Performing Diasporic Subjectivities: Gendered Narratives of Cultural Reproduction in a Community of Tibetan Exiles

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Introduction

On a morning in mid-June, 2011, I sat with my translator, Tenzin Tsering, in front of a large lecture room at the Tibetan Transit School (TTS), a residential school for Tibetan refugees aged eighteen to thirty-four who have fled Chinese-controlled Tibet for the center of Tibet-in-exile across the Himalayas in Dharamsala, India. Like other institutions managing the refugee population in Dharamsala, TTS houses a number of refugees who remained in a liminal state after leaving their homes in Tibet. I had begun to see such institutions as key sites for the formation of Tibetan refugee subjectivities. After meeting a number of adults and young adults living in Dharamsala who had graduated from TTS, I had decided to visit the school and seek out informants who could speak to their experiences of socialization in Dharamsala. I contacted the director, and I had been expecting to do one-on-one interviews with available students. At this point in my research, I could communicate in basic Tibetan, and could make out parts of complex and extensive speech. Since the students at TTS were not yet proficient in English, I asked enlisted Tenzin Tsering's help for the interviews. When I arrived at TTS, however, a school administrator brought us tea from the “canteen,” ushered us upstairs into classroom, and explained that the students would arrive for class shortly. The administrator left. A teacher arrived and greeted us in English, and students began to trickle in. About thirty students, male and female, filled the desks lined in front of me. Most seemed about my age (early twenties), but a few revealed faces weathered with wrinkles that made me assume they were in their thirties. I wondered exactly what the teacher and students expected me to do. Had my intentions to “speak with students about their lives” (as I had described my research agenda to the director) somehow been miscommunicated? How had these intentions been communicated? I was sitting in front of
a room of students, so was I supposed to be teaching a class? The teacher began addressing the students in Tibetan, saying something about me, the foreign girl (*bdyin ji'i pu mo*), then invited me, in English, to start asking questions.

I began asking the set of open-ended promptings I had developed over the course of my research to initiate conversation during interviews (see Appendix Three). I asked, “Why did you come to India?” The teacher responded, in English, “To meet the Dalai Lama. The second thing is to study, because the school fee is expensive in Tibet.” The students were silent. I asked, looking towards the students, if they had gone to school in Tibet, and three students raised their hands, reporting (through Tenzin Tsering) between four and five years of schooling before coming to India.

I said, “Does anyone have family in India?” Two students responded, one who has an older brother in India, another who had migrated with his nuclear family, including his younger brother and his mother and father. Up to this point in my exploration of refugee life stories, human rights literature, and other sources of discursive narrative production about refugee experiences and reproduction broadly defined, I had encountered discussions of family size and population in a variety of contexts. Since the student's explanation of his family composition seemed to open the doorway to this discussion, I asked about the average family size in Tibet, and the teacher responded, in Tibetan, “*Earlier, it was much larger, but now it has been reduced to four total family members. If you work in the government you can only have one baby.*” A student added, in Tibetan, “*Five family members is the maximum number.*” I wondered why the teacher had switched to speak in Tibetan. He had addressed me earlier in English, and seemed to be responding directly to my question. Throughout the rest of the hour-long class, however, he

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1 Throughout the thesis, I have marked responses translated from Tibetan to English in italics.
continued to address me, through Tenzin Tsering, in Tibetan. This may have signaled that he was, in fact, speaking to his students more than to me.

It was silent again, so I asked, “How do you feel about these policies?” The teacher responded, in Tibetan, “They are meant to check the Tibetan population from growing. For China, they have population, but we hardly have six million people, so it is definitely to reduce the number of Tibetans.”

“Did you know about these policies in Tibet?” I asked. A student responded, “China's population is the highest in the world. The Chinese population is very huge and they want to reduce the Tibetan population.” Another student added, “It is directed solely towards Tibetans.” The teacher said, “The Chinese government says it is totally for your own good—to keep only one to two children—but the motivation is to totally get rid of Tibetans.”

“In Tibet, what was your understanding of the situation?” I asked. The teacher responded vehemently, “I was an ex-political prisoner, and I know that there is a huge contrast between what they [the Chinese] say and do. They forcibly make farmers grow wheat and corn, and give them income to do so. But, now they have stopped giving them income. Nomads used to have on average seventy to one hundred yaks. Now, the government has reduced the maximum to five cattle per head, and you have to pay a tax to the government for any other animals you own. Instances like this have made us realize that the Chinese are not in Tibet for the reasons they say they are.” I noted a number of nodding heads among the students as the teacher continued.

“And, most importantly, in educational institutions, there is a systematic attempt to crush Tibetan identity. All the good schools are in China, not Tibet, and if there is a brilliant Tibetan student, he will be given a job so he doesn't pursue further studies. And, there are damages to
the environment, like cutting trees and diverting rivers.”

I wanted to hear from the students, so I asked if their families were engaged in farming activities. Most raised their hands in affirmation, and the teacher said, “The students here are quite young, so they ventured to seek jobs outside the home…” A student interjected, “But, if help was required at home, we would help. If not, we would seek an outside source of income—” The teacher broke in, “Even when you go out to work, if your colleague is Chinese, there is a different pay scale implemented on the grounds that he is a skilled laborer and you are not.”

Trying to get beyond the teacher's descriptions of China's violation of Tibet and Chinese discrimination against Tibetans, I asked “When you were in Tibet, what did you think it meant to be Tibetan?” A student answered, “When I was in Tibet, I didn't imagine I was Tibetan. I was very young, and I didn't go to school. I actually thought I'm Tibetan, but I was a nomad and was just living in the country, so I didn't know about the Tibet situation.” Another responded, “When I was young, I didn't know about it, but when I was about ten to twelve years old, my parents told me that we are Tibetans, that there was a massacre that had been done to the older generation, and then 2008 happened.” The teacher solemnly added, “We all know. Our parents witnessed how the Chinese had come, the destruction of our culture and religion. When the students were born, the Chinese were already there. What has become history, they don't know because it is not taught to them.” With this statement, the teacher seemed to be trying to summarize for me his students' sentiments. Rather than summarizing, however, he seemed to speak for them, first explicitly discounting the students' previous statements, replacing “I didn't know” with “we all know”, and then explaining why “they don't know.” The teacher seemed to take it as his duty to teach “what has become history” to the students, so that they “would know.” I had encountered
similar narratives from representatives of institutions before. And, the manner in which the
teacher interacted with his students confirmed my previous impressions of Tibetan exile
institutions in Dharamsala. Namely, institutions seem to shape a consistent refugee subjectivity,
oriented around key tropes involving opposition to the Chinese, oppression, and nationalism in
exile. Refugees housed at such institutions articulate their life stories through sets of discursive
resources, portraying their socialization in India as a process of self-realization.

Back at TTS, still hoping to understand the what in “what has become history” referred, I
keyed into the teacher's statement that “our parents” had “witnessed” the Chinese arrival. I asked
“What did your parents tell you?” A student responded, “There were a lot of monks back then.
Some rinpoches [Buddhist teachers] had ten thousand students, but they destroyed two thousand
monks' quarters and said you cannot keep any more monks.” Another added, “I had never seen
the flag before, I never knew that Tibet belongs to Tibetans or why women were forced to have
sterilizations.” With this last statement, the student communicated a connection between the
definition of the Tibetan nation and women's reproductive capacities. The student presented
forced sterilization of Tibetan women, like the flag, as an icon of the Tibetan nation. Throughout
my reading, interviews, and daily life in Dharamsala, I encountered recurring discussions of
female reproduction in multiple settings. It seemed, in fact, that the notion of reproduction
contributed to the production of refugee subjectivity. During formal and subtle socialization at
institutions like TTS, Tibetan refugees come to narrate their own experiences, and to
metaphorically link themselves to the experiences of the Tibetan nation under Chinese control,
through the trope of reproduction.

This thesis, then, is my attempt to grapple with the complex inundation of narratives of
suffering and violence I encountered in Dharamsala through the lens of gender and reproduction. The thesis charts what I consider to be genres in women's narratives of suffering, unified by the common plots of migration, political imprisonment, reproductive suffering, and kinship formation. My experience in the classroom at TTS typifies the sorts of knowledge my informants expressed to me in narrative form. “Tibetans from Tibet” seem to insist that they “did not know about Tibet” before migrating. This knowledge, that many of my informants report encountering only in exile, centers on the violation of “Tibet” by “China.” Tibetans in Dharamsala communicated this knowledge to me through what seemed to be generic, normative narratives that had even become institutionalized. Like the teacher at TTS, representatives of institutions that house and care for refugees in Dharamsala (all of which are run through the exile government and/or through foreign, especially American, donations) tell stories about the suffering of the Tibetan people that seem to follow specific plot lines. As I interviewed individuals, asking broad questions about their life experiences, they reiterated these same plot lines in their own life stories (without my prompting). I also encountered these plots in English language human rights literature, towards which my informants explicitly pointed me, and with which I had gained familiarity before entering the field.

Through this ethnography of narratives, I argue that speech and discourse reveal common understandings of the Tibetan collectivity. In writing of the narratives of female resistance fighters in Tibet, Carole McGranahan (2010b) explains that,

thinking of one's life as a story, as something that can be narrated, involves social processes and conventions...Narrating one's life, then, is to situate oneself and to be situated in dialogue with society...such narration signals possession of shared structures of possibility, including normative understandings of history, memory, knowledge, and truth [768].
As McGranahan asserts, examining individual life stories can help illuminate shared understandings, which are often culturally specific. In this way, individual women's narratives in Dharamsala provide insight into normative understandings of the nation that seemed to be cultivated in exile. These normative understandings presented unified collective and personal histories of suffering. It seemed that my informants formulated both the self—a singular Tibetan refugee—and the collectivity—the Tibetan community in Dharamsala and, more broadly, the Tibetan diaspora—through notions of shared suffering.

As my interaction at TTS suggests, institutional settings in Dharamsala inculcate refugees with these narratives of suffering. Indeed, through the encouragement of a consistent set of narratives of refugee experience and of the Tibetan nation, these sites shape what I refer to as “Tibetan subjectivity”. Foucault (1982) describes the role of institutions in employing “techniques of power” that define subjectivity. He argues that institutions operate according to a form of power that “applies itself to immediate everyday life [and] categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects” (781). Institutionalized power imposes the self- and social awareness that produces subjectivity. The normative understandings—that is, knowledge—of Tibet and Tibetans that my informants reiterate in personal narrative seem to arise through similar dynamics of power in the exile government's institutions.

Due to the role of such institutions in shaping Tibetan refugee subjectivity, personal educational histories seem to lead to significant social differences in Dharamsala. The amount of time that refugees have been schooled in India and/or Tibet, and the age at which they became
socialized in Dharamsala serves to define the extent of their understanding of Tibetanness. Ironically, this understanding seemed inversely related to the amount of time that Tibetans had spent in Tibet. As Tenzin Tsering and I were having coffee one day before we set out to conduct interviews, she spoke of this social difference. Tenzin Tsering explained,

I know Tibetans who were born and raised in Tibet. They were not taught the Tibetan alphabet in their schools, only when they came here they came to know. They didn't know about Tibetan history, they don't know the Dalai Lama, they have heard the Dalai Lama's name only on several occasions in a very hushed tone. So, the very attempt is to blur their identity in a way that they don't feel Tibetan, they don't feel the Tibetan pride, so if they don't have a pride in being Tibetan, why would you be involved in a movement for Tibet?

Tenzin Tsering suggests that the political climate in Tibet inhibits the development of Tibetan subjectivity. She asserts that, since Tibetans from Tibet have been deprived of a sense of “pride” in their Tibetanness, they also lack the political consciousness that motivates the Tibetan freedom movement. Tenzin Tsering points to an understanding that also arises in the personal narratives of Tibetans born in Tibet. Tibetans born in Tibet explain a profound shift in political consciousness and historical understanding. Migration, then, involves an enculturation in the exile community that redefines the migrant as a Tibetan refugee subject.

These anecdotes serve to demonstrate that Tibetans' initial enculturation in the diaspora takes place largely in institutional settings. And, following this enculturation, individuals perform their new-found refugee subjectivity in narrative form. This performance occurs across a landscape of institutions in greater Dharamsala. After crossing the border from Tibet to Nepal, all migrants must first stay at reception centers in Kathmandu, Delhi, and finally, Dharamsala (Fig. 1). From the reception center in Dharamsala, the exile government places refugees in monasteries or nunneries, an old-age home, or various schools based upon their ages. During my
time in Dharamsala, I explored TTS and the Tibetan Reception Center (TRC). I also visited Education Support Trust (ES Trust), a small, privately-funded residential school providing continuing education to TTS graduates. These institutions lie along dusty roads below the mountains. The tourist infrastructure in Dharamsala centers on the Dalai Lama's temple, located above in the hill station known as McLeod Ganj. McLeod Ganj consists of three winding mountain roads packed with restaurants, coffee shops, hotels, NGO headquarters, and the exile government's offices. Houses and apartments spill down across the hillsides (Fig. 2). Murals, statues, and posters call for Tibetan independence (Fig. 3). Almost all permanent residents of McLeod Ganj are Tibetan. Tourists, mainly Indian and Euro-American, flood the streets. But, apart from beggars, taxi drivers, and a few Kashmiri shop owners, most Indians work and live on the sprawling foothills below. Whereas Indian houses, farms, and tourist lodgings seem more evenly spaced across the mountain side (in spontaneous, almost mutinous risings of buildings that stretch the long distance between Dharamsala and the cities of Chandigarh, Amritsar, and Delhi), Tibetans live in concentrated enclaves in the greater Dharamsala area. The Tibetan community remains relatively distinct from their Indian hosts. Apart from those living in isolated institutions, Tibetans congregate solely in McLeod Ganj and in apartment complexes near the Norbulinka Institute, a Tibetan religious and cultural organization located about twelve kilometers down the mountain (Fig. 4).

It seems that Tibetans' topographic location in greater Dharamsala's mountains correlates with cultural and economic capital. Whereas McLeod Ganj offers a cosmopolitan audience for the performance of the Tibetan nation (and tourist prices for food and, sometimes even for locals, housing), residential institutions below isolate recently arrived refugees throughout their
socialization. This layout suggests that migrant communities produce marginality among
themselves and in their interactions with surrounding societies. Tsing (2000) asserts that “The
key feature of the global era is the 'implosion' of center and periphery...Spatial and cultural
discriminations become impossible in a world of global flows, and nonunitary migrant subjects
are formed in the interstices of past classificatory principles” (343). I argue against this
understanding of migration and circulation, which supposes a sort of naturalized mixing among
heterogeneous populations. Rather, my Tibetan informants interact differentially with Tibetans
from other regions, Tibetans born in India, Euro-Americans, and Indians. And, institutions that
operate through the exile government classify those born in Tibet as refugees in a global order.
Through this classification, refugees are categorized by their exclusion from nation-states. In
Dharamsala, it seems that migration does not overthrow a politics of marginality, but rather,
mutates into new patterns of social interaction and exclusion that correlate with nationality, a
classificatory principle fundamental to the principle of the nation-state.

Given my interest in reproduction, and IRB constraints that limited my research methods
to interviews and focus groups, I began my fieldwork in McLeod Ganj interviewing medical
professionals about reproductive health services at Delek hospital, a donation-based biomedical
hospital serving primarily the Tibetan community in Dharamsala, as well as at Rajendra Prasad
Medical College, an Indian government hospital (see Fig. 5 for locations relative to McLeod
Ganj). Then, I continued to interview people with whom I came in contact in my daily life. My
informants come from all regions of Tibet, and a few were born in India. Given my social
network and a dynamic in Dharamsala where Tibetans tend to socialize with and live in
proximity to those from the same region, the majority of my informants whom I met in McLeod
Ganj are from Amdo, one of Tibet's three regions. These Amdo Tibetans lived in a congregated “Amdo village” in Mcleod Ganj, as well as in apartments near the Norbulinka Institute (Fig. 6). The Tibetans I met in Mcleod Ganj and at Norbulinka all had attended schools in the Dharamsala area, including TTS, the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV), and ES Trust and had lived at the reception center. It seemed that these institutional sites presented ideal venues in which to continue my research. My informants in Mcleod Ganj articulated that they had acquired a new-found sense of self through their stays in these institutions. When I went to investigate, I found that in institutions, Tibetans from Tibet come into contact with normative framings of Tibet, Tibetan history, and Tibetanness that privilege a politicized knowledge of collective Tibetan suffering. As the teacher from TTS articulated, his students “do not know” about the history of injustices that China has perpetrated against Tibet. Although Tibetans from Tibet lived under the regime responsible for Tibetan suffering (as described by my informants), they must be educated about the nature of their experiences in Tibet. The process of enculturation in institutions seems to suppose that Tibetans from Tibet misrecognize their life experiences, and it reframes the ways that they view their lives in Tibet through a normative framework that emphasizes shared suffering.

As exemplified in the multiple narratives of suffering that the students and teacher at TTS reported, normative experiences of suffering take a variety of forms. I encountered common, remarkably consistent narrative formulae through which refugee Tibetans came to narrate their experience. Each chapter traces narratives I have grouped into common genres of suffering. These genres include the plots of migration, imprisonment, reproductive suffering, and kinship formation. These narratives demonstrate shifts in Tibetan subjectivity related to the process of
enculturation. For example, enculturation builds a collective memory of atrocity that seems to color the ways that individuals reflect upon their personal history, as well as upon their present circumstances and their plans for the future. In addition, I encountered a persistent narrative emphasis on female reproduction across narrative plots. At times, gender seemed to present a sort of hidden social infrastructure, with shaded references to violence against women, especially during the journey between Tibet and India. However, in recounting memories of imprisonment, women also spoke openly of sexual violence, only to negate its gendered nature moments later. In other contexts, women and men alike stressed gender differences, often reiterating the biological and spiritual capacities of gendered incarnations articulated in Buddhist philosophy.

By examining these diverse figurations of gender, I hope to shed light on women's subjectivity. I seek to explore how individual women respond to and internalize representations of gendered suffering in narrative. McGranahan (2010a, 2010b) has noted that the Tibetan exile community overlooks, and to some extent, silences women's narratives of political resistance. I found, however, that certain gendered narratives are privileged in Dharamsala, including those of political imprisonment and reproductive rights violations. How, then, do women engage with such narratives of gendered suffering, when their voices are silenced in other political contexts?

A Semiotic Approach to Cultural Reproduction

These consistent, gendered narrative formulae necessitated an interpretive approach. Geertz (1973) defines the interpretive outlook by explaining that since “man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be...an interpretive [science] in search of meaning” (5). In searching for cultural meaning, Geertz argues that “what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's
constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (ibid: 9). I view my informants' narratives similarly, as constructions of Tibetan exilic subjectivity. More recent scholarship has amended Geertz's interpretive approach, arguing for an understanding of culture as unstable, emergent, and contested. Culture is not fixed in webs of meaning. Rather, individuals produce meaning in their interactions. Applying this model to my field site, Tibetans construct Tibetanness as they narrate. The view of culture that my field material portrays captures the construction of Tibetanness aimed at a specific audience—an American ethnographer. To this end, I consider Tibetan narratives to be performances of Tibetanness for an international audience, which sheds light on the positioning of Tibetans in the world order of nation-states. I have taken Nany Ries' *Russian Talk* (1997), an ethnography on conversation among Moscow's intelligentsia in the time of Perestroika, to guide my approach to exploring Tibetan narrative performance. Ries explains that “in talk, various conceptual patterns and value systems are encapsulated in narrative, even mythic form, comprising models for life as much as models of it” (3). That is, talk constructs collective meanings which serve to direct action, and cultural reproduction occurs as individuals navigate within these collective meanings and implied actions. Ries analyzes Russian talk by highlighting key symbolic elements that occur throughout her informants' conversations. Speakers linked these key symbolic elements to the poverty of Perestroika, performing their own hardship in routinized ways. Talk became an important register for the performance and production of value in the face of material deprivation, and served to proclaim the collective suffering of the narod—the Russian people.

My Tibetan informants likewise linguistically performed a specific form of suffering, produced in a liminal phase of refugee subject formation. They affirmed suffering as an essential
character of the Tibetan people. Although Ries' fieldwork is removed in time, space, and political context from my own, our informants seemed to communicate collective belonging in a manner that led narratives of suffering to produce symbolic capital. Ries explains that “Suffering, enhanced through discourse, can socially exonerate those who suffer and even sacralize them. In Russia, in particular, spiritual merit has been associated with hardship and poverty” (ibid: 126). Tibetans' narratives can likewise be understood in the context of a culturally specific valorization of suffering. For example, Tibetan representations of the freedom struggle deploy the suffering of the Tibetan people at the hands of the Chinese as a call for autonomy. Likewise, aspects of Tibetan religion, including (but not limited to) karma, link suffering to spiritual merit. In a study of happiness among ethnic Tibetans in Nepal and India, Lichter and Epstein (1983) encountered the belief that by experiencing suffering, individuals could live out karmic consequences that would allow for future happiness (234-235). My informants have had varying exposure to textual Buddhism, but nonetheless seemed to espouse similar associations between suffering and potential happiness. Like Ries, I argue for unique links between suffering and morality which play out in the discursive production of collective identity.

In tracing the production of collective belonging, like Ries, I mobilize Ortner's (1973) treatise on symbolic anthropology. Ortner describes “key symbols” as elements of a culture which “are crucial to its distinctive organization” (1338). Ortner provides a scheme of the types and functions of these key symbols. She identifies “summarizing symbols” which involve “the cultural conversion of complex ideas into various kinds of relatively undifferentiated commitment—patriotism, for example, or faith” (ibid: 1344). I locate summarizing symbols
through which Tibetans communicate the significance of religion and the nation, such as the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan flag, which speakers consistently invoke in narratives. Ortner also writes of “key scenarios,” which consist of “dramatistic modes of analysis...concerning the restructuring of attitudes and relationships as a result of enacting particular culturally provided sequences of stylized actions” (ibid: 1344-1345). In Dharamsala, migration, political resistance, and physical reproduction represent such key scenarios. As individuals recount their experiences of and attitudes towards these scenarios, they seem to formulate strategies of cultural survival. These key scenarios framed the plot lines of many narratives, and correspond to the thesis' chapters (with Chapters Three and Four encompassing physical reproduction). I attempt to demonstrate the function of key symbols in communicating the importance of and strategies for reproducing the Tibetan collectivity.

**History and Circumstances of the Tibetan Diaspora**

My informants' current position in India results from specific historical circumstances, which have led “Tibet” to be defined as a nation in exile. McGranahan (2010a: 1-52) and Avedon (1984: 12-21) describe historical Tibet as a series of small-scale societies, loosely held together by monastic rule emanating from Lhasa. Since 1642, ethnic Tibetans have shown allegiance to the Dalai Lama lineage as rulers of Tibet (McGranahan 2010a: 14). Chinese incursions into Tibet began in the late 1940s (McGranahan 2010a: 1). Following these incursions, the Dalai Lama appealed to the United States and Great Britain to support their planned request for membership in the United Nations (ibid: 45). Given that Britain was political embroiled with a newly independent India, and that the United States was entering a war against the Chinese in Korea, both governments rejected the Dalai Lama's appeal (ibid). The Dalai Lama continued to
negotiate with the Chinese government until 1956, when a series of bombings led him to seek American military assistance (ibid: 1, 46). The United States complied, deploying the CIA to train Tibetan guerrilla soldiers (ibid: 46). March 10, 1959 marks a turning point in the political conflict between China and Tibet. In early March, the Dalai Lama had received an invitation from the PLA to attend a theatrical show, and the date was set for March 10th (Avedon 1984: 49-50). The PLA had extended similar invitations to other prominent lamas, who had been imprisoned and executed once they arrived at the performances (ibid). Since the Tibetan population in Lhasa was aware of these events, they formed a barricade around the Dalai Lama's residence on March 10, seeking to prevent the Dalai Lama's attendance at the show. Riots began. On March 17, 1959, the PLA dropped two mortar shells near the Dalai Lama's residence, and he decided to flee to India with his family. The official emergence of the Tibetan nation coincided with the Dalai Lama's flight into exile. The Dalai Lama constituted the government-in-exile on April 19, 1959 (McGranahan 2010a: 14). By the end of June, 1959, almost 20,000 Tibetans had fled to India (Avedon 1984: 72). The Tibetan nation was thus defined through a large-scale exodus, at a time when incipient independence movements across Asia, Africa, and South America focused attention on post-coloniality and the rise of independent nation-states.

Today, “Tibet” generally refers to a space demarcated by geographic borders asserted by either the PRC or the exile government. The PRC gave provincial status to “the Tibet Autonomous Region” in 1965, and classified outlying Tibetan territories as “Autonomous Prefectures” and “Autonomous Counties” (ibid: 48). The exile government, however, adheres to a “three region” (chol kha gsum) model of Tibet, encompassing Kham, Amdo, and Utzang (ibid: 50-51). The Tibet Autonomous Region, in contrast, encompasses all of Utzang and parts of
eastern Kham (Fig. 7). In Dharamsala, individuals describe their heritage according to the three region model. Following the lead of my informants, when writing of “Tibet” throughout the thesis, I refer to the three region model. The Tibetan diaspora in South Asia encompasses fifty-seven settlements in India, Nepal, and Bhutan.² Dharamsala, which represents one of these settlements, functions as the capital of diaspora. Many migrants frequently travel between settlements. Even exiled families comprised of multiple settled generations move across the subcontinent. And, young migrants who have journeyed to India without their families sometimes travel multiple times between Tibet and South Asia. The diaspora is not fixed. Rather, it is renewed through perpetual movements within and between Tibet, South Asia, and beyond.

These historical circumstances, leading to globally dispersed but concentrated communities of Tibetans, have positioned the exile nation within the international community. Likewise, the development of the exile nation and of its associated schools and institutions that manage the refugee population, has coincided with the production of national sentiment. Both the infrastructure of the Tibetan nation-state and the imagining of the Tibetan nation have occurred in exile. National sentiment has produced an imagined homeland in Tibet, to which individuals would theoretically return once it was freed. The Dalai Lama states that he does not seek political independence, but rather, political and cultural autonomy, for greater Tibet (McGranahan 2010a: 38). I thus refer to the goals underlying Tibetan nationalism as “freedom” and the actions taken to mobilize for these goals as the “freedom movement.” I have employed anthropological scholarship on globalization and diaspora to understand this complex relationship between the global positioning of the Tibetan population and its imagined homeland.

² http://tibet.net/home/about-us/settlements-in-india/
In the early 1990s, cultural studies extended post-modern scholarship which had abandoned positivist understandings of culture. Scholars began to consider culture as contested and unstable, especially as people and populations moved across the globe. Appadurai (2003[1990]) notes the “schizophrenic social formations” of the post-post-modern world, arguing for a model of the global political economy based upon disjunctive circulations of people, media, finances, and ideas. Tsing (2000) explains that such models of circulation challenge the conceptualization of cultures as discrete units. Not only do individuals migrate, but “diasporas circulate, bringing the wealth of their cultural heritage to new locations” (337). The circulation of Tibetan people to South Asia and beyond, which began at a moment of articulation between the Cold War and post-colonial independence movements, allowed for an appreciation of Tibetan culture around the world. Tibetan traditions of Buddhist monasticism have been exported beyond South Asia, in particular, to Europe and North America. At the same time, Euro-American Buddhist practitioners have been imported to Tibetan settlements across South Asia and to Tibet itself as travelers, pilgrims, converted monastics, and political activists. The involvement of Tibet in a globalized world seems to exemplify the complex flows that scholars of globalization have introduced. Likewise, the national sentiment that shapes my informants' subjectivities results from a humanitarian framing of the political conflict in Tibet.\(^3\) In the 1960s, the continued rise of an international humanitarian regime, as well as Tibet's location within this regime, seem linked to new imaginings of the global that mirrored the shift in cultural studies.\(^4\) Tibet's involvement in a globalized world seems to exemplify the complex flows that

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\(^3\) Cold War politics influenced this humanitarian framing, since the government in exile relied upon the United States, who held a primary commitment to placate the PRC (McGranahan 2010a: 46).

\(^4\) Scholars have noted the importance of developing environmental movements in the 1960s to imaginings of the global. Tsing (2000) explains that in the 1960s, imaging technology produced the first photographs of the Earth as seen from space, which “brought together the universalist morality of 1960s social justice politics and the transboundary expertise of an emergent ecological science” (331). These new developments in
In this vein, transnational mobilization for Tibetan freedom has produced unstable imaginings of “Tibet” itself. Appadurai (2003[1990]) argues that “As group pasts become increasingly parts of...national and transnational spectacles, culture becomes...an arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation, the latter often to multiple and spatially dislocated audiences” (42). The case of Tibet necessitates a similar understanding of culture, as a field in which individuals navigate a multiplicity of possible interpersonal affiliations and self-representations. Simply stated, as my informants migrate from Tibet to South Asia, they report encountering the unfamiliar representation of Tibet as a nation and of Tibetans as victims of human rights abuses. These representations of the nation and Tibetan victim circulate in Western media and politics (Barnett 2001). In coming into contact with new communities and media, my informants understandings of their own culture shift, and they seem to espouse a politicized understanding of Tibet and a humanitarian framing of Tibetan freedom. As explained above, residential institutions seem to contribute to this new-found “knowledge” of Tibetan culture. The performance of Tibetan refugee subjectivity, then, involves processes of disjuncture and difference within a migrant, globally situated community.

Along with its emergence in the realm of international humanitarianism, the issue of Tibet arose in diaspora studies in the late 20th century. The Tibetan intelligentsia adopted the notion of environmentalism resonated with “another image of the global, in which globality represented the goal of a process of building transnational political and cultural ties” (ibid). The Tibet movement exemplifies this meeting of environmentalism and transnational exchange. Barnett (2001) explains that representations of Tibet outside of China portray a violated “Zone of Specialness,” playing on the intersection of primordial romanticism and environmental concerns. The Dalai Lama, for example, wrote “Prior to Chinese invasion, Tibet was an unspoiled wilderness sanctuary in a unique natural environment...What little is left in Tibet must be protected and efforts must be made to restore the environment to its balanced state” (as cited in Barnett 2001:276). That is, both Western and Tibetan mobilization for freedom seem to have been inspired and influenced by emerging environmentalism in the mid- to late 20th century.
“diaspora” to describe the Tibetan exile population while the term gained popularity in post-colonial studies (Anand 2003: 215-216). Since attention to diaspora developed in the context of post-modern understandings of the fluidity of space and culture, scholarship did not pin down a specific definition of diaspora. Rather, scholars considered diasporas to be bundles of certain interrelated characteristics, including geographic displacement and nostalgic imaginings of return to the homeland (Axel 2004: 27, Clifford 1994: 302). Tibetan communities in South Asia and beyond share such characteristics. However, in the case of Tibet, the diaspora seems defined by the possibility—in fact, the moral imperative—of return. Clifford (1994) argues that, “Whatever their eschatological longings, diaspora communities are 'not-here' to stay. Diaspora cultures thus mediate, in a lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement of living here and remembering/desiring another place” (311). The status of the Tibetan nation in exile heightens these tensions, challenging Clifford's definition of the diasporic state as one of fixed displacement. Tibet-in-exile is seemingly more solidified than other diasporas, by virtue of its quasi-state infrastructure centered in Dharamsala. From this vantage point, Tibet exemplifies an exilic population rather than a diaspora. Anand explains that scholars such as Clifford have considered diasporas to be “incommensurate with nationalism” (2003:224). The Tibetan freedom movement fuels a pan-Tibetan identity based on the notion of nationality. And, the freedom movement involves highly organized protests, frequently leading to violence, which seems to contrast sharply from other dispersed immigrants' sentiments towards their homelands.

And yet, Tibetans' perpetual dispersion across the globe, and deep-rooted relationships with people of other nationalities, pushes exilic existence to the realm of diaspora. In a sense, the notion of diaspora undermines the lived realities of the Tibetan people's suffering. Scholarly
focus on nostalgic remembering presents an aesthetic that contrasts with the intense affect of shared suffering my informants communicate in their narratives. And yet, the deployment of narrative performances of suffering, in the human rights literature and media which infiltrate daily life in Dharamsala, suggests Orientalist imaginings. Tibetan nationalism is predicated upon shared suffering. Tibetan nationalist calls for a “free Tibet” seem characteristic of exile rather than diaspora. Shared experiences of profound suffering suggest an affect more characteristic of a refugee community, and my informants' official status in the international world order is that of “refugee.” NGO networks in Dharamsala, and, in fact, the exile government itself, seem to cater to needy refugee subjects. Narrative performances of shared suffering, however, mediate between “diaspora,” “exile,” and “refugee.” Crafted towards nationalist goals, performances of suffering nonetheless romanticize the tension between lived displacement and nostalgia for the homeland which scholars have identified as a key characteristic of diasporic imaginings. And, given Dharamsala's cosmopolitanism, Tibetan refugees mix readily with foreigners and tourists. Although, like refugees, they remain isolated from their Indian host community, like inhabitants of a diaspora, they create ties with a global audience who visits Dharamsala. I therefore switch between the three terms when discussing Tibetan subjectivities and the theater of Dharamsala.

My informants continue to move throughout South Asia and beyond, which presents a striking contrast to the freedom struggle's stated goals. As described above, Tibetan individuals and institutions defined the nation at the moment of deterritorialization. In discussing the influence of communication systems on globalization, Levy (2000) asserts that individuals cultivate “a global discourse of diasporicity or nationalism, one that transcends locality while creating a new 'locality', a unique locality that transcends immediate spaces and shared
landscapes” (150). The Tibetan freedom movement speaks to these contrasting localities. “Freedom” would involve a reconciliation between the diasporic Tibetan population and the territorial nation—a reterritorialization. And yet, my informants frequently explained that they sought further opportunities for migration, for example, through obtaining citizenship in Europe or America. Meanwhile, internal migrations and “population transfers” (as Tibet activists describe) of Han Chinese into Tibet further blur the boundaries of the physical space towards which Tibetans direct the freedom struggle. Tibet's future thus seems caught in a continued process of literal deterritorialization, while Tibetans continue to affirm their nationality. In her analysis of the contemporary world order, Tsing speaks of similar contradictions between migration and territory. She defines “flow” as the migration catalyzed by the political economy and institutional ties between pathways of movement, explaining, “if flow itself always involves making terrain, there can be no territorial distinctions between the 'global' transcending of place and the 'local' making of places. Instead, there is place making” (338). That is, individuals practice “place making” through their imaginings of territory, globality, and locality as they move through geographic space; they endow certain spaces with meaning, creating a sense of place, and situate themselves within these places. Tsing's argument carries implications for the experience of migration from Tibet and for refugee life in Dharamsala. Tibetans' understandings of the freedom struggle and personal hopes for continued migration seem to conflict. However, the ethnographic inquiry shifts from attempts to reconcile literal and metaphoric—as well as collective and personal—goals, to an examination of individual meaning-making in the face of these central contradictions in Tibetan diasporic imaginings of the nation.

The narratives I have collected from young Tibetan women deal centrally with their
personal experiences of place-making in exile. I examine the ways that my informants make sense of social and geographic displacement, while emplacing themselves within the exile community. In this process of place-making, my informants articulate a concern with cultural reproduction, which leads to them to discussions of kinship formation and physical reproduction. Appadurai argues that, “As the shapes of cultures grow themselves less bounded and tacit, more fluid and politicized, the work of cultural reproduction becomes a daily hazard” (Appadurai 2003:43). According to Appadurai, therefore, culture's decentralization through global circulations produces anxieties about cultural reproduction. Many of my informants have left their families as they migrated to India and expressed personal concern with cultural survival that they attributed to the uncertain nature of diasporic life. This concern over cultural survival seems to have led to the politicization of Tibetan discourses on reproduction, and motivates my semiotic approach. This thesis seeks to join scholarship on diaspora to an interpretation of the role of gender and reproduction in Tibetan subject-formation.

**Methods of Fieldwork and Analysis**

The fieldwork for this thesis came about as an extension of an independent research project I conducted with the School for International Training’s (SIT) program, “Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples.” With SIT, I lived with a Tibetan host family in Kathmandu and participated in daily language classes and other lectures from January to early April, 2011. As part of the requirements for my semester, I completed four weeks of independent research in April, 2011. For this research period, students could remain in Kathmandu or travel to another ethnically Tibetan area of India, Nepal, or Bhutan. I chose to travel to Dharamsala, India. As will be further described in Chapter Three, my academic work had brought me in contact with
declarations of the “genocide” of the Tibetan people. Works that I studied through SIT, such as John Avedon's (1984) journalistic history of Tibet, In Exile from the Land of Snows, as well as lectures organized through SIT, including multiple talks with Avedon's ex-wife, herself an American activist for Tibet, consistently reiterated these accounts of genocide. The Tibetans employed by SIT, all of whom were raised in India and Nepal, likewise narrated testimony of genocide. My host family, however, and other Tibetans living in Kathmandu were silent about political conflict—both within Nepal and in Tibet—even when I explicitly asked their opinions. Meanwhile, the Tibetans working for SIT asserted that Nepal's cooperation with China (especially following its 2008 Communist revolution) stifled Tibetans' vibrant political sentiments, which emanated from the capital of Dharamsala.

My previous experience in Nepal has given me insight into the uniqueness of Dharamsala among the sites along the Tibetan refugee circuit. Marcus (1995) describes late 20th century ethnographic trends toward “multi-sited” research projects, including a method he terms “following the people.” Within the umbrella of “following the people,” Marcus describes certain studies that present an ethnography of a single field with “with multiple sites evoked [as] 'off-stage' knowledge, so to speak, of what happens to their subjects in the other sites” (106). While this thesis, itself, does not draw on material from Kathmandu, my understanding of Dharamsala as a theater for the performance of Tibetan subjectivity has been shaped by my own embodied experience of travel between the Tibetan communities in Kathmandu, Delhi, and Dharamsala.

The ethnographic encounters with which this thesis deals come entirely from Dharamsala. The majority of these ethnographic encounters took the form of scheduled interviews. Through these interviews in Dharamsala, I collected life stories from forty-two refugees (thirty-one
women and eleven men), and interviewed twelve NGO and hospital employees. My informants come from diverse backgrounds, but most are young adults between the ages of eighteen to thirty-four who have migrated to India within the past seven years. A few were born in India, and a few had migrated to India as children. When I approached informants and asked them to share with me their lives, I told them that I hoped to hear anything they wished to tell me. Conversations usually proceeded fairly naturally, but when they did not, I employed a set of common prompts I had adapted to gather information about specific aspects of refugee life (see Appendix Three). As described above, I sought out informants for interviews in McLeod Ganj and Norbulinka, as well as at three institutions, the Tibetan Transit School (TTS), Educational Support Trust (ES Trust), and the Tibetan Reception Center (TRC), each located about an hour outside of Dharamsala by bus. The unpaved roads leading to these institutions filled my lungs with hot dust in April and May and flooded during the summer monsoon, making travel unpleasant, both by foot and by vehicle.

About half of my informants (nineteen) were fluent in English. Tibetans born in India and the students at ES Trust have high levels of English proficiency. Students at TTS have just begun learning English, and Tibetans living at the reception center do not speak English. When I traveled to TTS and the reception center, therefore, I enlisted the help of three translators, Tenzin Tsering, Jangchup Choetso, and Lhamo Tso. Tenzin Youdon, SIT’s program assistant also translated my first two interviews conducted in early April. Tenzin Tsering, Jangchup Choetso, and Lhamo Tso also helped with a few interviews in McLeod and Norbulinka with individuals who were not confident in their English. I have italicized statements that were originally articulated in Tibetan. My Tibetan translators often took care of me as a foreigner. In attempting
to help me navigate the Tibetan community, their authoritative knowledge of Tibetans sometimes influenced the ways they asked questions or communicated information. For example, there was, on a number of occasions, confusion about how to communicate the word “Buddhist.” On one occasion, when the informant did not understand the word, the translator responded, “All Tibetans are Buddhists except for a few who are Muslims.” I often attempted to present myself as a cultural novice, to avoid assuming that any single explanation I had encountered or inferred was representative or universal. By asking every interviewee to explain for me the same phenomena, I hoped to grasp a range of formulations and to get a sense of commonality and idiosyncrasy. As a foreigner, who presumably knew nothing about Tibet, my translators sometimes inserted their own knowledge of what the answer should be. After studying Tibetan every day for two months through SIT and living with Tibetans in Nepal and India for a total of six months, I was able to understand enough Tibetan to catch obvious inconsistencies. If I was not confident in the accuracy of any translated expression, I asked for clarification and took note of any statements about which I remained unclear. The study is highly limited, since it involves an analysis of linguistic expression that took place in two languages (and multiple dialects) by an ethnographer who is not fluent in Tibetan. I am confident, however, that with my limited Tibetan, the help of my translators, and my informants' knowledge of English, I effectively grasped the intended sentiments and key vocabularies of each narrative. Throughout the thesis, certain key vocabularies are transliterated according to the Wylie (1959) system of romanized Tibetan transcription.

The written transcripts of my formal interviews are made up of extensive dictations that I wrote by hand during the interviews and typed in the evenings afterward. I audio-taped and
transcribed in full some of the first interviews. However, I found that my informants became uncomfortable when I asked to record their voices. Some even explicitly asked me not to record them. Additionally, I was advised by SIT to delete all of the recordings after they had been transcribed in order to protect informants' confidentiality. Such concern over confidentiality seems to result both from China's continued repression of knowledge about the Tibetan exile community and from specific anxieties arising from Dharamsala's cosmopolitanism. Due to close monitoring of phone calls and media, Tibetans living abroad who make statements that threaten China's territorial control over the region can expect their families in Tibet to face harassment from the authorities. In addition, my informants described a number of negative experiences involving unethical appropriation of their culture and personal lives that resulted from Euro-American interest with Tibetans. For example, a friend told me that her elderly mother was shocked when, on a trip to Delhi, she encountered a postcard that featured her circumambulating the Dalai Lama's temple, when she had not even been aware that she had been photographed. Hoping to position myself apart from these exploitative practices, I chose to rely on my ability to take faithful notes throughout most of the interviews. As a result, I left the field with exclusively English linguistic material, except when I took note of the original Tibetan in my dictations. And, this linguistic material was imperfectly translated, literally from English to Tibetan and through my (well-developed but inherently flawed) ability to capture speech by hand. Despite ethical concerns, I greatly regret both deleting the audio recordings I had and not recording more extensively. It was only once I began to analyze the English linguistic material with my adviser, Deborah Matzner, that it became clear that fine-grained linguistic analysis could have contributed to the project.
In addition to collecting life stories, I participated as much as possible in daily life in Dharamsala, which, as described above seemed to function as a sort of theater for the inculcation and performance of Tibetan exile subjectivity. I spent my mornings in coffee houses and chatted with the employees, who sometimes gave me English language human rights literature and even, on one occasion, a documentary film, about Tibet. I volunteered at a number of English “conversation classes,” and led a few, by request, on my own. NGOs in Dharamsala organized these daily English conversation classes which seemed, to me, a means of entertaining the hordes of tourists who came to Dharamsala, half-expecting Shangri-la, only to find a few winding roads. The students would sometimes ask me to tea after class, hoping that I could make them fluent in English while they articulated over and over the hardship of the Tibetan people. As will be further described in Chapter Two, NGOs also provided entertainment through such narratives of hardship, including weekly lectures (accompanied by free dinner) with former political prisoners. Although my interview transcripts form the bulk of ethnographic data for this project, I took extensive field notes on these and many more interactions. The thesis thus synthesizes my interview data with ethnographic encounters during everyday life in Dharamsala, as well as with human rights literature towards which my informants pointed me. The thesis employs specific women's narratives as focal points, and brings in other narrative fragments and descriptions of spontaneous ethnographic encounters to demonstrate patterns, inconsistencies, and complexities that were not illuminated by a single informant. I often spoke with my informants in multiple contexts, both formal and informal, but the main narratives that structure the thesis were elicited through scheduled interviews.

Chapter Outline
As described above, the thesis charts four common narrative plot lines, migration, political imprisonment, physical reproduction, and kinship formation, which shed light on the ways that Tibetans engage with and reproduce collective national identity in the diaspora. Five women's narratives of migration provide the framework for Chapter One. In describing personal experiences of migration, and, in the case of one woman born in exile, familial experiences of migration, Tibetans communicate the process of acquiring refugee status. Through statements about gender, women communicate a dual displacement, geographic and social, which arises from leaving their families and the physical Tibetan nation. At the same time, enacting migration serves as a rite of passage into the diasporic nation. Through this rite of passage, women connect themselves to the history of the diaspora, blurring historically contingent catalysts for migration into a single framing of the political conflict, which insists upon the moral imperative of freeing the Tibetan people from Chinese oppression.

Chapter Two recounts the narratives of three women who were imprisoned in Tibet following their participation in political protests. This chapter explores the key scenario of political resistance, demonstrating that suffering for Tibetan freedom—that is, for the political status of the Tibetan nation—affirms national identity. Experiences of torture, the primary form of suffering associated with imprisonment, represent collective suffering. Such narratives of torture seem strikingly normative, presenting what I consider to be a clear genre of stories about Tibet. I name this genre “the prison narrative,” charting its recurrence in life stories as well as in human rights literature. While Chapter One describes a shift in subjectivity resulting from migration, Chapter Two demonstrates the hegemony of a certain subjectivity—the Tibetan prisoner—among refugees in Dharamsala. I explore the factors which seem to produce this
hegemony, including international interest in political imprisonment and institutional support for victims of torture.

Chapter Three opens by exploring the connections between torture and reproductive regulation. Through these conceptual connections, women's reproductive capacities symbolize political strife. The chapter continues by juxtaposing narratives of women's memories of childbirth in Tibet with experiences of childbirth in exile, describing the ways that women interpret political and familial belonging through the metaphor of reproduction. In India, women seek biomedical care during pregnancy and birth, but in Tibet, most women give birth at home. This dynamic is shaped by forces of biomedical hegemony, kinship, and citizenship. Memories of coercive reproduction regulation in Tibet, enacted through biomedical intervention, shape conceptual links between life, death, and medicalized reproduction. In Tibet, a mistrust of Chinese doctors and hospitals seems to discourage women from accessing biomedical obstetric care. However, anxiety about Chinese biomedicine comes into tension with experiences of familial death due to birth complications at home. In India, this tension is somewhat eased, since women emphasize their “freedom” to access reproductive health care. And, given the absence of kin networks to aid women throughout labor, the vast majority choose to give birth in hospitals.

Chapter Four furthers this exploration of the metaphorical facets of physical reproduction by describing the ways that women reconcile the future of the Tibetan nation and their personal life goals. I put the narratives of two women born in Tibet into conversation with that of a woman born in Dharamsala. All women comment upon the shared ideal of a heteronormative life path resulting in physical reproduction of Tibetan children. In this way, they suggest that, due to the representations of a genocide enacted through reproductive regulation, women carry
the burden to reproduce the Tibetan collectivity. However, they also emphasize the importance of education before marriage, suggesting that institutional life in exile has reframed the normative life course. The woman born in Dharamsala seemed more willing to depart from this normative course, articulating other possibilities for the reproduction of the Tibetan people.

In the Conclusion, I summarize my findings and ask questions for possible future research based on the flare-up of political activism among Tibetans in India in recent months. I attend to the ways that the performance of refugee subjectivity seems to be undergoing a heightened social drama.
Chapter 1: Tracing the Path to India: Migration in Personal and Collective History

Introduction: The Social Drama of Migration

This chapter explores five women's narratives of migration, which demonstrate complex dynamics between shifting personal and social identities. The specific geographic and social locations through which Tibetans pass as they move between Tibet and Dharamasala make migration a ritual undertaking; the act of migration is a repetitive social practice, often performed multiple times by the same individual (if not between Tibet and South Asia, at least between Tibetan settlements within South Asia), that is fraught with symbolic meaning. The narratives in this chapter suggest that, as Tibetans migrate, they encounter changing physical and social landscapes which provoke a process of re-enculturation; novel encounters re-shape individuals' understanding of the world's order and their sense of place within this order, from kinship units, to exile societies, to the global community of nation-states. Due to a continuous movement of Tibetans out of Tibet, a sort of infrastructure has developed around the borderlands of Tibet and Nepal, where human traffickers are paid to work as guides, relaying people across the divide between China, in which Chinese minorities are oppressed, and South Asia, in which Tibetan refugees are free. In order to avoid arrest, Tibetans participate in this infrastructure, following predetermined pathways from greater Tibet, to Lhasa, to the border (most often, Dram, a small town located between Nepal and Tibet), to Kathmandu, to Dharamsala, by way of Delhi (see Fig. 1). Kathmandu, Dharamsala, and Delhi each host a Tibetan Refugee Reception Center, funded by the UNHCR and other international aid organizations,\(^5\) where refugees live for the first months following migration. In order to gain legal residency in India, all refugees must pass

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\(^5\) The reception center in Dharamsala was recently renovated. The new compound was inaugurated by the US Ambassador to India in February, 2011 because the renovations were funded by the US State Department, and the Tibet Fund, an American NGO.
through the reception center in Dharamsala, where they are issued a Registration Certificate (RC). Regardless of where in India Tibetans are living, they must update their RCs each year at the Office of Foreign Registration in Dharamsala.®

Once registered, refugees can proceed to their final destinations, which are determined according to age and occupation. Regardless of whether or not they migrated with their families, children ages six to thirteen are sent to Mussoorie to live and study at the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) or the Tibetan Homes Foundation (THF). Children ages fourteen to eighteen are sent to another residential branch of the Tibetan Children's Village, TCV Suja, located about 150 km southeast of Dharamsala. Refugees ages eighteen to thirty-four who wish to receive secular education may live and matriculate for up to five years at the Tibetan Transit School (TTS) in Dharamsala. Monks and nuns choose a monastery or nunnery to join, regardless of age. And, the elderly and other adults who are not self-sufficient may live at an old-age home near the Dalai Lama's temple in Dharamsala.

The motivation to migrate in the first place seems to arise from the knowledge about the exile community that is disseminated and constructed through kinship networks and the media. “Hearing about” exiled Tibetans from friends and relatives, and “seeing” Tibetans in India on the television, constructs migration as a reasonable path on which to embark. As Appadurai (2003[1990]) asserts, due to the circulation of people, media, technology, finances, and ideas, “the new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping disjunctive order” in which “imagined worlds, that is, the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread across the globe” are created, contested, and

® It was unclear as to whether or not Tibetans residing in Nepal were legally obligated to carry an RC. It seemed that only Tibetans who traveled between India and Nepal possessed updated certificates.
recreated (31). My informants' geographic movements shed light on a specific moment of this disjunctive circulation, which can be traced through their reflections on migration. Social rupture and the establishment of kinship ties in exile, along with changing political identities, as well as exposure to Dharamsala's “ethnoscapes” of foreign tourists, Indians, and Tibetans born and raised across the globe, lead to a radically re-imagined world in which my informants locate themselves by affirming their belonging to a unique Tibetan collectivity.

The disjunctive forces that produce the desire to migrate seem to result from a tense cultural climate where notions of modernity and tradition are linked to programs of political oppression. According to my informants, “the Chinese” attempt to legitimize intervention in Tibet through a discourse of development. Propaganda paints for younger generations an image of a “traditional” Tibet mired in “lamaism” and the “backwardness” of rural life, while older generations, who “remember” Tibet before Chinese political involvement, discern systematic attempts to mold Tibetan public sentiment towards assimilation. However, attempts at assimilation seem to have failed, since rural inhabitants lack opportunities for schooling, employment, and socioeconomic advancement; ultimately Chinese political propaganda remains disconnected from the realities of Tibetan life and does not inspire large-scale public support. Facing resistance to sinicization, the Chinese government employs blatant political oppression to enforce assimilation.7

Political oppression produces a dynamic in which the social rupture experienced upon migration becomes a means of asserting Tibetanness. Through social disarticulation, migrants

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7 Much scholarly attention has been placed on China's assimilationist policies towards minorities (Gladney 1994, Mullaney & Anderson 2010, Rossabi 2004). Many studies posit that, throughout history, different governing bodies in China have asserted control over vast territories in a scheme of concentric circles, where circles farther from the center represent peoples who are “wilder” and less assimilated (Wang Mingming 2010). In these outlying areas, assimilationist policies and population transfers are forcibly enacted to demonstrate the Chinese state's territorial integrity.
become articulated within the Tibetan collectivity, which exists openly only outside the physical territory of Tibet. The ritual of migration, and its associated dynamics of disarticulation and articulation, can be contextualized according to the stages of Turner's social drama. From my informants' accounts, Tibetans in Tibet seem to be immersed in a political climate where breach is inherent. Chinese development projects interfere with the traditional subsistence strategies of farming and nomadism, driving families to seek financial support and educational opportunities for their children beyond their natal communities. The domestic political economy thus places stress upon kinship relations even within Tibet, since individuals, especially youth and young adults, are displaced internally as they seek employment and education in urban centers. Crisis seems to arise when individuals become aware of opportunities in exile, and begin to question the social, economic, and political systems that mire Tibetan societies in constant opposition to the Chinese government. My informants point, in particular, to the lack of access to quality education and religious repression, which they describe as deliberate attempts by the Chinese government to “ruin” the Tibetan people.

From analysis of my informants' narratives, it thus seems that, upon entering the diaspora, Tibetan subjectivity shifts. Whereas individuals were once “Chinese minorities,” they become “Tibetan refugees,” in both self- and bureaucratic identification. Once emplaced in the diaspora with a new-found refugee identity, they are reintegrated into a Tibetan collectivity. ³ And yet, my informants also recognize the schism between their current refugee status and their previous identity in Tibet. This schism seems to give rise to ubiquitous cultural anxieties about the future of Tibet and Tibetans. Tibetans describe the collectivity as a population and culture under attack.

³ Nowak (1984) provides an ethnographic examination of the ways that the exile government's education system contributes to such Tibetan migrant youth's changing identities.
A discourse of “genocide,” both literal and “cultural,” enters Tibetan vocabulary, as individuals revise their understandings of personal and political history; they look back on their lives in Tibet, and contextualize their experiences within a discourse of collective suffering. Through migration, my informants seem to become conscious of a pan-Tibetan ethnic identity that has been systematically oppressed and forcibly dissociated from the physical territory of greater Tibet.

The following women's narratives demonstrate that certain events, individuals, and experiences figure as common symbols that arise in stories of the ritual of Tibetan migration. These common symbols point to “a system...of shared or consensual meaning” (Turner 1980: 156) through which Tibetans seem to understand their present circumstances, as well as their personal and collective pasts. A hermeneutic reading of these narratives warrants the adoption of Turner's concept of shared meaning, because specific “key symbols” seem to arise consistently and function similarly across diverse life stories. In this way, I join Ortner's treatise (1973) to Turner's social drama in charting the semiotics of common symbols that women's narratives of migration reveal.

**Personal History, Unified Flight: Stories of Migration**

*Dolma Dechen*

Dolma Dechen and I met through a mutual friend, when she had come to McLeod Ganj on her day off from her studies at Education Support Trust, a nearby residential school providing two years of intensive English language instruction to twenty four graduates of the Tibetan Transit School and TCV Suja. The three of us were eating lunch in a restaurant, and Dolma Dechen offered to speak with me when I explained that I was seeking to “learn about Tibet” by
conducting interviews with Tibetan women. As we finished our food, the monsoon clouds began
to gather, and we rushed to my room to avoid the impending downpour. As soon as we arrived,
we sat down and Dolma Dechen began to “share her story” with me. We sat in my room for
more than five hours, and Dolma Dechen talked almost continuously. Her narrative nonetheless
remained highly focused, primarily describing the events surrounding her migration and her first
years in India. She wove these events into a plot of re-birth through the acquisition of
knowledge.

Now twenty-six years old, Dolma Dechen migrated to India at age nineteen, from a
village in Utzang. Soon after we begin talking, Dolma Dechen says, “In Tibet, I didn't get the
chance to go to school. I was like a blind person. I couldn't read and write, even in Tibetan.”
This figuration of illiteracy as “blindness” correlates with a cultural logic that connects migration
with opportunity through education; it exemplifies a narrative pattern in which the lack of
educational opportunities in Tibet impels migration. Representatives of institutions also
demonstrate this narrative pattern. Mingyur, the director of the Tibetan Reception Center in
Dharamsala, explained that new arrivals migrate in response to collective concerns. She stressed
that “there are two reasons for coming to India: the first is to see the Dalai Lama and the second
is to get proper modern and traditional education.” As a spokesperson for the institution that
hosts the most recent arrivals from Tibet, Mingyur presents an authoritative perspective on
migration that plays a role in producing normative knowledge about the collective Tibetan
experience. She suggests that Tibetans choose to migrate based on specific, collective logics that
align the prospect of education and “seeing” the Dalai Lama with the opportunity for a more
fulfilling life.
Dolma Dechen's narrative reflects Mingyur's representation of two common motivations for migration. However, as she speaks, Dolma Dechen expresses her choice to migrate in a more nuanced manner, revealing gendered family relationships as a key force in her journey. Dolma Dechen grew up in a polygamous household, in which her mother and aunt “shared” a husband. Her mother gave birth to four sons in addition to Dolma Dechen, one of whom passed away in infancy. Her aunt gave birth to four sons and one daughter, and three of her sons survived past infancy. Dolma Dechen's father died when she was twelve years old, after which her mother and aunt raised their children together. Dolma Dechen consistently emphasizes the gendered social dynamics of her family when discussing the events leading up to her departure to India. She says that, after telling her family she wanted to leave Tibet,

At first, my mother didn't agree because I am the only daughter and when I separated [before], she was sad...In Lhasa, I was a babysitter for two months after my father died...I was really homesick, I always cried at night, I couldn't sleep. I didn't want to stay there...there were four people in the family: the mother and father and one daughter who got married and had a baby. The daughter was really jealous. Her husband taught me how to watch tv, wear clothes, and do housework, so she was jealous and I didn't know why...When we would get together and have dinner and breakfast, she said to her husband, “You are so bad, why are you spending time with her?” So, then, I really didn't want to stay there. When someone dies, we do prayers after one month, one year...So, after one year, we did a big prayer for my father, and I lied to the family and told them that my mother told me to come home because I am the only daughter and the whole family needs to pray together.

Dolma Dechen asserts a unique connection with her mother, because she is the only daughter in the family. And, Dolma Dechen says that her employers viewed her presence as an incursion into the relationship between the child's mother and father because of the mother's “jealousy.” Her gender posed a threat to the family's integrity. Therefore, Dolma Dechen's time in Lhasa

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9 From my informants' descriptions, it seems that families feel it is important to have both daughters and sons. According to my informants, male children who are the only sons also hold a privileged place within families.
leaves her disarticulated; she is physically separated from her mother, and barred from acceptance into the family with whom she is living. Dolma Dechen's gender heightens this disarticulation; she and her mother share an unusually strong bond because she is the only daughter. But, her position as the only daughter also allows for her reintegration, because it provides an understandable justification for leaving Lhasa.

Dolma Dechen continues to describe the closeness she feels to her mother. Dolma Dechen expresses the social rupture she experienced upon moving to Lhasa through statements about her mother's emotions. She says,

When I got home, my mother was very happy. She said that she always dreamt about me. And, some dreams are true, you know. She said that she dreamt that the woman took a knife and tried to beat me. She said she felt so much regret because I was the only girl and I went there and had a difficult situation.

In this excerpt, Dolma Dechen socially situates herself through an idiom of female relationships. Dolma Dechen's narrative thus suggests that Tibetan refugee women interpret social connection and disconnection through the lens of gender, and that gender influences affective experiences of kinship in Tibetan society.

Also, it seems apparent that gender shapes Tibetan understandings of the population movements which perpetuate the diaspora. For example, Dolma Dechen's experiences in Lhasa serve as a precursor to her migration to India. She says,

So, at first when I told my mom I wanted to come to India, she felt very sad because she was lonely when I went to Lhasa. When I was at home, I was always with her. But, she looked at my life [through astrology from an oracle] and said if your future is good, you should go. And, my future was good so she didn't stop me.

Dolma Dechen thus presents two parallel stories of migration—to Lhasa and to India. She articulates both through her relationship with her mother, stressing her position as the only
daughter in the family. Despite their absence in the normative migration narrative, affective kinship ties seem to drive patterns of movement. Dolma Dechen's decision to migrate was not a simple response to a lack of educational opportunities, although she frames it in these terms at the outset of her narrative. Rather, she seems to migrate due to a liminal state provoked by social rupture; her father dies, prompting her to move to Lhasa where she is separated from her mother and experiences social conflict. And, she makes sense of this liminal state through the gendered relationships of her family, since her mother's emotions, dreams, and insights from the oracle drive her movements between her village, Lhasa, and India.

That Dolma Dechen's mother seeks assistance from the supernatural forces of dreams and oracles further demonstrates the strength of gendered kinship ties. The employment of the supernatural as a means of gaining clarity about specific personal and interpersonal struggles forms part of a religious practice that shows congruence between Buddhist philosophies and Tibetan social experiences. Tenzin Yangzom, a young nun living at the reception center whose narrative we will examine next, told me that seeking the advice of an oracle is “a custom, followed by Tibetans from all over Tibet. It is part of a Buddhist way of thinking that when you are at your wit's end you consult the oracle.” Among my informants, the practice seemed to occur only in the context of the nuclear family, most often with parents interpreting their own dreams or initiating contact with a Buddhist oracle. Families seem to employ the supernatural as a tool to assess and ensure the safety of their kin. And, my informants link the supernatural to Buddhist philosophy and institutions, since the oracles are monks and nuns, for the most part. Tibetan engagement with dreams and oracles points to the ways that Buddhism influences social life. Since relationships among female family members are particularly strong, gender seems to
underly interpretations of liminality, including those that arise through Buddhist practices.

Dolma Dechen speaks to a narrative pattern in which kinship impels participation in the social drama of migration. At the same time, gender seems to provide a lens through which women understand the social disarticulation intrinsic to exile. When reiterating the normative narrative of migration, Dolma Dechen at first obliterates kinship by employing opaque descriptions of “the Dalai Lama” and “education.” Turner (1980) writes that, in analyzing the social drama, “certain entrenched features of a given society's social structure influence both the course of conduct in observable social events and the scenarios of its genres of cultural performance” (142). Close readings of individual narratives, such as Dolma Dechen's, suggest that gender and kinship represent entrenched features, since they usher individuals into a liminal state. Individuals then address this liminality by performing the ritual of migration. And, in another genre of cultural performance, women narrate their experiences of migration through a normative framework that privileges education and the Dalai Lama—distinct features of the nation-state in exile—over the entrenched features of kinship and gender.

Dolma Dechen remains in a liminal state until she obtains official refugee status. She explains,

I stayed in Nepal for five months. There were lots of people, and it was very difficult—1800 people, I think. And people just slept outside without a room. Then, the Nepali king and queen died. They said that the family had been killed together. Then, the Tibetan officers announced, “Maybe we can't go to Dharamsala, we might have to go back to Tibet.” Then, that would be really bad, to have to go back after we had come all this way. I was just waiting for what the officer would say, and finally he said we could go. We needed a Registration Certificate, so the Tibetan government gave us a white book so we could get into India.

Political forces profoundly influence Dolma Dechen's journey. Her travel to India is suspended
indefinitely, which provokes further uncertainty. This uncertainty figures as a sort of rite of passage that ends when Dolma Dechen acquires refugee status in India. The reception center's (lack of) facilities present a literal homelessness that highlighted the refugee's displacement. Once the political situation in Nepal stabilized, bureaucratic identification of the refugees could continue, and Dolma Dechen could proceed to her destination in India.

Education further solidifies Dolma Dechen's inclusion within Tibetan diaspora. Dolma Dechen explains,

> Then, I went to the Tibetan Transit School, because I was old [over age eighteen]. Like grandmother, grandfather, we went to TTS. I didn't know how to write my name, even in Tibetan. I didn't know Hindi, English, or Tibetan [writing], so I used to cry a lot...They said tomorrow morning after breakfast we will give you your uniform, and you have to sign your name when you get it. I forgot how to write my name. When I was in line, there was a big rock, and I took a small rock and just practiced writing my name. But, I was very nervous and shy, and when I got to the front of the line, I totally forgot. The headmaster looked at me and laughed and said 'don't be shy,' but I couldn't even speak, and my stomach was like a butterfly.

That Dolma Dechen marks her arrival in India by recounting how she learned to write her name underlines her transformed subjectivity. The exile government identifies Dolma Dechen as a refugee-citizen, and she learns to identify herself by signing her name. Also, Dolma Dechen experiences anxiety since she “forgot” how to write her name. This process of learning and forgetting figures as a sort of rebirth, since Dolma Dechen is re-identified and newly emplaced within the social world of Dharamsala. Exposure to linguistic and ethnic diversity also influences Dolma Dechen's world view. She ends her narrative by explaining, “I didn't know that there were people who didn't speak Tibetan, who had different faces, until I was in Nepal. I thought that people spoke Tibetan in India, that all people were the same everywhere.” After leaving Tibet, Dolma Dechen sees the Tibetan people as a unique collectivity. Combined with
the acquisition of a refugee certificate, as described above, Dolma Dechen's realization of Tibetanness marks her entry into the self-aware diaspora.

The production of a self-aware diaspora involves the creation of diasporic subjects. Axel (2004) offers a general discussion of “diaspora” motivated by an analysis of Sikh nationalist movements, which are mobilized globally, primarily through the internet. Axel speaks of “context” as a process of subject formation that “facilitates productions of both difference and identity” by shaping understandings of temporality (past, present, and future) and of space (creating a sense of displacement) (30). In Dolma Dechen's narrative, she experiences a shift in “context” through interpersonal encounters with ethnic and linguistic difference, as well as through official avenues of political identification. Dolma Dechen's narrative suggests that the shifting contexts in which Tibetan migrants find themselves speak to processes that are social and bureaucratic, individual and collective, local and global.

Therefore, Dolma Dechen's journey demonstrates her shifting subjectivity. The notion of common Tibetan motivations for migration emerges in her story, but is complicated by her specific history of gendered family relationships. Her family's circumstances following her father's death lead her to experience social displacement in migrating to Lhasa for work. This displacement provides a precursor to her journey to India, which once again ruptures her relationship with her mother. However, Dolma Dechen's experiences of liminality are resolved once she obtains diasporic citizenship, both literal and imagined. Through the acquisition of a registration certificate, Dolma Dechen's refugee status is both symbolized and solidified. And, it is only through encountering difference in the exile community that she understands Tibetans as a unique linguistic and ethnic group. Ironically, Dolma Dechen affirms her Tibetan-ness through
articulations of social rupture. As Cecilia Rothenberg (1999) found, in migrant Palestinian communities, “the weakening of family relations through the effects of distance can be so great that many immigrant Palestinians may shift from practicing those relations to imagining them” (38). Tibetan women's narratives suggest a similar conceptual process. In addition to continually (re)imagining kinship relations with those left behind in Tibet, women feel affective ties to members of a Tibetan imagined community upon enculturation in exile. As will be further demonstrated throughout the thesis, it is imagined ties of kinship, strengthened in diaspora, that characterize the Tibetan nation.

Kalsang Tsomo

Kalsang Tsomo was the first woman I interviewed at the Tibetan Reception Center. After my translator, Jangchup, and I met with Mingyur (the center's director), we walked outside into the hot sun, planning to go home and come back another day. But, we passed Kalsang Tsomo sitting on a bench nearby, so I asked her if we could speak, and she agreed.

Kalsang Tsomo had reached India only one month ago, leaving her husband and two teenage daughters behind at her home near Lhasa. Kalsang Tsomo frames her narrative as a religious pilgrimage. Kalsang Tsomo explains,

*My main aim is to see His Holiness, and to search for one of my relatives who came to India in 1959. He is my mother's sister's son. I heard that he is in South India, but I haven't been able to find out anything else yet...It's true that there is no freedom of religion in Tibet. There are no problems for food or grain, everything is available. The Chinese put pressure on other people, but not on me because I didn't protest...I knew a bit about the exile government, because I saw people in exile on tv. I liked India very much because His Holiness has stayed here for so long, and many Tibetans are allowed to stay. So, for this, I came...I took a bus to Dram with some businessmen who looked after me. Then, I walked for five days from Dram to Nepal.*

Like Dolma Dechen, Kalsang Tsomo opens her narrative by reiterating one of the “two reasons”
that Tibetans migrate to India. Kalsang Tsomo, however, also complicates the normative
migration narrative, affirming that kinship, within families and the greater Tibetan community,
drives movement between India and Tibet. Kalsang Tsomo mentions that her nephew may be in
India at the outset of her story, but does not speak of him again. However, she repeatedly
references the Dalai Lama, and states she wished to come to India because the country hosts the
Dalai Lama and the exile community.

In fact, the Dalai Lama and the exile community form part of an extended kin network in
which my informants seem to locate themselves. In her ethnography of Tibetan students in
Dharamsala, Margaret Nowak (1984) explains that “lineage” connotes kinship bonds of marriage
and consanguinity as well as affinity to lamas (93). For example, Tibetan traditions of naming
demonstrate kinship ties between religious leaders and their followers. Tibetans have two given
names, which are, for the most part, androgynous.10 Most often, Tibetan families request a name
for their child, either shortly before birth or at a ceremony shortly after birth, from a lama. The
lama will then provide the child with two names, the first of which is his own. The lama writes
the names on a piece of sacred thread which Tibetans keep with them, frequently for their
lifetime, as protection (I was told that the threads make one “bullet proof”). When parents cannot
contact a lama, they choose the child's two names themselves, often based on the names' spiritual
meanings as opposed to namesakes. The practice of naming thus connects children to religious
lineages (when named by a lama) and/or spiritual ideals, as opposed to the immediate kinship
networks into which they are born. In Dharamsala, these naming practices take place
bureaucratically. In order to receive a name from the Dalai Lama, parents must fill out a name

10 The vast majority of names are androgynous, but some suggest femininity when used as a second name. Those
names that are exclusively female refer to goddesses, such as Dolma (sgrol ma ), a female Bodhisattva (tārā in
Sanskrit).
request form and return it to an office at the Dalai Lama's temple. Once the paper work has been processed, the office sends to the parents the child's name along with the sacred thread. In this system, babies acquire membership in the Buddhist exile community through bureaucratic identification; religious institutions officially determine personhood. Naming practices therefore point to the ways that kinship networks extend beyond the family to include the Buddhist religious community. And, the Dalai Lama's presence and the bureaucratic proceedings of his temple strengthen these networks in the exile community.

Religious motivation for migration can be understood in this context of overlapping networks of kinship and religion. For example, as Kalsang Tsomo continues to speak, she ascribes to the Dalai Lama a sense of kinship, underwritten by notions of physical and spiritual lineage, through discussions of reincarnation. She says, “Even though I am uneducated, I feel that having reincarnation is good because even if the highest lama dies, he can come back, so the Buddhist religion cannot die...I feel lucky being Buddhist because there is reincarnation.” Kalsang Tsomo connects the philosophy of reincarnation to the continuation of the Buddhist religion, and, by extension, of the Tibetan people. That she feels “lucky being Buddhist” points to a personal identification with this process of renewal; because lineages of Buddhist leaders are sustained through reincarnation, the Tibetan people can survive. This affinity to Buddhist leaders, including the Dalai Lama, suggests that Tibetan conceptions of lineage shape subjectivity, both in self- and official identification with a Buddhist collectivity.

Tibetan vocabulary further demonstrates the strength of Buddhist identity. The Tibetan word for a Buddhist is nang pa, literally, an “insider.” A few days after I met Kalsang Tsomo for the first time, I returned to the reception center, along with Jangchup to assist with translation. I
was speaking with a young woman from Amdo, and Kalsang Tsomo came by to listen. When I asked the woman if she is *nang pa*, she did not understand the word. Jangchup could not think of another word to translate “Buddhist,” but Kalsang Tsomo assured me, “*she is nang pa. All Tibetans are nang pa. She didn't understand because Amdo has a different language.*” With this statement Kalsang Tsomo, links Buddhist identity to an intrinsic Tibetanness.

It seems that congruence between individual and collective Tibetan subjectivity in turn propels migration, since explicit constructions of Tibetanness emanate from the exile community. For example, Kalsang Tsomo's narrative demonstrates that, in the Tibetan diaspora, mediascapes catalyze ethnoscapes, and ethnoscapes proliferate and are sustained along various kinship ties. As cited above, Kalsang Tsomo explains that she had heard that the Dalai Lama was in India and had seen exiled Tibetans on tv. Another woman who had migrated alone told me that, before coming to India, she didn't know much about the Dalai Lama, but that she remembers her father listening to Radio Free Asia for news about him. In a political climate in which discussing the Dalai Lama can lead to harassment and even imprisonment, it is through access to the media that many Tibetans come to know of him. Media contribute to understandings of kinship, since they serve to sustain affiliation with the Dalai Lama across generations and to disseminate awareness of a Tibetan community beyond China. These kinship networks, which include familial and religious lineages and affiliation with an imagined Tibetan collectivity, seem to inspire migration.

The Dalai Lama seems to provide a powerful motivation for migration because he figures as a summarizing symbol. Juxtaposed with statements from other women, the importance Kalsang Tsomo places on the Dalai Lama comes into focus. Tsewang, a young woman staying at the reception center, told me,
I was fulfilled to see His Holiness. I don't care about what happens after now. It was my first time seeing His Holiness, and my eyes filled with tears because I believe in him. In Tibet, we are not allowed to keep his photo or his blessings in our houses.

Tsewang uses her intense, emotional response upon seeing the Dalai Lama to express that meeting him was worth the suffering incurred through migration. Additionally, like Kalsang Tsomo, Tsewang speaks of religious repression in China, suggesting that restrictions on religious practices strengthen the desire to migrate for the sake of Buddhism, since Tibetans cannot openly worship the Dalai Lama or receive the associated spiritual merits in Tibet.

The Dalai Lama is the crux of political dynamics in Tibet. His worship is forbidden in Tibet because he fled Chinese rule and established an exile society. In a sense, therefore, he serves to summarize the Tibetan people in Chinese political discourse, since he exemplifies the political resistance associated with the diaspora. The political conflict surrounding the Dalai Lama that has pushed Tibetans to journey to India for the sake of worship can be understood, in part, as a struggle between competing symbolic systems in which the Dalai Lama summarizes Tibetanness. For Tibetan Buddhist practitioners, the Dalai Lama is an emotionally powerful, sacred symbol who exemplifies the Tibetan collectivity. Given that the Chinese government enacts political intervention in Tibet primarily through sinicization programs, the Dalai Lama's role as a summarizing symbol among Tibetans poses a political threat. Chinese government policies have addressed this political threat by undermining the Dalai Lama's symbolic value by repressing worship practices. Religious repression has, however, stimulated further migration, since media and kinship networks transmit “knowledge” of the Dalai Lama.

As a catalyst for migration, the Dalai Lama thus influences both Tibetan patterns of

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11 For further information on China's minority policies, in particular, on the importance of assimilation into the Chinese body politic, see Gladney (1994) Mullaney and Anderson (2010), and Rossabi (2004).
thought and of action. Ortner writes that summarizing symbols “while primarily functioning to compound rather than sort out experience, are seen as both formulating basic orientations and implying...certain modes of action” (ibid: 1342). The basic orientation formulated by the Dalai Lama (as symbol) involves Buddhist worship and the espousal of Buddhist philosophy in interpreting the social world. The ways that Tibetans seem to interpret their social worlds through Buddhist philosophy include making sense of collective survival (that is, reproduction and cultural renewal) through forces such as reincarnation. And, this line of interpretation implies that becoming part of the Tibetan collectivity is both spiritually desirable, and can be achieved by accessing religious freedom in India. Migration therefore figures as a mode of action adapted to the patterns of thought built around the Dalai Lama as a summarizing symbol.

Symbols are, however, polysemic and become compressed in the dominant migration narrative—that is, the multiple meanings that individuals actively invoke or subtly indicate become overruled by certain icons that seem to serve a clear-cut, often singular, purpose in narratives. In the dominant migration narrative, the Dalai Lama serves solely as a motivating factor for migration. However, especially in the context of strict control of the Dalai Lama's image in Tibet, the Dalai Lama can carry vastly different connotations for the same individuals, as they move between social worlds in Tibet and in exile. In addition to expressing reverence for the Dalai Lama, Kalsang Tsomo emphasizes her immediate kinship relations with her daughters. She reveals that conceptual connections between suffering and gender underlie her religious convictions. Kalsang Tsomo says,

*I want to stay in India for two more years. I need the blessing of His Holiness and I want to get the Kalachakra initiation*\(^\text{12}\) at Bodhgaya...I hoped to take my

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\(^{12}\) Kalsang Tsomo referred to this religious practice by its Tibetan name (*dus kyi 'khor lo*), but Jangchup translated it in the Sanskrit. I frequently encountered the practice of translating Tibetan religious terms into a Sanskrit
daughters here to study in the Tibetan Children's Village under His Holiness, but it is very difficult because if they are caught, the Chinese army will beat them very badly. They cannot take the same suffering as me.

Kalsang Tsomo clarifies the ways that Tibetan women discuss the experience of social displacement through idioms of gender and kinship. Dolma Dechen expressed social suffering, due to ruptured kinship ties, through her relationship with her mother. Kalsang Tsomo likewise makes sense of her social dislocation by discussing her daughters. Kalsang Tsomo communicates the sacrificial nature of her journey—that is, she bolsters her religious motivations for migration—through her description of ruptured kinship ties.

The suffering that characterizes Tibetan migration seems to include both the pain experienced during the journey as well as social dislocation. Given that migration seems to present a mode of action implied by Tibetan thought, suffering marks collective Tibetan experience. Tibetans told me that the experience of suffering is spiritually productive. To suffer increases one's merits, by serving as a vehicle through which one lives out the karma of previous transgressions (of this life or of past lives). In describing the inadequacy of the human rights framework in addressing Tibetan suffering, Adams (1998) explains,

Suffering is often depicted as a uniform experience among Tibetans...because it is said that all Tibetans are, by cultural identity, religious...It is thus not surprising that suffering is often depicted by Tibetans in Buddhist terms, because Buddhism has formed a foundation for Tibetan culture despite wide variation in lay religious knowledge and practice [81].

Contextualizing Kalsang Tsomo's sacrificial narrative within this scholarship on Buddhist thought, it seems that suffering encourages migration as a spiritual path. However, Kalsang Tsomo's discussion of her daughter's (potential) suffering also reveals subtleties within Buddhist understandings of gender which are obliterated in the normative narrative of religious

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equivalent when Tibetans communicated with English speakers.
pilgrimage. Kalsang Tsomo's protection of her daughters can be contextualized within Tibetan understandings of gender difference. Tibetans commonly explained what they considered to be gendered migration patterns by invoking the idea that women can “take” less suffering than men. Mingyur told me,

More men than women come to India because the journey is very difficult. They have to hide in the day time in the forest, and they often come during the winter because the Chinese police hesitate to look everywhere then.

Likewise, a male student at the Tibetan Transit School explained, “We say, in our culture, that if a boy and a girl are faced with the same problem, the girl will be afraid but the boy will think of how to solve the problem. Maybe that is why more men come [to India].” These statements, suggesting that women are physically and mentally weaker than men, mirror broader notions of gender in Tibetan Buddhism. In spiritual hierarchies of reincarnation, women embody a lower incarnation than men. This hierarchy seems to play out in descriptions of the self, as well as in everyday interpersonal interactions. A woman living near Norbulinka, for example, told me that she “will be a man” in her next life, because “women's minds and bodies are different.”

Similarly, when women openly express emotion, men frequently explain that they behave this way because they “have small hearts” (sems chung chung). Since Buddhist thought implies migration as a logical response to religious repression in Tibet, it follows that the enactment of

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13 Similar sentiments are described in Charlene Makley's (2005) study on attitudes towards nuns in Amdo. She writes, “the body of a particular rebirth critically influences the capacities of the mind to learn during that lifetime, and therefore to master the body and materiality in general through ritual power...the female body was still widely seen to be a lower rebirth, associated with more suffering, and the result of an inadequate accumulation of merit from past lifetimes” (p. 269).

14 The word chung chung can mean both small and weak. Additionally, it is worth noting that Robert Desjarlais (1992) found the same conceptual connections between gender, emotion, and sems among the ethnically Tibetan Yolmo people in Nepal. He explains, “the 'bigger' the sems, the stronger, more courageous, and less overtly emotional a person is. A strong sems is one that can contain or 'hold' emotions within. Consequently, as children, women, and the elderly are believed to have smaller [sems] than the average adult male, they are said to be more emotional and frighten more easily” (56). Also, sems shares the metaphorical but not literal meaning of the English “heart,” as the seat of emotions. But, it can also refer to states of mind (such as whether or not an individual is mentally present) and is translated by some, including Desjarlais, as “heartmind.”
migration is also patterned according to Buddhist philosophies which posit essentialized gender difference. Kalsang Tsomo's narrative demonstrates that the Dalai Lama's role in the dominant migration narrative summarizes his place within Tibetan social cosmology, but eclipses nuances of kinship and gender that shape lay Buddhism into a driving force for migration.

_Tenzin Yangzom_

A few days after meeting Kalsang Tsomo, I return to the reception center with my translator, Tenzin Tsering. With the permission of the director, we enter the women's dormitory, a storied concrete block building. At first, we meet no one. Then, we see a girl of about ten years old playing in the hall, with purple dots on her face, which I thought she had colored in ink. We ask if any women are in the building, and she tells us a nun is resting in a room down the hall. She skips ahead of us, leading the way. In the dormitory room, we find a sole young woman wearing a nun's robes who agrees to speak with us. Her face is covered with the same purple dots as the girl. She introduces herself as Tenzin Yangzom, explaining that she arrived at the reception center only one month ago. She continues to speak, telling us that she is twenty-two years old and, before leaving Tibet, she had lived only in rural Utzang.

Like Kalsang Tsomo, Tenzin Yangzom reiterates that individuals identify with a unique Tibetan collectivity through experiences of suffering. She locates these experiences within the realms of gender and religion. Tenzin Yangzom says,

_In my life, there was not much of a problem of what to eat. I lived on a farm, so there was always enough. But, I didn't have freedom of religion. I was a nun but I couldn't live in a nunnery because the Chinese didn't give me the necessary documents. I went to the nunnery each day to study and came back at night...There used to be more nuns, but the government isn't giving documents anymore. Earlier, there was no need for documents, but then the Chinese made a law that you needed documents to live in a nunnery. Then, they stopped giving out the documents. You had to go to Shigatze [the administrative center_
of the district} and then Lhasa to get the paperwork, and there was so much bureaucracy. You had to know someone who worked in one of the offices to get the paperwork.

This narrative fragment can be understood in the context of competing discourses on Chinese intervention in Tibet. The first two sentences refute Chinese moral claims to state presence in Tibet, which assert that the government is liberating the Tibetan people from poverty and underdevelopment. Many narratives mirrored these subtle refutations, describing subsistence in their opening statements. Kalsang Tsomo, for example, had said, “There are no problems for food or grain, everything is available.” Although not speaking of subsistence, Mingyur also described Tibet in a manner meant to discredit the Chinese government's portrayal of their interventionist activities. She told me, “there were armed forces in Tibet who were carrying a banner on a truck that said, ‘We came to respect the Tibetan people. The army said that, right there with their guns.” These statements present a sort of counter-narrative to Chinese development discourse, at the same time, articulating Tibetan nationalist claims to realign the Tibetan people with the Tibetan homeland.

Tenzin Yangzom explains that practicing Buddhism has alleviated suffering and disability, serving as a form of healing. She continues,

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I \text{ became a nun three years ago. I had wanted to be a nun since I was very young. When I was younger, I was blind, and I went to a woman oracle with my family. This woman said that I had to pray and that there were many struggles ahead, but that I should study and pray to overcome them. After this, I started praying. Even before that, I had really liked prayers and Buddhism, so when the oracle said this, I was happy...Listening to the advice that I should study Buddhism has been very helpful, even though I have only been learning mantras. I am physically and mentally intact, and my eyesight got much better, and all my misfortunes have been dealt with.}\]

As in Dolma Dechen's narrative, blindness (in this case literal) marks a state of deficiency, used
to describe everyday tensions in Tibet that arise from the struggles of rural life. Tenzin Yangzom connects eyesight to physical and mental integrity achieved through religious practice. She has managed her personal struggles and suffering (“misfortunes”) through this holistic integrity. For Dolma Dechen, accessing secular education provided a sense of personal fulfillment that alleviated her figurative blindness. For Tenzin Yangzom, studying Buddhism is a source of physical healing that has enhanced her ability to tolerate suffering. In this manner, women's stories echo the normative migration narrative's central concern with, in Mingyur's words, “modern and traditional education.”

Tenzin Yangzom continues to speak of religious repression. She explains,

*I went to the nunnery each day to study and came back at night...If you were wearing robes, the Chinese would ask you what monastery you live in and where your documents are, so I had to change my clothes when I went out from the monastery...It took me years and years, I kept telling my parents I had to go somewhere where I could practice the Dharma. I told them I am like an idiot if I just stayed there, wearing the robes.*

Bureaucratic restrictions interfered with Tenzin Yangzom's daily life, since her identity as a nun was incompatible with her official identification. In Tibet, it is illegal to “be” a nun without bureaucratic identification provided by the Chinese government. These identification laws dissociated Tenzin Yangzom from her nunhood, since she had to live with her family and change in and out of her nun's robes rather than living in the monastery as a nun. Axel (2004) has studied the ways that the “visible identity” of the amritdhari (a Sikh who has been initiated into the Khalsa, a Sikh religious order), marked by religiously prescribed dress and appearance, “constitute[s] an individual as a representative—and the body as a representation—of a Sikh collectivity” (33). The androgynous red robes and shaved heads of Tibetan (dge lugs pa) monks and nuns constitute a similar visible identity, which aligns individuals with the collectivity.
through their embodied representation of Tibetanness. Chinese bureaucratic restraints therefore directly undermine Tenzin Yangzom's identity, both personal and collective. She seems to view migrating to India as the only means of legitimizing her religious identity.

However, Tenzin Yangzom's family complicates her decision to migrate. As explained above, Tenzin Yangzom spent many years discussing migration with her family. She says,

> My family had to tell the Chinese that I went to Lhasa, and that they didn't know exactly where I was. It wasn't only that they were worried that I am a woman. They sent my brother with me, and I had a document saying that I could travel to the border, but I didn't want to use the document because it would be registered that I had reached the Nepali border and had not come back. I spent an entire day in the car, and I traveled at night. My brother gave his thumbprints when we reached the check points, because you need a pass wherever you go, but I just stayed in the car. In Shang, I met up with the ten-year old girl who is staying at the reception center now. She came alone, without her family, like me. On the journey, the physical pain was nothing compared to the constant fear that I would fail, that I would be put in prison and my family, too, that they would suffer because of this act. We had to walk all day and we were very tired. But, this we could bear. The mental trauma was very difficult.

Like Kalsang Tsomo and Dolma Dechen, Tenzin Yangzom reveals the role of gender and suffering in family decisions surrounding migration. Tenzin Yangzom explains that her family is fearful because she is female. And yet, Tenzin Yangzom does not focus on gender to the same extent as Kalsang Tsomo and Dolma Dechen. Rather, she seems to take for granted additional risk posed to females migrants (“it wasn't only…”). Tenzin Yangzom portrays her fears for her family as her greatest source of suffering. Tenzin Yangzom therefore subsumes issues of gender under other forms of suffering, a pattern seen across Tibetan women's narratives.

Since women frequently hint at, but mostly gloss over, issues of gender that arise in their narratives, gender seems to form a sort of “hidden social infrastructure” (Turner 1980: 154) in the social drama of migration. As mentioned above, Buddhist philosophy posits essentialized
gender difference founded on notions of biological determinism. As Makley (2005) explains, “the basis for the lower status of the female body [is] the assumption that the female body, burdened by such physiological suffering as menstruation and childbirth, more tightly circumscribes the mind than a male body” (269). However, even biological sex is fluid in Tibetan Buddhist cosmology. Especially shortly after birth, an individual's sex may literally switch from male to female. Women from a variety of backgrounds, including college-educated women born in India, told me that it is not uncommon for a baby's sex to change, but that they “don't really know how this process takes place.”

Monastic culture, which dissociates individuals from their reproductive capacities, further complicates understandings of sex and gender. Both monks and nuns seem to renounce gender when entering monasteries, since, for example, there is no colloquial term that refers to women, including nuns, or men, including monks (ibid: 273). However, monks are nonetheless more highly respected than nuns, mirroring the gendered hierarchy of the secular social world. Cultural conceptions of sex and gender are therefore rife with contradictions that my informants do not seem to overtly describe (or recognize) in their narratives.

These contradictions, however, play out in stories of migration. Both Tibetan men and women with whom I spoke invoke Buddhist philosophies and practices of (seeming) gender egalitarianism when considering issues of violence. Despite my observations, a female nurse told me that domestic violence simply “doesn't happen” in Tibetan families because “Tibetans are Buddhists, so they are non-violent.” Individuals seem willing to provide examples of cross-cultural gendered violence, perpetrated by Indian or Chinese men against Tibetan women.

Craig (2009) notes that Tibetan medical texts document the possibility of sex change during fetal development (152).
Although women raise such examples in migration narratives, they do so covertly. For example, my female informants speak of rape as “getting pregnant on the way to India,” and say that it is unsafe to travel without men. Both Kalsang Tsomo and Tenzin Yangzom implicitly discuss gendered violence in this manner, suggesting that women risk more suffering than men through migration. The possibility of gendered suffering seems to constrain women's travels, leading to a gendered performance of the Tibetan social drama of migration.

Tenzin Yangzom has finished her narrative. As Tenzin Tsering and I get ready to leave, we pass back through the compound's first building, in which the director's office is located. In the entryway, I notice for the first time bulletin boards decorated with photographs of famished bodies, frostbitten toes, and faces pock-marked with purple dots. Captions explain in English the various ailments, which were contracted during the journey from Tibet to Dharamsala. The images of faces covered in the purple dots are labeled “chicken pox.” The bulletin boards attest to the physical suffering undergone during migration from Tibet to India. And, as suggested by their location in the entryway of the main building and their English captions, the bulletin boards serve as a display of somatic suffering intended for a foreign audience. Through such displays, bodily suffering offers a pictorial narrative of the Tibetan experience of migration. In her illness, Tenzin Yangzom embodies collective suffering that also arises in visual narrative. As will be further described in Chapter Two, accounts of bodily suffering form another facet of collective Tibetan experience, and provide a channel through which individuals represent the Tibetan imagined community to an international audience.

**Imagined Presents, Projected Pasts: The “Mythico-History” of Migration**

The stories of Dolma Dechen, Kalsang Tsomo, and Tenzin Yangzom have demonstrated the ways
that Tibetan women align themselves with a normative narrative of migration, in which education and the Dalai Lama figure as the two guiding forces of a united Tibetan ethnoscape. In these narratives, “the Chinese” have precipitated both the lack of educational opportunities and religious repression. As Tibetan women express their personal history, they portray specific forms of Chinese oppression as common, summarizing experiences of the Tibetan imagined community that impel migration. At the same time, the complexity of each narrative reveals patterns of discord with normative, authoritative statements about migration. Women's narratives reveal connections between kinship, religion, and gender that also seem to shape the cultural logics surrounding the decision to migrate.

Tibetan women in Dharamsala reflect upon their migration with reference to the collective suffering of the Tibetan people. As individuals become enculturated within a self-aware diaspora, they come to associate Tibetan political history with collective suffering. According to my informants, in Tibet, the concept of a Tibetan nation is generational; their parents and grandparents “know about Tibet,” but, before migrating, they, personally, did not. When reaching the exile community, however, individuals come into contact with historical knowledge that produces a national identity. And, my informants seem to conflate their personal national identities with those of older generations including those who stayed behind in Tibet. This dynamic, in which present historical knowledge about the Tibetan nation is projected into the past, infiltrates narrative expressions.

My informants employ key symbols to communicate this historical knowledge. For example, many mentioned the Tibetan flag, remarking that seeing the Tibetan flag at the reception center in Kathmandu was the first time they understood Tibet as a country. A young
man from Amdo explained to me, “When I got to Kathmandu, I saw the American flag and the Tibetan flag next to it, and I had to ask what country that flag belonged to. Then, I realized that Tibet is a country.” Many informants recounted an identical scenario, including the juxtaposition of the Tibetan flag and the American flag, and the fact that the American flag was immediately recognizable but the Tibetan flag was not. From the outset of their enculturation, migrants thus encounter the portrayal of Tibet and America as allies. This Tibetan-American alliance seems to profoundly shape Tibetans' experiences in a world order of nation-states.

Speakers likewise employ specific historical moments as key symbols. These moments almost always involve conflict with China, and serve to generate a sort of diasporic national history through which individuals seem to interpret present nationalist sentiment in Dharamsala. My informants consistently mention three Tibetan uprisings: the Lhasa uprising in 1959 (see p. 19), the international protests surrounding the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, and ongoing unrest at the Kirti Monastery in Amdo, beginning in March 2011 and continuing through the ethnographic present. Axel (2004) explains that, in the study of diasporas such key historical moments constitute a sort of “diasporic archive,” generated by “collecting 'facts' from the homeland to help explain the peculiar problems of a dispersed population” (29). As students of diaspora, “we come to understand diaspora as something objectively present in the world today with regard to something else in the past...we hope to find in the present a repository of an authoritative knowledge of the past” (ibid: 28-29). Axel argues that scholarship on diaspora delineates populations and homelands, and seeks to align the two through historical analyses. From my informants' statements, it seems that a similar process of knowledge production takes place within the Tibetan diaspora. Tibetans seem to employ history as a means of solidifying a
Tibetan imagined community. In her ethnographic study of life in a Burundian refugee camp, Malkki (1990) describes the “mythico-history” as a historical narrative that “went far beyond accurate recording. It represented not only a description of the past, nor even merely an evaluation of the past, but a subversive recasting and reinterpretation of it in fundamentally moral, categorical terms” (37). Tibetan accounts of the diaspora's formation seem to present a similar process of historical reinterpretation. My informants employ binary oppositions between the “Tibetan” and the “Chinese” to order political history (from specific moments in a diasporic archive) in a manner that morally legitimates Tibetan claims to realign the diasporic population with the homeland. By employing historical moments as key symbols, Tibetans in Dharamsala seem to construct a mythico-history.

I turn, now, to two women's performances of Tibetan diasporic subjectivity. These women employ the mythico-history to set the scene of exilic life. Malkki (1990) found that, in the Burundian mythico-history, “the personal and collective fused into one dynamic discourse that was recorded from different persons and in varying contexts. The impassioned, even relentless, preoccupation with this particular form of history presented itself as a social fact to be explained” (37). The Tibetan diaspora, with its locus in Dharamsala, manifests a similar discursive process in which a common historical narrative provides a framework through which Tibetan subjects perform personal history. This section examines the fact that, despite emphasis on dual motivations for migration that are temporally specific (the Dalai Lama's presence, and the educational infrastructure that has been built by the government in exile over the past four decades), Tibetan migrants tie their life histories to a single imagined ethnoscape beginning with the Dalai Lama's expulsion from Tibet.
Jangchup

Jangchup and I met by chance in a coffee shop where a mutual friend, Metok, works. We began to talk, and, after learning that she is studying English in college, I asked if she would help me with translation. After agreeing to help me interview women who do not speak English, she also offered to share with me her own life story. She began to speak immediately, as Metok sat nearby.

Jangchup is twenty-two years old, with two older sisters and another sibling who recently passed away. She was born near Khadtze, Kham, in the same village as Metok, and came to India when she was nine years old. Jangchup is one of the few women with whom I spoke who had migrated as a child. Her life story, therefore, carries important implications for an examination of personal and social memory in the narration of the mythico-history because she grew up, without her family, in the care of an educational institution run by the exile government. She explains,

I came to India with Metok by walking. My parents didn't come, and I haven't seen my parents since 1998 when I left. My parents sent me because in Tibet, we don't have the opportunity to study, especially Tibetan and English. Everything is in Chinese. Also, maybe my parents found it difficult for me to stay with them. We went from Kham to Lhasa in a bus, and then my father arranged our journey with a man who was the leader. We came with him, we took things to eat and some clothes. There were other people with us, and they gave me a lot of help. We had to walk in the mornings and at night and sleep during the day. I wanted to sleep, but the way was very snowy, so sometimes I just fell asleep on the snow and the leader would carry me...I thought India was a nice place, better than Tibet, but I found that it is not so nice. Because, I forget much about my parents...It is not so clean, and I don't have my parents' love. Everything is really strange here, so I think Tibet is much better for me.

Jangchup expresses a sense of displacement in her host country that hints at the moral underpinnings of her narration. She says that India did not meet her expectations (“it is not so
nice”), explaining that it is in Tibet that she would feel more in place (“Tibet is better for me”). Additionally, Jangchup communicates the moral importance of connecting the Tibetan people with the Tibetan homeland through a discussion of the social rupture she experienced upon leaving her family. Again, we see that kinship seems to provide a forum for making sense of diasporic experience. In this case, Janchup begins to articulate a mythico-history through the suffering inherent to the experience of migration. And, she expresses this suffering through the idiom of kinship.

Jangchup demonstrates a cultural concern with perpetuating a mythico-history beyond the Tibetan community. She explains that she is going to college in Chennai on a scholarship from the Tibetan government, and that it was difficult to move from the Dharamsala area, where she grew up at the Tibetan Children's Village, to South India. She says of her classmates in Chennai,

They don't know much English, and the first time they met us, they called us Chinese because they had never seen our faces. We talked about Tibet in class, how Tibet looks, differences between Tibet and India, and about how China tortured Tibet and how people suffered under the Chinese. I have never been to Tibet, but we used to get information from Tibet and we know how people are suffering at the Kirti Monastery. All this news we got. We heard much about how Tibetan people suffer.

This statement demonstrates a narrative pattern in which Tibetans express their personal identities by defining the Tibetan nation. Jangchup addresses a personal experience of social misunderstanding through a moral ordering of Tibetan history; when her classmates mistook her for Chinese, she clarified her identity with reference to the nation, differentiating Tibet from China and India. This differentiation serves to accentuate Jangchup's displacement. In recounting this personal sense of being out of place in the host country, Tibetans (like Jangchup) highlight the necessity of returning to Tibet if their suffering is to be alleviated.
Jangchup's statement also demonstrates that place and time are conflated in the moral ordering of Tibetan history. She says that she has never been to Tibet, although she was born in Kham and lived there for nine years. And, she uses the example of the Kirti monastery, a site of ongoing political unrest in Kham beginning in March 2011, to explain the suffering of the Tibetan people, present and past. Axel (2004) notes a similar dynamic in Sikh nationalist discourses, which defines “Sikh anteriority and a Sikh futurity, in terms of the priority of present violence” (44). Tibetan narratives, as exemplified by Jangchup's, follow a similar discursive pattern, projecting present examples of political oppression into both the past and future. This temporal omniscience frames suffering as a characteristic state of the Tibetan people resulting from a protracted conflict in the homeland. Jangchup's conflation of past and present also serves to render the Tibetan situation comprehensible to a broad public, both in India and abroad. International media have documented the protests at the Kirti Monastery, and the exile community in Dharamsala held multiple vigils during my stay. That Jangchup draws on an immediate example of Tibetan suffering (to which the ethnographer can relate) to communicate a continuous state of suffering demonstrates a recurring pattern of making sense of the present through collective political history; speakers fit present experiences into the mythico-history's moral ordering, in a manner that attempts to “give witness”\(^\text{16}\) to Tibetan suffering.

Additionally, that Jangchup explains Tibetan history through an idiom of torture clarifies the relationship between suffering and the Tibetan collective identity. In their narratives, Tibetan women employ “torture” both figuratively and literally, at times conforming to the concept's definition in international human rights discourse, at others, using it as a vehicle to communicate

\(^{16}\) Politically active Tibetans repeatedly employed this phrase when they explained to me their intentions in participating in demonstrations and producing media (newspapers, reports, documentaries, and blog entries) about Tibet.
the broad injustices that characterize Tibetan existence, in both Tibet and in the diaspora.

Jangchup's personal identification with the nation—that is, the ways that she aligns the self with the Tibetan mythico-history—becomes more clear, as she speaks of “Tibet,” “China,” and “how people suffered,” interchangeably. Jangchup demonstrates the ways that linguistic performances of collective suffering unite the nation, the people, and the individual.

However, Jangchup also complicates her own temporal extension of collective suffering. Reiterating the common history of the Tibetan exodus, I ask whether or not Tibetans migrate today for the same reasons as in 1959. Jangchup responds,

They continue to come and the reason is that they can't survive under the torture. For us, our parents sent us for the betterment of our future. But, many elders come because they don't want to die under China. And, these days, many people know about Tibet. All Tibetan people are scattered. Especially in India, they will know about Tibet...[But] Tamil girls don't know about Tibet. We tell them that we are not Chinese, Mani Puri, Naga, that Tibet is the roof of the world, between Nepal and China. I'm proud to be Tibetan, because everyone loves their own country. I get worried when Tibetans are suffering in Tibet and in exile. I love Tibet. I love the Tibetan people and nation.

In this statement, Jangchup moves between political rhetoric, in her allegiance to the Tibetan nation, and historical knowledge, in repeatedly mentioning collective Tibetan suffering. And, Jangchup's statements about those who “know” or “don't know” about Tibet seem to further join individual identity to national allegiance. Additionally, Jangchup's consistent use of plural pronouns highlights the priority that Tibetans give to collective identity, despite generational and regional divides that have been re-crafted in exile. For example, regional social divisions seem to have become less salient in exile, but two generations of Tibetans have been born in India,

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17 That is, Tibetans and the government in exile seem to actively down-play regionalism. For example, Nowak (1984) describes the ways that by conducting language instruction in the Central Tibetan dialect, and incorporating a sort of “pan-Tibetan ideology” through textbooks and coursework, the exile government's schools “are consciously setting out to produce a more homogenous younger generation who are learning to put their national identity ahead of regional loyalties” (65).
creating the distinction between “old” (gzhas chigs) and “new” (gsa'a a'g.yor) migrants.

Nonetheless, as cited above, Jangchup says that her Tamil classmates had never seen “our faces,” and that, in response, “we tell them that we are not Chinese.” Likewise, one woman staying at the reception center told me, “Maybe all Tibetans have the same heart, so maybe [earlier migrants] came for the same reasons as us.” The notion that Tibetans “have the same heart” mirrors Jangchup’s description of Tibetan faces; both statements essentialize collective identity, Jangchup’s through biology and the other woman’s through shared affect. And yet, Jangchup also articulates a tension between the normative narrative of present motivations for migration and the mythico-history of the Tibetan diaspora. She positions her parents' reasons for sending her to Tibet against the suffering perpetrated by China.

This tension between the logics driving old and new migration plays out socially, as well as discursively. One day, I was waiting for the bus to TTS. A man sat down next to me, asking where I was going. When I told him I was going to TTS, he launched into a discussion about the problems that new arrivals from Tibet cause in Dharamsala. I looked apprehensively towards a group of Tibetan girls, clearly TTS students, mingling in a shop across the street, but the man kept on speaking, somewhat vehemently. He told me,

These new-comers are not like my parents, who came to India with nothing and made something of their lives by working on the roads and chose to survive. The new arrivals drink, they don't know how to...cope with Indian society, they just come here and get sent to a school where they are taken care of, and then they [graduate] and make all these problems.

From this statement, I perceived that a moral ordering of history had been extended to the social dynamics of the exile community. The man's description of his parents' work on the roads forms part of the common history of the diaspora, which my informants born in exile reiterate, since
many of the first migrants were employed on construction projects in the Indian Himalayan towns of Dharamsala, Manali, and Mussoorie. This man suggests that he considers the suffering of these earlier migrants to be greater than that of the new-comers. He positions earlier generations' reasons for migrating as morally superior, by virtue of their superior suffering. The man thus suggests that suffering produces social merit. Following this line of interpretation, I commented that Tibetan new-comers must have experienced some hardship in Tibet, if they were willing to cross the Himalayas and risk arrest to reach India. The man exclaimed, “Oh! That is not something that you should at all be concerned about! Everyone says, 'I walked across the mountains,' but it's really nothing major. No problem.” That the man discounts the new-comers' narratives of migration further highlights a moral hierarchy of suffering that reflects a basic social division in the exile community.

The man's opposition of his parents' generation with the new-comers can be understood as a sort of collective cognitive dissonance within the diaspora. Speakers highlight the notion of the collective suffering of the Tibetan people. And yet, the Tibetan community in diaspora (in Dharamsala, in particular, since it hosts most of the schools for migrants as well as the main reception center) faces fundamental social differences which arise from the stark contrasts between political and cultural life in India and in Tibet. In writing of the common features of diasporas, Chakrabarty (1998) asserts that “'generation'...remains a key organizing principle...because diasporas are internally differentiated around constellations of shared memories” (472). In the case of Dharamsala, diverse memories of migration at different historical moments shape this generational organization. The social reality of diverse memories and experiences thus comes into conflict with the national imagining of a unified Tibetan
diaspora. I see this man's attitudes towards new-comers as a response to this conflict, in which speakers order competing normative stories according to their protagonists' (perceived) degree of suffering. The narrative of Sonam, a young woman born in India, further elucidates the dynamics of generation in Dharamsala.

Sonam

In Dharamsala, concrete buildings are claustrophobically packed up and down the hillsides, hugging the narrow mountain roads. One day, while leaving my apartment, I noticed a sign for the office of Students for a Free Tibet in the building across the street, and I decided to stop in. The office employees were too busy to speak with me, but they gave me the phone numbers of five young women, one of whom was Sonam. I called her, and she agreed to have coffee with me the next day.18

Sonam is a twenty-seven year old woman born in Bylakuppe, a Tibetan settlement in South India. The oldest of three children, her family moved between Bylakuppe and Dharamsala throughout her childhood and adolescence. She graduated from a women's college in Chennai a few years ago, and currently works on small projects for NGOs and consultants in the Dharamsala area. Almost all of the life stories I collected came from women born in Tibet. Sonam's story thus provides a forum to examine congruence and dissonance across a fundamental social divide in Dharamsala. Sonam tells me her life story by focusing on her relatives and the complications of being a refugee in India. When I ask about her family, she tells me,

My grandparents left Tibet because the Chinese were just coming into their

18 “Having coffee” seems to be a sort of cosmopolitan practice that has arisen with the tourist infrastructure in Dharamsala, but is absent in Kathmandu. Tibetans frequent coffee houses and restaurants to socialize with each other and with tourists.
villages and so that was starting to create problems and they heard that the Dalai Lama had already left and so they wanted to follow the Dalai Lama and they wanted to run away from the Chinese persecution and torture because in my grandma's village, the Chinese soldiers were arresting all these heads of the Tibetan families and beating them up...It's not like they wanted to leave, because my grandma would talk a lot about jewelries that she had to leave behind. And the livestock--she would constantly talk about how many thousands and thousands of sheep, hundreds of cattle, yak, and horses that she had to leave behind....In those times they walked, they were all born mountaineers or trekkers.

Although she was born in India, unlike Jangchup, Sonam paints a corresponding picture of Chinese oppression, in which “torture” figures as a shared, and fundamentally life-altering, experience of Tibetans in Tibet. In fact, my Tibetan informants born in India seemed to give more vivid descriptions of the social strife in Tibet than most Tibetans from Tibet, which suggests that oral transmission of narratives across generations may also influence diasporic subjectivity. Second-hand narratives of familial migration suggest that, contrary to the mythico-history, experiences of political oppression are inconsistent throughout time.

Sonam also echoes Jangchup in her descriptions of life at college. She says,

Going to college was a reality check. I was raised in a very Tibetan environment. I led a very protected, cocooned Tibetan life, but when you leave, that is when you really have to assert your identity as a Tibetan. The feeling comes strong that you are a minority--not just a minority citizen, because there are other students who are from the North East [of India], they feel themselves as a minority--but the sense that you don't belong here in India, that comes quite strong when you are outside your Tibetan settlement.

Sonam's description of life as a “minority” suggests that feelings of displacement persist across generations, regardless of birth place. And, that she speaks of a “Tibetan environment” as “protected” recalls statements about “torture” perpetrated against Tibet. Sonam conforms to the mythico-history in which nations figure as moral actors, and China actively threatens the Tibetan collectivity.
Also, Sonam clarifies the ways that bureaucratic identity seems to shape refugee subjectivity. She explains,

When you introduce yourself as a Tibetan with respect to someone who has no clue about Tibet, it becomes quite complicated to explain it in a way that that person gets it at a minimum. Like, if you say “I'm an American,” you don't have to go beyond that, they just have a clue about it...so when you introduce yourself as Tibetan sometimes they blink their eyes, sometimes the first thing they say mostly is “the Dalai Lama,” and I try to go beyond it. I always end up talking about political history, because I have to justify my existence in India as a refugee who was born in raised in India but who is not an Indian. I have to tell them 1959, blah blah blah, I'm born and raised in India but I'm not an Indian citizen. My document says I'm a foreigner.

Sonam articulates Tibetan political history through her bureaucratic identification (the fact that she was born a refugee) rather than through more abstract collective ties of affect and suffering in migration. Sonam suggests that, for Tibetans born in India, bureaucratic identification is the key symbol that marks cultural and political otherness in India. She seems to view the Dalai Lama to be an inadequate representation of the Tibetan people. She suggests, however, that political history and political classification portray Tibet and Tibetans more holistically. With this statement, Sonam may be responding to simplistic appropriations of the key symbol of the Dalai Lama in Western imaginings of Tibet and Tibetans. As described in the Introduction, Tibetans in Dharamsala sometimes seemed suspicious of my motivations for speaking with them. These Tibetans were, more often than not, born in India. Tibetans from Tibet expressed a far greater enthusiasm for my presence, and a striking lack of criticism for Western involvement in the Tibetan cause. Tibetans born in India have been in longer-term contact with Western tourists and activists. They also benefit less from aid from Euro-American donors, NGOs, and the exile government itself, although they are largely more educated (many have graduated from
bachelors' and masters' programs at Indian Universities). These sociological differences may lead to an awareness among Tibetans born in India that Western deployment of symbols such as the Dalai Lama misrepresents the complex aspects of culture that these symbols summarize. As Sonam suggests, the political history of conflict that has led to a state of lived tension between India and the homeland more accurately reflects Tibetanness.

Nonetheless, Sonam seems to welcome political support for Tibetan freedom from cultural and national outsiders. She seems preoccupied with disseminating a specific political knowledge about Tibet beyond the Tibetan community. Like Jangchup, who focused on how she speaks about Tibet to her Tamil classmates, Sonam stresses the importance of explaining her Tibetanness so that others understand. The importance of spreading awareness about Tibet further connects Tibetan personal narratives to the mythico-history. It is the act of telling, that is, of perpetuating a moral ordering of the Tibetan conflict, that enhances the cohesion of diasporic citizens and advances Tibetan nationalist goals. In this way, Sonam's narrative performance of political history bolsters a linguistic process of cultural renewal.

The mythico-history can be understood as a form of litany. The mythico-history circles through time, continuously incorporating presently unfolding life histories of migration into a master narrative of the diaspora's formation. Ries (1997) explains the ways that litany contributes to cultural renewal in Moscow, writing that, in her informants' litanies, “The inherent

19 It seemed that most individual sponsors of Tibetans (further described in Chapter Four) supported only Tibetans born in Tibet. Also, as Tenzin Youdon, SIT's program assistant, explained, the best exile government schools operate almost exclusively for Tibetans born in Tibet. One day, we were having tea and Tenzin Youdon began describing tensions between Tibetans and Indians in Dharamsala. She explained that she felt that new-comers provoke many conflicts with Indian youth, since they party and drink more than Tibetans born in India. She explained that this behavior is understandable in the context of Chinese attempts to “ruin” Tibetan youth (“in Lhasa,” she explained, “beer is cheaper than water”). Nonetheless, she seemed irritated that Tibetans from Tibet behaved indolently when they can access “things that not even us—Tibetans born here—can get.”

20 McLagan (2002), for example, noted that Western audiences of media activism for Tibet “are generally ignorant about the intertwining of religion and politics that defines the Tibetan system and challenges their own fundamental cultural categories” (99).
form of the litany was one key to its socially reproductive power. It was circular rather than linear, a mythical rather than a pragmatic discourse” (118). Tibetan migration narratives seem to function similarly. In speaking of migration, Tibetans temporally and conceptually link distinct, personal experiences through summarizing symbols. This narrative process aligns personal experience with national history, in a manner that affirms national belonging in exile. By preserving a discourse of suffering, litanies of migration contribute to the reproduction of the Tibetan collectivity. And, as revealed in the narratives cited above, performances of individual subjectivity seem to mold themselves to this imagined collectivity.

Conclusions

Tibetans seem to define the nation with reference to a specific moment of colonization. Diaspora studies call for a more nuanced understanding of history and diaspora formation, in which “spaces have always been hierarchically interconnected, instead of naturally disconnected...Colonialism, then, represents the displacement of one form of interconnection by another” (Gupta & Ferguson 1997: 8). As described in the Introduction, the space of Tibet and the people who inhabit it has been historically ruled through monastic centers. In a largely dispersed rural population, the family served as a primary institution that structured daily life, and large-scale “state” cohesion was achieved through allegiance rather than organized administrative rule.²¹ The family and the monastery served corresponding purposes: to manage population and inheritance.²² Due to the social functions of these institutions, understandings of

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²¹ As McGranahan (2010a) explains, for example, in premodern Tibet, “There was a wide variety of political and social formations...Some of these groups were subordinate to others, and some were self-governing; many, but not all, of these groups were subordinate to the Dalai Lama's administration in Lhasa. Yet the administrative aspects of rule were not weighted more heavily than the ritual or performative aspects of rule...what mattered was...the sentiments and allegiances of people and communities to the central state” (41).

²² Many scholars argue that the monastery is, first and foremost, an institution of inheritance management. Families frequently send their second son to the monastery, removing him from the realm of reproduction (Childs 2004: 57-58, 70).
birth and rebirth converge in kinships that are both spiritual and physical. Practices of lineage and naming, for example, demonstrate the congruence between the institutions of the family and monastery. Tibetans are formally recognized as full, incarnate humans through religious rituals. Chinese colonization of Tibet therefore represents a shift in complex power relations between centers of rule and peripheries, rather than the conquest of a clearly demarcated region. It seems that Tibetans who directly experienced colonization made sense of this displacement of power through the indigenous hierarchy of the monastery. Such evidence arises, for example, in the historical fact of a massive exodus following the Dalai Lama's migration to India, as well as in the narratives of older Tibetans told to me by their children and grandchildren, such as Sonam, which suggest a sense of kinship to the Dalai Lama. And, the very structure of the exile government implies this sense of collective kinship. The exile government, created in response to colonization, represents a new social formation that extends the monastery into the international order of nation-states. The Tibetan community thus presents a unique example of kinship ties which strengthen national imaginaries.

In response to the imposition of Chinese colonial rule, the exile government has adopted institutions of power characteristic of the nation-state, complementing but not obliterating existing practices that manage and measure belonging. Because the Dalai Lama heads the Tibetan nation, spiritual hierarchy from Tibet has been preserved in the present-day exile government; the historical monastic hierarchy has thus been projected onto a new institutional

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23 For a more extensive discussion of “traditional” and “modern” organizational infrastructures in the exile government, see McGranahan 2010a: 13-17.

24 Now, figuratively, rather than literally, since Tibet elected its first president in the spring of 2011. Nonetheless, Tibetans told me that “the Dalai Lama always says he is going to step down, so nothing is going to change.” I also heard, on multiple occasions, that Tibetans would not be in favor of a democratically elected government because they trust the Dalai Lama above all. It seems that the Dalai Lama's political move can be understood best in the context of concerns about his death.
infrastructure in the form of an exile nation. The Tibetan government has developed maps and
censuses, which act as “totalizing classification[s]” (Anderson 1983: 173), since they unite
individuals across previous social divisions. Maps of Tibet circulate, on which the three
provinces of Kham, Amdo, and Utzang are painted in stark contrast to China's map which marks
only the Tibet Autonomous Region (Fig. 7 and 8). Individuals locate their homelands within this
Tibetan nation, prioritizing a pan-Tibetan consciousness over regional affiliations. Likewise, as
Tibetans flee Tibet, the political frameworks of the Indian state and international community
manage them as refugees; Tibetans are incorporated into a world of nation-states through their
bureaucratic identification as displaced persons (in this case, through “registration certificates”).
In becoming incorporated into the world of nation-states through their refugee status, Tibetans
affirm their membership within a collectivity that is based on existing hierarchies from Tibet, but
that resists newly imposed Chinese hierarchies of Communist rule.

The exile government's institutions of power align with the desire for national freedom.
The Tibetan government in exile seems to have fashioned itself as a nation in order to make
legitimate claims to governance to the international community of nation-states. The imagination
of Tibet as a naturally existing nation that has become a diaspora in response to colonization
reflects the contemporary structure of the global political economy. Gupta and Ferguson (1997)
explain that, in this global political economy, “space itself becomes a kind of neutral grid on
which cultural difference, historical memory, and societal organization are inscribed” (7).
Individuals from spatially dispersed populations in Tibet come into contact in the small
community of Dharamsala. It seems that they subsequently project this newly encountered pan-
Tibetan social structure onto the geographic map of greater Tibet. In writing of the overlap
between anthropology and diaspora studies, Levy (2000) explains “diasporas function as a sociocultural integrative apparatus” (138). The case of Tibet seems to epitomize this function of diasporas. In the diaspora's bureaucratic integrative apparatus, centered in Dharamsala, Tibetans become refugee citizens. Dharamsala also presents a conceptual integrative apparatus that shapes exilic subjectivities through institutional management. My informants' deployment of key symbols in migration narratives evidences this process of conceptual integration, since Tibetans fit their personal histories into a collective history of a homogenous Tibetan nation.

Membership to the Tibetan imagined community is predicated upon the refugee identity. In her study of Khampa ex-guerrilla soldiers, McGranahan (2010a) notes that “Political statuses reach deeply into people's lives, affecting how their communities are organized and how they move themselves, their bodies, and their histories through the world” (52). For Tibetans, being a refugee matters not simply because it affirms membership within a unique collectivity, but rather, because it provides a specific social vantage point through which individuals navigate the diaspora's complexity and contradiction. Furthermore, this social vantage point shapes and is shaped by narrative. Ries (1997) argues that “the structures that mold a social world inhere first in the person; local worlds are, as it were, by-products of people's productions of themselves” (44). Tibetans' productions of the self and the collectivity take place through narrative plots structured by certain key events, including migration. In Tibetan nationalist discourse, which has been charted through individual narratives in this chapter, migration appears as a social drama through which individuals perform membership to the nation in diaspora. Migration thus exemplifies what Geertz refers to as “the repetitive performance dimensions of social action—the reenactment and reexperience of known forms” (1983: 28). Enacted and experienced as a
rite of passage, the process of migration confers to the individual a collective Tibetan identity through both official, bureaucratic citizenship, as well as through the performance of a paradigmatically Tibetan experience of suffering and social rupture.

Although Tibetans in Dharamsala employ the specific diasporic situation brought about by migration from Tibet to India to exemplify Tibetan collective experience, many lived in internal diasporas within Tibet. In speaking of such constant migrations, both within and across borders, Gupta and Ferguson (1997) describe the global political economy as a “world of diaspora” (10). Chinese colonialism has rendered Tibetan social space both more cohesive and more fragmented. On the one hand, economic and political transformations initiated by the Chinese government have brought individuals from disparate regions of Tibet into contact by virtue of the necessity of finding employment outside the home. Yet, in participating in wider economies, individuals experience geographic and social displacement. These displacements prefigure transnational migration between Tibet and India, often along the lines of kinship. Internal migration facilitates the circulation of information about the exile community, including news of the Dalai Lama and from kin who have migrated in the past. My informants' movements demonstrate a conflation of borders and diasporas, since multiple forms of contact wax and wane as individuals travel. In this way, migration reconfigures Tibetan kinship relations.

In light of this dynamic of waning and waxing interpersonal contact, I argue for a broad approach to kinship, in which the family, nation, and monastery are understood as kinship formations (especially in the context of overlapping categories of religious and familial lineage).

25 In offering a theory of diaspora, Clifford (1994) writes of an “overlap of border and diaspora” that seems similar to the dynamic movements of my informants (304).
Tibetan society thus presents a multiplicity of diasporas, as well as a multiplicity of kinships. Axel (2004) writes that the imagined state of stability believed to precede the formation of a diaspora figures “as an originary moment of tradition or kinship” (31). According to this model, kinship provides a foundational structure through which exiles imagine Tibet's nationhood. And, diverse kinship formations influence social cohesion and division in Dharamsala. In particular, birth place and generation play out in narratives of migration and mirror the division between Tibetans born in India and Tibetans from Tibet. As Ries found in Russia, “Born into the context of the many layered, fantastically embroidered, epic tale that is Russia, individuals also to greater or lesser extents embody that tale in the personal narratives they fashion from the materials of their own lives and, in so doing, assert their cultural identity and belonging” (Ries 1997: 27). Similarly, Tibetans in Dharamsala wield their narratives of migration competitively, constructing a moral hierarchy of suffering through the mythico-history. In migrating, and in retelling familial migration, Tibetans perform, in embodied experience, the key plot line of the Tibetan mythico-history.

To an outside observer, gender influences Tibetan women's decisions to undertake the ritual of migration. Gender also seems to shape women's lived experiences of migration, and the ways that they make sense of both social rupture from kin in Tibet and emplacement within the Tibetan community of Dharamsala. However, the women with whom I spoke consistently overlook or merely hint at the ways that gender has shaped their experiences. Their subtle references to gender seem to be structured within ideologies and institutions, such as lay Buddhist thought and family dynamics. This chapter has charted how Tibetan women move through the multiple social institutions of family, monastery, Chinese colonial rule, and the exile
government in their changing life circumstances. The interactions between these social institutions seem to provoke tension within social worlds in Tibet. Internal migrations manifest these tensions, as individuals experience social rupture upon moving between natal villages and Lhasa (as exemplified by Dolma Dechen) and between the family and monastery (as demonstrated by Tenzin Yangzom). Rupture also becomes apparent in conflicts between Chinese political and Tibetan religious order, since repression interferes with the daily lives of those who engage in religious practices and who seek religious education. Transnational migration seems to arise as a response to these tensions and social ruptures.

As described in the body of the chapter, this migration seems to be constrained by gender. As the creative force of the diaspora, migration highlights the collective suffering of the Tibetan people through memories of oppression. When women perform narratives, both personal and historical, they align their present experiences with these collective, selectively remembered instances of oppression. In migration narratives, women seem to hint at the idea that they and their female kin can tolerate less suffering than men. The possibility of gendered violence also seems to make families less willing to support women's migration. Gender is, to an extent, overlooked in these subtle statements about suffering in migration. But, given that suffering characterizes the collectivity, and that women seem to risk greater suffering by undertaking the ritual of migration, my informants wield gender in other narrative genres to explicitly communicate the depth of Tibetan suffering. The following chapter examines women's experiences of political imprisonment, which serve as icons of a suffering constructed as essentially Tibetan.
Chapter 2: The Prison Narrative: gender and embodiment in collective trauma

Introduction: Spectacle, Performance, and Transnational Mobilization

Chapter One demonstrated that, through narrative, women performed for me a story of collective suffering that served to construct (discursively and imaginatively) the nation. I found that my positionality as an American provoked specific politicized discussions of suffering. Tibetan individuals, in informal contexts and as representatives of institutions, consistently pointed me towards those who had lived out what I soon came to recognize as certain iconic experiences. Most commonly, Tibetans in Dharamsala pushed me to speak with former political prisoners (whether or not they were women). Through these encounters, I began to realize that stories of torture and trauma dominate the narrative space of Dharamsala. This narrative space encompassed media and daily interactions in Dharamsala (including the persistently circulating human rights literature), as well as the space I carved out (and which had been carved out by other Western researchers, journalists, and activists) by conducting interviews. In guiding me towards specific narratives, individuals from a variety of backgrounds and in a variety of contexts participated in the performance of Tibetan nationality. Political prisoners themselves performed national identity by recounting a common plot of protest, arrest, systematic torture, and continued illness. Since former political prisoners' stories seemed strikingly similar, I grouped them into genre that I call “the prison narrative.”

The prison narrative employs vivid descriptions of physical torture to epitomize the collective suffering of the Tibetan people and the moral imperative of humanitarian involvement in Tibet. These corporeal descriptions seem to be crafted into a spectacle intended for an international audience as well as for other Tibetan exiles. I did not conduct audience research for
this project, beyond reflecting upon my own reactions to hearing Tibetans’ life stories, reading human rights reports, and seeing human rights media. As I will describe throughout the chapter, however, other scholars of human rights media have noted the efficacy of titillating accounts of physical pain. From my own encounters with the prison narrative in these diverse forms, it seems that references to torture function to articulate pain through an idiom that is meant to be universally comprehensible: the human body. By representing embodied suffering as raw, physical pain, the prison narrative actively strips bodily experience of cultural specificity. The prison narrative acts as political propaganda, since it advocates political support of Tibetan freedom through activism and humanitarian assistance. To this end, narrative descriptions of Tibetan bodily suffering seem to evoke a universal embodied response for an international audience in order to mobilize specific political actions. As will become clear throughout the chapter, this process of universalization—and, of de-culturalization—takes on a gendered form, since narrative descriptions focus on women’s sexual torture. This chapter compares examples of the prison narrative in human rights literature towards which my informants pointed me, and in the narrative performances of three female former political prisoners. Juxtaposing these narrative performances of imprisonment with human rights accounts suggests that culturally specific understandings of gender influence the interpretation of seemingly universal experiences of pain.

Much scholarly work focuses on the role of large-scale media, such as television and film, in mobilizing international activism for Tibetan freedom (McLagan 2002, McLagan 2003, McLagan 2005, McLagan 2006, Schell 2000). Scholars have suggested that these media capitalize upon a sort of exoticization of Tibet and Tibetans for a Euro-American audience
(Lopez 1998, McLagan 2002). In analyzing the spoken testimony of individual Tibetan women, I found that spoken and written discourse seemed to employ similar exoticizing language and imagery. Through symbols, both visual and narrative, that suggest an exoticizing aesthetic, human rights organizations seem to bolster a discourse of Tibetan suffering.

This chapter begins with an examination of an English language report, which was authored by a human rights organization, the Tibetan Women's Association (TWA), and crafted for an international audience. When I explained that I was seeking to learn about Tibetan women, my Tibetan friends advised me to contact the TWA, and explicitly told me to read their reports. The TWA composed these reports in English, which suggests that Euro-Americans form the primary intended readership. The TWA has published some of their reports online, but most are available only in print form for purchase at the TWA's office. I did not purchase any of these reports myself. But, I acquired copies as gifts from friends and informants, which indicates that my informants see English language human rights reports as a meaningful representation of Tibet and Tibetans, and that they consider me to be among the reports' intended audience.

The chapter then moves to explore the life stories of three female former political prisoners. The published and personal prison narratives seem to interact dynamically, each influencing the other's content and form; women's life stories seem to employ the same narrative techniques to recount (nearly) the same plot line as human rights reports. As in Tibetans' narratives of migration, individual stories of imprisonment align with a normative representation of collective suffering, which, in the case of the prison narrative, human rights reports clearly

26 Although many Tibetans and Indians are also literate in English, notions of liberal humanism form the reports' ideological basis. Also, many of the organizations that create the reports, even when based in Dharamsala, are funded by European and American individuals, foundations, and governments.

27 Pdf files of some of the TWA's reports can be accessed through their website (http://tibetanwomen.org/books-reports/).
articulate. Former political prisoners' life stories showed far greater congruence with a normative narrative than did women's migration stories. By collecting elicited life stories at set times through formal interviews, I expected that many would narrate their lives in a somewhat staged manner. However, that former political prisoners' stories held so closely to a normative narrative suggests that they actively sought to mold their life stories to a normative representation; the performative aspect of their narratives seemed heightened in comparison to other expressions of Tibetan suffering.

**Imprisonment as Symbolic Capital**

Throughout the chapter, I draw on classic scholarship of social class and hegemony. Political prisoners seem to possess a symbolic power that comes from the symbolic capital of experiences of imprisonment.28 Bourdieu (1989) discusses the emergence of social classes as a process through which a group grants certain individuals the authority to represent the collectivity. Groups grant this power of representation to authority figures on the basis of “symbolic power,” which Bourdieu describes broadly as an ability (“efficacy”) for mobilization (23). I see former political prisoners in Dharamsala as an authoritative social class. A broader community, both Tibetan and international, seems to have granted them the authority to represent the Tibetan collectivity because of their lived experiences of torture. Narrative performances of imprisonment provide a forum for the exercise of symbolic power. I argue that, through their dominance over narrative space, Tibetan female political prisoners represent a hegemonic social formation.

28 Kleinman and Kleinman (1997) have noted a similar dynamic, which they argue is produced by the international humanitarian regime's commodification of suffering. They explain media interest in suffering as an “appropriation” that converts memories into “trauma stories.” Trauma stories then function as “the currency, the symbolic capital, with which [victims] enter exchanges for physical resources and achieve the status of political refugee” (10).
Institutions privilege former political prisoners by endowing them with economic capital. The exile government's department of security registers all cases of imprisonment among new arrivals (through self-reporting). Once registered, the Department of Health's Torture Survivor's Unit offers social and medical support for former political prisoners for their first ten years in exile, in the form of a monthly stipend and reimbursement for all medical costs. Former political prisoners' symbolic capital, in the form of experiences of imprisonment, confers to them economic capital, in the form of financial support from the government. That is, government support converts the symbolic capital of the prison narrative into economic capital. Although representatives of the Department of Health explained these services as a system of social support for recovery from trauma, it seems that ex-political prisoners benefit mainly from the monthly stipend. For example, the Department of Health offers mental health treatment to former political prisoners, but it seems that they do not normally access these services. As Dolkar, an employee at the Torture Survivor's Unit told me,

There is also a counselor who is very new, but torture victims are mostly very sound mentally. We have a few mental patients in other Tibetan settlements, so we are planning on sending the counselor there. Political prisoners have very high coping mechanisms. While in prison, they always think of His Holiness, and we believe in karmic relations, so we think that we might have done something wrong in a past life and that is the reason we are experiencing hardship now. They believe in Buddhism, and also think that their torture is nothing compared to the suffering of all Tibetans. They feel that they are suffering for all Tibetans.

With this statement, Dolkar expresses that former political prisoners rarely require social support from the government. Rather, the financial support they receive affirms their privileged status. And, as the narratives will elucidate, Dolkar's explanation of the political prisoners' “coping mechanisms” summarizes quite concisely the common themes underlying stories of
imprisonment, namely, strength in collective suffering and Buddhist cosmology.

As Bourdieu writes, “Symbolic power is the power to make things with words...symbolic power is a power of consecration and revelation” (ibid). Bourdieu asserts that symbolic power allows for linguistic representation, and that linguistic representation produces value. It is due to their lived experience of a Tibetan key scenario—that of political resistance to and torture by the Chinese—that the community in Dharamsala grants former political prisoners the symbolic power to represent a Tibetan collectivity. And, due to the symbolic power associated with imprisonment, individuals and human rights organizations wield the prison narrative as a political tool in Dharamsala's networks of humanitarian aid. The prison narrative's political efficacy lies partly in its appeal to an international audience, which plays out in daily life in Dharamsala. Given the number of tourists and the relative dearth of activities in McLeod Ganj, there is a constant supply of foreigners who take part in volunteer events run by NGOs. Gu Chu Sum, an association of former political prisoners, houses recently arrived torture victims and holds daily English conversation classes which are frequently attended by two to three times as many volunteers as Tibetans. Another NGO, Learning and Ideas for Tibet (LIT), holds a weekly “Tuesday Talk with an Ex-Political Prisoner,” where tourists can eat free Tibetan food and learn about “the Tibet situation”. Employees of LIT distribute fliers for the Tuesday Talks to foreigners as they meander the marketplace and sip coffee in cafés and restaurants (Fig. 9). NGOs thus profoundly influence foreigners' activities in Dharamsala, to the point of structuring their interactions with the local community through a performance and spectacle of Tibetan plight.

Articulations of Tibetanness seem to be cultivated in response to the symbolic demands
of the humanitarian discourse associated with Dharamsala’s dense NGO infrastructure. In this
discourse, the narrative testimony of individual Tibetans links Tibetanness and suffering.
Individual tales of suffering form a collective Tibetan trauma. In standardizing the structure of
narratives, humanitarian discourse therefore impinges upon personal expressions of Tibetan
identity. However, as Baumann writes, “Tibetans are not always mere passive victims of
[Western] imagining, but strategically make use of the stereotypical images to raise awareness
for their case and plight” (382). Humanitarian discourse provides an avenue for entry into the
international community. In this way, the perpetuation of narratives that construct Tibetans as a
sacred, suffering people represents a sort of geopolitical strategy, since it disseminates a specific
understanding of political history that supports Tibetan national goals.

And, hopes for international mobilization for Tibetan freedom seem to influence
interpersonal interactions. Tibetans in Dharamsala seemed to associate me with my government's
actions.29 As an American ethnographer, I found that I was, in fact, one such audience for the
prison narrative. Scheduled interviews with former political prisoners became an arena for the
spectacle and performance of the prison narrative. In addition to narrating their imprisonment by
reiterating the common plot of the prison narrative, individuals gestured to demonstrate torture,
showed to me the resulting scars and deformations, and directed me towards human rights
literature intended for a Euro-American audience. Therefore, as an interviewer, I also became a
participant observer in the performance and spectacle of the deployment of an international
humanitarian discourse. In collecting personal narratives, I received testimonies. In hearing
testimonies, I became an international audience to human rights violations. As an audience

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29 Once the event reached the international media, I even received text messages from Tibetans congratulating me
on Osama bin Laden's death before I had heard the news myself.
member, I participated in the dynamics of international dissemination of the prison narrative. For example, as I was leaving the Torture Survivor's Unit at the Department of Health, Dolkar called out to me, “it is mainly from USAID, from the American people, that we are getting funding, so, thank you to the US government! There is a sign right there!” (Fig. 10). Former political prisoners sometimes interacted with me similarly, as if I could personally mobilize American intervention in Tibet. At the Tibetan Reception Center, there were two male former political prisoners whom the director had arranged for me to interview. Towards the end of the interview, one man told me, “There was another political prisoner I used to talk to through a window between our cells, and when we heard helicopters, we used to think that the Americans were coming to save us.” As I left, he kept asking me what I “would do for Tibet,” and if I could “please write to Obama and Bush.” This man seemed to hope that I could influence the political outcome of the conflict in Tibet. He even explained that he had friends who were still imprisoned in Tibet, seeming to suggest that I could help these individuals by communicating with American government officials. Such encounters underscore the extent to which international humanitarian discourse essentializes nationality. This process of essentialization shapes personal hopes and social dynamics, since interpersonal interactions mirror the broader operations of international networks of political activism and humanitarian aid.

In international human rights media and individual performances of Tibetan exile subjectivity, certain testimonies, including the prison narrative, receive social recognition. Carole McGranahan (2010b) explains that, among Tibetan exiles,

experiences chosen to circulate as representative...tend to be those that validate existing power structures as a condition of their existence. As a result, the conversion of experience to narration and the social recognition of such narration are all processes as generative of dispossession as they are of possession [769].
The prison narrative reifies an essentialized dynamic between a Tibetan victim, a Chinese aggressor, and a foreign savior that corresponds to the conceptual structure of the Tibetan political conflict in an international humanitarian regime (an existing power structure). This regime is characterized by the international dissemination of testimony, foreign private donations, and institutions who manage and moderate the two (NGOs and the exile government). As a result, the translation of a Tibetan's individual experiences of imprisonment seems to be crafted according to a narrative form that de-contextualizes and universalizes its message(s) for an international audience. McLagan (2005) writes that the international humanitarian regime which arose in the post Cold-War global community represents “an organizational infrastructure that function[s] as a mechanism through which local political concerns [can] be translated into narratives and discursive forms that regist[e] as political in an international context” (224). In passing through such a mechanism, the prison narrative is thus “dispossessed” from an original, personal experience of imprisonment. This process of dispossession seems to result in a generic narrative plot that presents bodily suffering in line with a humanitarian discourse.

**Published Accounts of the Prison Narrative**

In Dharamsala, many publications that circulate are authored in English, and the organizations (even when based in Dharamsala) through which they are published often operate through foreign donations. These published, English language accounts further political and humanitarian goals of gaining international recognition for Tibetan suffering and for the Tibetan freedom movement. Additionally, women's narratives of imprisonment seem to monopolize this political and humanitarian discourse. In the context of scholarship on human rights organizations, it seems that international consumption (and demand) may shape this monopoly.
McLagan (2003) notes that activists who seek to mobilize public audiences rely on media that portray victims' personal narratives. These narratives produce emotional responses and, by extension ethical ties, between public audiences and the represented victims. In this way, human rights media depend upon individual victims “who function as 'nodal points' in a transnational network of identification and solidarity” (McLagan 2003: 610). In the case of human rights media about Tibet, women often act as such nodal points. For example, two famous autobiographies were written and published in English by female ex-political prisoners (each co-authored by an American woman), *The Voice that Remembers* by Ama Adhe (1997) and *Sorrow Mountain: the journey of a Tibetan warrior nun* by Ani Panchen (2000). Ama Adhe's book was translated into Tibetan by the Tibetan Women's Association only in 2009, and Ani Panchen's book seems not to have been translated. As Barnett (2005) asserts, such memoirs and personal testimony thus “appear to be part of a mainly western discourse” (356). As described above, this “western discourse” circulates throughout daily life in Dharamsala, in conversation, media, and the operations of Dharamsala's NGOs. We turn now, to an example of an English language publication that exemplifies this western discourse.

*The Drapchi Fourteen*

Known as the Drapchi Fourteen, a group of fourteen nuns was incarcerated in Drapchi prison, Tibet's largest detention facility, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. While imprisoned, they covertly recorded resistance songs. One recording was smuggled out, but the rest were discovered and confiscated, and the nuns received extended sentences. After attending a leadership training workshop with the TWA, my translator, Jangchup, received booklet, “Light in the Abyss,” written in English by the Tibetan Women's Association, which she gave to me. The
booklet recounts the plight of political prisoners in Tibet through narratives of the Drapchi Fourteen. The booklet is also available for sale at the TWA's office in Dharamsala, which suggests that the booklet circulates for popular consumption by English readers. The report opens with an overview of prison conditions and commonly suffered tortures. It reads,

Torture, systematic and brutal, remains a daily reality for political prisoners in Tibet...Electric shocks are...commonly employed, delivered both through wires attached to the body and directly with cattle prods. “Active” torture of this variety is supplemented by a variety of “passive” techniques ranging from exposing prisoners to extreme temperatures, to forcing prisoners to stand immobile for long stretches of time, deprivation of food, water and sleep, and forced exercise. Chinese prison authorities have taken the creation of pain into a scientific craft. A slew of specially designed restraints augment torture tactics including finger cuffs and self-tightening, barbed cuffs. “Aerial suspension” is another commonly employed device in which prisoners are hung from the ceiling by the wrists or arms, putting immense strain upon the shoulders. Victims report being beaten while in this position and being left hanging for hours while coal and chili powder is burned below them [TWA 2009: 28-29].

This fragment suggests that an economy of bodily suffering permeates human rights discourse; physical torture serves as the main channel through which the TWA communicates atrocity across cultures and geographies, to an English readership. In a discussion of the role of the individual in human rights discourse, Adams (1998) writes,

> Shared humanism requires a transcendence of cultural difference. Difference is perceptible when bodies are encultured, when a body becomes an encultured person. Individualized and to some extent objectified by the presence of a body tortured, bodies can be universalized and suffering can go to work for human rights politics [83].

Adams argues that, in the realm of human rights, descriptions of physical suffering are effective because they are considered universal. However, as the following sections will describe, experiences of embodiment are culturally specific. Since the prison narrative de-contextualizes embodied experiences, it may lead a Euro-American audience to project understandings of
violence onto descriptions of physical torture.

Gendered violence clarifies this process of projection. The TWA's report continues,

Female prisoners often suffer the worst treatment at the hands of prison officials. First-hand accounts reveal that gender specific torture is employed, and female prisoners are frequently the victims of sexual assault. Female detainees are stripped naked during interrogations, and implements of torture such as sticks and electric batons are forcibly inserted into the mouth, vagina, and anus...Prison authorities target nuns in particular for these sadistic practices which serve to systematically degrade and humiliate the victims [TWA 2009: 29].

This example of vivid, sexual imagery further highlights human rights literature's economy of embodied suffering. Different forms of human rights media across the world employ similar vivid accounts of raw, physical pain, attempting to achieve an embodied audience response. Anthropologist and documentary film-maker Ronit Avni describes the ways that spectacle operates according to this rationale in an international field. Avni (2006) writes of a documentary film she created about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, “We wanted audiences to connect to the characters featured on a viscera, visual, and emotional level” (211). The TWA's report seems to strive for a similar impact, noting the particularities of physical and sexual abuse that accompany imprisonment. Such narrative spectacles of Tibetan women's torture suggest that humanitarian networks operate through an economy of pain. In this economy, individual testimony of embodied atrocity circulates between cultures to create an embodied audience response. This embodied response produces a moral understanding of Tibetan suffering (in Bourdieusian terms, “reveals and consecrates”) and, by extension, of the legitimacy of Tibetan claims to nationhood.

Additionally, the TWA's report demonstrates that the nun carries particular weight in this economy of suffering. The nun's symbolic value seems to have developed in response to the
social dynamics of protest in Tibet. Monasteries and nunneries, as the primary centers of Tibetan cultural education, organize and lead many political demonstrations. Some sources even assert that the majority of female political prisoners are nuns (Tibet Justice Center 2008: 7). Barnett (2005) explains that, during a period of particular political upheaval in Tibet in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the time at which my informants and the Drapchi Fourteen were imprisoned, nuns developed “specifically female forms of protest” in prison, such as singing (334-354). In addition to such gendered protests, Barnett asserts that, in Tibetan nun's accounts of imprisonment from the same time period, “the site of conflict and resistance becomes the prisoner's body” (335). Accounts of imprisonment explain that Tibetan nuns undergo discipline that removes embodied markers of identity. For example, from the 1990s onward, nuns in Drapchi prison were forbidden to cut their hair (ibid: 344). As will be described below, enculturation of the nun's body occurs through identity markers such as a shaved head. In being stripped of their embodied identity, imprisonment universalizes the nun's enculturated body.30 And, since enculturation confers personhood (as described by Adams above), it is through an explicit de-personalization that embodiment operates in the prison's system of discipline.

Barnett's discussion of the nun's body directs us towards the connections between Tibetan women, embodiment, and the Buddhist collectivity. Foucault (1979[1975]) defines the “body politic” as “a set of material elements and techniques that serves as weapons, relays, communication routes and supports for the power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge” (28). Prescriptions of dress and other material markers of embodied identity, such as a shaved head, enculturate the

30 Tenzin Yangzom's description of being forbidden to wear the nun's robes (as cited in Chapter One) presents a similar example.
nun, marking her as a Tibetan Buddhist subject. Axel (2004) describes the “visible identity” of the amritdhari (Sikh initiate), involving specific manners of dress, which makes the individual amritdhari recognizable as a Sikh following initiation. Axel explains that, due to this resulting visible identity, initiation “refers to a specific process designed to constitute an individual as a representative—and the body as a representation—of a Sikh collectivity” both within the Sikh community and beyond (33). Similarly, the Tibetan nun's visible identity marks her membership to the Buddhist collectivity in an embodied form that is recognizable to an international audience. In prison, new disciplines explicitly re-enculturate the nun's body, dissociating her embodied identity from a Buddhist collectivity—that is, the Tibetan body politic—and marking her as a Chinese prisoner. Ironically, therefore, the universalization of the nun's body that is wielded in the arena of international human rights results from her enculturation into the Chinese body politic.

However, portrayals of the Tibetan nun in human rights literature also demonstrate orientalizing trends in the international dissemination of representations of Tibetan political experience. That the de-personalization of the nun's body carries particular weight in the narrative spectacle of human rights literature suggests an exoticizing aesthetic in line with general attitudes towards Tibetan Buddhism. From the standpoint of human rights, bodily suffering is universally comprehensible. And yet, human rights reports's persistent emphasis on bodily suffering seems to fetishize the sexual violence perpetrated against Tibetan nuns in prison. The prison narrative in human rights literature seems to suppose an audience's scopophilic interest in the embodied, sexual trauma of an exoticized “other.”

In fact, it seems that the nun genders the performance of the prison narrative in human
rights discourse according to Euro-American notions of sexual violence. Incessant descriptions of sexual violence (and, as will be further examined in subsequent sections, the basic framing of certain violences as sexual when they are not necessarily experienced as such) demonstrates a form of discursive colonization that can be understood within an historical trajectory of Euro-American representations of the Oriental subject. McLagan (2002) points to the ways that the emergence of television and other media technologies has initiated a political trend in which “images and spectacle [have become] central to the definitions and meanings of legitimacy in politics” (91). In this trend towards spectacle, the definition of political conflicts, such as that in Tibet, hinge on symbolic construction. For example, Stoler (1991) writes that, through “the salience of sexual symbols as graphic representations of colonial dominance,” sexual imagery “serves as a loaded metaphor for domination” (54). The prison narrative's persistent sexual imagery thus frames the political conflict in Tibet as an example of colonial dominance, a pattern of representation that serves to morally legitimize calls for Tibetan freedom.31 The following sections present the translation of the prison narrative into individual life stories, suggesting that international humanitarian discourse arises in multiple contexts in the Tibetan diaspora. That is, humanitarian discourse seems to provide a framework through which individuals in Dharamsala reflect upon their own lives, make sense of the broader functions of institutions and states, and perform allegiance to the Tibetan imagined community in exile.

Shaping Subjectivities through Human Rights Discourse: “The Prison Narrative” in the Life Stories of Ex-Political Prisoners

31 The image of Tibet as a colony in crisis is contested. Barnett (2001) explains that Tibetan exile activists sought to shift representation of Tibet to a “colonial concept,” “having realized in the mid 1980s that foreign governments had no strategic or political interest in raising the Tibet issue” (279). However, rather than pushing the Tibet crisis into the realm of legitimate politics, this action figured as a continuation of “attempt[s] to achieve political effects by engaging people in a shared image or representation” (ibid). We see, therefore, the colonial framing of the Tibetan crisis as a pattern of representation that continues in the realm of international law.
Beyond serving as a tool for achieving political and humanitarian goals, the prison narrative seems to present a channel through which Tibetans socially locate themselves in Dharamsala. Geertz explains that in his ethnographic work, he has been centrally concerned with interpreting how his indigenous interlocutors “define themselves as persons, what goes into the idea they have...of what a self...is” (1983: 58). To this end, he sought out “the symbolic forms—words, images, institutions, behaviors—in terms of which, in each place, people actually represented themselves to themselves and to one another” (ibid: 58). The prison narrative provides a unique example of native self-representation that sheds light on the construction of subjects, marked by differing degrees of Tibetanness, in Dharamsala. I found that the prison narrative creates and sanctifies specific knowledge about Tibet that certain individuals and groups in Dharamsala seem to possess through their embodiment of key scenarios. This section presents a conversation between the narratives of three female former political prisoners in Dharamsala through which I hope to clarify the ways that the prison narrative influences subjectivities in Dharamsala—both of former political prisoners and of other Tibetans.

The experience of imprisonment is bound in power relations that operate in an international humanitarian regime, but that play out in daily life in Dharamsala. One day, for example, I had made an appointment to interview Pema Tsering, a woman who had given birth to a baby girl eight months prior, in her home near the Norbulinka Institute. I had enlisted the translation skills of my friend, Lhamo Tso, who had helped me in an interview with Sangmu, a former political prisoner, a few weeks before. We reached Pema Tsering’s home, and I moved to knock on the door. Lhamo Tso told me I was at the wrong house, pointing across the road to a restaurant where another woman, Tashi Lodoeh, works. I explained that I actually had made the
appointment to speak with Pema Tsering, and Lhamo Tso replied, “Pema Tsering won't have very much to tell you because she wasn't in prison. She didn't know about Tibet when she was in Tibet. Pema Tsering is just like us [from rural Amdo]. You should talk with Tashi Lodoeh because she is a former nun and political prisoner.” However, we kept the appointment with Pema Tsering partly because I had, in fact, already spoken with Tashi Lodoeh.

This exchange, between Lhamo Tso and me, suggests that social dynamics in Dharamsala produce a knowledge of Tibet that relates almost exclusively to the political struggle. Those who were unaware of the freedom movement in Tibet “don't know” about Tibet, although they are, in fact, Tibetan. Those who are learning about Tibet, and those who support Tibetans financially and ideologically (such as sponsors, journalists, and human rights activists) seem to seek out this specific knowledge related to the freedom movement. And, those who did know about Tibet while they were in Tibet are frequently former political prisoners. That Lhamo Tso reflects upon her life history with reference to the prison narrative (in her statement that she did not know about Tibet while political prisoners did) points to its hegemonic infiltration of social life. Lhamo Tso differentiates herself and Pema Tsering from Tashi Lodoeh, suggesting that political imprisonment marks a socially meaningful category. Lhamo Tso thus points us towards an example of Gramsci’s (1999[1971]) “subaltern functions of social hegemony” in the form of the “‘spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group” (145). The Tibetan community in Dharamsala gives Tashi Lodoeh, and other former political prisoners, the authority to represent the collectivity. And, as evidenced in the centrality of the prison narrative in human rights discourse and media, communities beyond Dharamsala, both Tibetan and international, likewise
support the dominance of former political prisoners.

The following narratives come from three female former political prisoners. All lived in Utzang and were imprisoned in Lhasa, which underscores the fact that the prison narrative is most representative of Central Tibetan life. As the historical locus of monastic administration, Lhasa remains the center of political activity. Central Tibet also maintains the strongest ties to the international community and to the Tibetan diaspora (McGranahan 2010a:16-17). The stories that dominate narrative space thus tend to normalize Central Tibetan experiences. The following women's narratives demonstrate consistency with the pervasively circulating descriptions of systematic bodily tortures and resulting health problems that arise in human rights literature. The correlation between women's personal narratives and human rights literature underlines that the Tibetan prisoner's subjectivity is molded in a social field. In discussing examples of world literature that have been translated into Tibetan, Steven Venturino (1995) explains that stories of imprisonment are translated strategically, to address Tibetan experience. He writes,

An alliance between personal experience and those experiences considered tellable, literary, and socially relevant can significantly address the social identities of imprisoned Tibetans. The notion of Tibetan personal identity, which has traditionally featured a profoundly Buddhist and admittedly apolitical consciousness, now incorporates and negotiates contemporary personal experiences recognized as having social and political significance [165].

In their personal narratives, women define the self in relation to experiences of imprisonment. Selves who embody these experiences are granted narrative space, a social dynamic that, as Venturino argues, has newly emerged in the exile community. When they speak about imprisonment, Tibetan women socially locate themselves within a world of collective Tibetan suffering. However, through their individual renditions of the prison narrative, they also speak to
broader issues of kinship and gender in the Tibetan diaspora.

_Tashi Lodoeh_

Twenty-nine year old Tashi Lodoeh came to India in 2004, after she was released from prison. She now runs a restaurant with two other former nuns and political prisoners, one of whom was arrested alongside her during a protest in Tibet. These “three nuns,” as they were known in Dharamsala, seemed almost famous in the community, given the number of people who directed me towards them. But, the nuns themselves were not actually eager to speak with me, which demonstrates another key social tension in Dharamsala: whereas the town operates primarily through garnering foreign interest in the Tibet cause, certain individuals whose stories exemplify Tibetan suffering seem exhausted from giving interviews about their experiences.

However, after I had contacted the nuns a few times over the phone, Tashi Lodoeh agreed to speak with me. My translator, Tenzin Tsering, and I conducted the interview in Tashi Lodoeh’s restaurant near the Norbulinka Institute over tea. Tashi Lodoeh tells me,

> After I was released, I was branded as an ex-political prisoner, so my employment and everything was restricted. It was difficult to live with this, and I had to flee. I was imprisoned in 1994 after I staged a protest, and I stayed in prison for five years. I had entered a nunnery when I was fifteen, and around age seventeen or eighteen I was in prison. I went to the nunnery because in my village, there were so few opportunities to go to school and the nunnery provided basic education. Also, I had a big family.

Tashi Lodoeh opens with a discussion of imprisonment that seems characteristic of the stories I have grouped into the genre of the prison narrative. In interviews, my informants who had experienced torture defined themselves, (at least to me, as an American), primarily as “former political prisoners.” That Tashi Lodoeh opens her narrative by explaining the social consequences of her imprisonment exemplifies this pattern. Tashi Lodoeh also, however,
highlights her family's specific circumstances as a driving force behind her decision to enter the monastery, both through the lack of educational opportunities in her village and the fact that her family had a number of other children to support (Tashi Lodoeh has four brothers and four sisters). Removal from the extended family network is a hallmark of monastic life. And, as explained in the previous section, nuns figure as iconic protagonists in the prison narrative. By recounting her life prior to entering the monastery, Tashi Lodoeh subverts what seems to be a conventional plot line of stories I have grouped into the prison narrative. This narrative subversion points to the strength of Tibetan family ties, which Tashi Lodoeh seems to privilege over the suffering of the Tibetan nation.

As Tashi continues to speak, however, her narrative weaves together statements about her family, the political situation in Tibet, and her imprisonment. She says,

"Generally, everyone knows about the atrocities the Chinese perpetrate against Tibetans. My grandfather was also a political prisoner for twelve years. Even if you are just a farmer, you have to give all the best greens to the government. And, I was kicked out of the nunnery because they said you have to be eighteen to be a nun. After I was kicked out of the nunnery, my mother had fallen ill and had to go to the hospital, but I couldn't go see her because of the restrictions on nuns. My cousins were also put in prison for eight to nine years...So, I decided to come to India because the health care was a lot of expenditure to my parents, and it's not like you have regained your freedom once you are released from prison. The government follows you, and your opportunities for employment are almost nil because employers will be in trouble if they hire ex-prisoners. I made the decision to take care of myself because I was a huge burden on my family. Soldiers were following them, and on special events like March 10th, there were restrictions and they couldn't celebrate. My parents didn't know I was preparing to leave, and I left suddenly because if they had known, they wouldn't have wanted to part with me. I can contact them a little bit now, but it's scary. I would love to talk with them every day, but the government has taken my family's numbers and can tap into their calls, and if I happen to say something that I shouldn't, they could be in huge trouble."

Barnett (2005) explains that nuns' protests in the 1980s and 1990s in Lhasa transformed political protest into a sort of feminized ritual (322-328). Barnett also points to specific non-violent forms of protest that seem to have been initiated by nuns and other female political prisoners (ibid: 323, 334-355).
Tashi Lodoeh seems to see her own experience as iconic, since she states that all Tibetans understand the political situation in Tibet according to a victim-victimizer paradigm that positions Tibetans and Chinese in opposition. Tashi Lodoeh thus demonstrates a practice of synecdoche, common to my informants' narratives, that essentializes nationality and ethnicity. Although Tashi Lodoeh seems to see her life in Tibet as representative, the majority of my informants said that they, like Lhamo Tso, “didn't know about Tibet in Tibet.” Tashi Lodoeh expects that even farmers, who are presumably politically inactive, would understand government regulations of crops as an oppression of the Tibetan people. I found, however, that the conception of government regulations as acts of violation of Tibet and Tibetans seems to be largely cultivated in exile. That Tashi Lodoeh takes this attitude toward Chinese agricultural policy for granted suggests that the prisoner undergoes a unique process of enculturation in exile.

By granting former political prisoners symbolic capital, the Tibetan exile and international humanitarian communities affirm the experience of imprisonment as characteristically Tibetan. Former political prisoners are removed from the process of enculturation in the diaspora since, through their imprisonment and political activities in Tibet, they had acquired membership in the Tibetan imagined community before migrating; while living in Tibet, they had cultivated subjectivities that correlate with those inculcated in Dharamsala. And, human rights media employ accounts of imprisonment to represent Tibet to an international audience. The prisoner's subjectivity thus easily translates across political borders, from Tibet to India to an international audience, because her political activism and the suffering she experienced in Tibet represent the

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33 For example, as mentioned in Chapter One, Jangchup had explained that she and her Tibetan classmates told other students at her college in Chennai “how China tortured Tibet.” In this statement, Jangchup presented “China” and “Tibet” as singular actors in order to communicate the Tibetan people's individual and collective suffering.
Tibetan imagined community.

Tashi Lodoeh's kinship relations show complex consistencies and inconsistencies with the experiences of other Tibetans. Like other Tibetan women, whose internal displacement prefigured their migration to India, Tashi Lodoeh separated from her family when she entered the nunnery, due primarily to financial constraints. Entering the nunnery ultimately led to other major life events, including her imprisonment and migration, because, as Tashi Lodoeh will explain further, she participated in a protest with the support of her nunnery. Through common experiences of imprisonment, Tashi Lodoeh shared a unique cross-generational understanding with her family. Most Tibetans with whom I spoke, even those who were politically active in Tibet, stressed that their parents and grandparents did not speak to them “about Tibet,” because disseminating subversive political ideas risks the entire family's safety. Tashi Lodoeh's family, however, presents a cross-generational consciousness of oppression, since her grandfather and cousins were also imprisoned. Other Tibetans, such as Tenzin Yangzom, feared that leaving Tibet would create political hardship for their families if they were caught or imprisoned on their journey (see p. 58). Tashi Lodoeh, however, portrays her migration as a means of alleviating the suffering that she has already brought upon her family through her imprisonment. Political oppression is a driving force for Tashi Lodoeh's migration, not simply because she has been imprisoned but because her family faced continued surveillance and harassment in their daily lives. Kinship therefore figures as the ultimate catalyst for migration in Tashi Lodoeh's narrative.

Tseyang

Thirty-six year old Tseyang and I met by chance. I had attended an English conversation class where I met Tseyang's neighbor, who asked me after class to help her friend learn English. I
agreed, and the next day, the neighbor introduced me to Tseyang. Tseyang and I met a number of times over the next month, conversing in broken English and Tibetan. The first time we met, Tseyang told me that she had been imprisoned in Tibet. We both lived very close to the Dalai Lama's temple, so we visited each other's homes multiple times to practice language. It became clear that Tseyang's casual references to her imprisonment summarized a more extensive personal narrative she seemed willing to tell. So, I asked if I could interview her with the help of my translator, Tenzin Tsering. She agreed, and we met at a café near our homes.

We sit down on the bright red stools in the café, Tenzin Tsering and Tseyang facing me. Tenzin Tsering and I order coffee. I am worried when Tseyang will not order anything. I had hoped that our previous relationship would position me differently than other Western muckrakers, but her unwillingness to let me buy her coffee seems to suggest otherwise. Once I initiate the conversation, however, Tseyang begins to speak naturally, describing her family in India and in Tibet. She tells me,

*My husband and I met six years ago in Dharamsala. He is from Lhasa, also, and we have a five year old son. I have one older brother and three older sisters in Tibet. My parents were farmers. When you're a farmer, you have a pre-determined life. In the autumn, there is a lot of work planting crops, and in the summer you have to water the fields and help the cattle graze. In the winter, all the adults go to other towns to do businesses like selling fruits—mostly apples—or to become laborers for the Chinese. The children and elders would stay home. There was a huge sense of nationalism in Tibet in the 1980s...We tried not to interact with the Chinese...Nationalism in exile is almost disappearing, which is definitely bad. It's good if you have a sense of pride in your country.*

That Tseyang begins by discussing her family recalls the narrative form of migration stories. Kinship ties, in this case, kinship ties actively acquired in exile, serve as a means through which she introduces herself. Also, Tseyang seems to link her family in India and in Tibet (her kinship

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34 Tseyang differentiated “pride” (*spobs pa*) from “nationalism” (*rg.yal shin*) in the original Tibetan.
ties of affinity and consanguinity), describing both in the same narrative segment.

Tseyang's description of life in Tibet resonates with that of Tashi Lodoeh, since she describes political consciousness. However, as mentioned above, many other informants described little to no national sentiment in Tibet. Tseyang's view of nationalism within Tibet clarifies regional difference. Political activism seems to be localized in the Lhasa area, Tibet's historic capital, linking resistance to centralized rule.\(^{35}\) Utzang has been the historical center of Tibetan society, since it hosts the majority of institutions including the main monasteries of the dge lugs pa ("Gelugpa") sect and the Dalai Lama lineage. And, since national mobilization occurs frequently through enculturation in monasteries and nunneries (as Tashi Lodoeh will further describe), individuals seem to come into contact with nationalist knowledge more readily in Central Tibet. That Central Tibet figures as the focal point of national sentiment within Tibet reiterates Lhamo Tso's sense of social division between those who "know" (from Utzang) and “don't know” (from Amdo) about Tibet. The emergence of political prisoners as a hegemonic social formation, by virtue of their archetypal representation of Tibet and Tibetans, seems to begin within Tibet. And, their dominance in Dharamsala presents a continuation of historical power relationships between the center and peripheries of Tibetan society.

Also, Tseyang explains a sense of alienation from the Chinese through her family history and her experience of arrest. She tells me,

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\text{In 1989, when I was sixteen, there was one month where many dance troupes were performing operas, and we were protesting during that time. In my family, there was a lot of interest in politics. I heard from my parents about the protests. They were always talking to their children about Tibet and were very politically conscious. They had cassette tapes of the Dalai Lama's speeches, and we would listen to them at night secretly, when all the guests had left. My mother told me, especially, a lot about the Dalai Lama. She had full confidence}
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\(^{35}\) The ongoing protests at the Kirti monastery in Kham is a notable exception.
in me because I wouldn't talk very much in general. So, I was in Lhasa and I found out about a protest that was happening. I participated without my parents' knowledge, otherwise, they wouldn't have allowed it. The protest was at Norbulinka, and nine people were arrested, including me.

As in narratives of migration, “knowledge” about Tibet and the Dalai Lama circulates through kinship relations. Tseyang seems to remember daily life with her family through their shared political “consciousness,” in particular, through the act of listening clandestinely to the Dalai Lama's speeches. And, like many migrants who left Tibet at the resistance of their families or without their families' knowledge, Tseyang undertook political risk secretly. Tseyang provides an example of consistent acts of resistance to state oppression in the form of migration and political protest.

Also, Tseyang's circumstances of arrest shed light on the ways that political protest in Tibet seems to function as a ritual. Tseyang had explained that the demonstration leading to her arrest took place in the context of existing performances. Barnett (2005) has noted a similar dynamic, in which political protesters in Tibet incorporate their demonstrations into religious rituals and holidays (325-327). My informants consistently reported that Tibetans are more closely monitored during holidays. Certain rituals, such as throwing tsampa (a barley flour that is the staple food in Tibet) in the air at the Dalai Lama's birthday are banned in Tibet. That existing Tibetan ritual becomes a mode for the performance of discontent further underlines the strength of the ties between Tibetan identity and political resistance. And, that protest functions as performance in Tibet foreshadows its role in humanitarian discourse. Narrative spectacles of suffering in exile preserve the form of political protest in Tibet.

Sangmu

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36 Tsampa throwing occurs at many Tibetan celebrations, including the New Year, birthdays, and weddings. It seems to function as a general sort of good luck prayer, as well as an expression of joy.
Sangmu and I met at the office of Gu Chu Sum, the association of former political prisoners in Dharamsala, where she works as a secretary. Sangmu's job seems to demonstrate another facet of former political prisoner's symbolic power. Apart from Sangmu and the teacher at TTS described in the Introduction, all the Tibetans I knew in Dharamsala who worked for NGOs, schools, or the exile government were born in India. That both Sangmu and the teacher are former political prisoners suggests that the experience of imprisonment may also allow for employment opportunities unavailable to other Tibetans from Tibet. I visited the office a few days after I reached Dharamsala in April, 2011, when I was referred by a friend who told me that the organization houses former political prisoners who have “seen” forced abortion and sterilization, the starting point of my research.37 When I entered the office, I spoke with an employee who pointed me to the office next door, where Sangmu sat. Sangmu speaks fluent Tibetan and Chinese, and knows some English. She seemed extremely excited to speak with me, but I did not yet have a translator. I came back a day later, with my friend and translator, Tenzin Youdon, to help.

Forty-four year old Sangmu was born in Kham, and lived in Tibet until she was imprisoned following political activism during her matriculation at Tibet University in Lhasa. She tells me,

Now, I am married, but I don't have children. I wanted children, but it was mainly due to my health that I didn't have children. From age six to twenty-two, I went to a Chinese school. The Chinese started a revolutionary movement around this time [the late 1970s and 1980s], and their ideology influenced my schooling. I grew up in a village on the way to Chamdo, and I could see all of Chamdo from a hill in the village, and it had the shape of a peacock. There was definitely enough food, everyone was happy. There was no poverty. You could

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37 My informants emphasized the notion of “giving witness” to Tibetan suffering, in addition to telling of personal experiences of suffering. This specific vocabulary underscores the ways that Tibetan realities are translated into a discursive structure of legal terminology, including “testimony”, “witness,” and “knowledge.”
Like Tseyang, Sangmu opens her narrative through a discussion of her current kinship ties, suggesting that forming a family in exile held significance for her. And, that she places importance on her infertility will become more clear throughout her narrative. As in women's narratives of migration, Sangmu emphasizes the environmental purity of the Tibet, as well as the people's happiness, which serves to discount the Chinese government's proclamation of their liberation of the Tibetan plateau. Sangmu's nostalgic remembering paints an idyllic portrait of the Tibetan homeland. And, her nostalgia seems characteristic of diasporic imagining. As the following excerpts suggest, women also employ pictorial retellings of their memories to communicate suffering.

Tashi Lodeoh

As Tashi Lodoeh continues to speak, like Sangmu, she vividly portrays her life in Tibet. However, rather than nostalgically imagining her previous life, she recounts her experiences of torture. She says,

> In prison, men and women lived separately. But, once you are a political prisoner, once you have done anything against the Chinese government or demanded human rights, the treatment meted out to men and women is equal. In tortures and interrogations, you have to admit that what you said at the protest was wrong, and that you believe something different. The pictures of torture they have at Gu Chu Sum, those are completely true.

The pictures of which Tashi Lodeoh is speaking are a series of drawings that hang in the stairwell leading to Gu Chu Sum's office, in a manner similar to the photographs of suffering endured through migration in the entryway to the reception center. These pictures depict common torture techniques used against Tibetan women, including beating, burning their breasts, hanging them from the ceiling by their arms and dragging barbed wire between their legs, and inserting sticks...
into their vaginas (Fig. 11). In addition to describing these tortures themselves, political prisoners pointed me towards such images, demonstrating the ways that both visual and narrative spectacle communicates embodied suffering. When describing specific tortures, translators also added in their own references to the images at Gu Chu Sum, and gestured vividly as they spoke.

These overlapping visual and narrative performances complicate the examination of the emergence of the prison narrative in multiple contexts. It is not simply that women reiterate the claims found in human rights literature and vice versa. Rather, the spectacular nature of the prison narrative, particularly in its pictorial form suggests a process of scopophilic exoticizing that furthers the “narrative disposssession” (McGranahan 2010b) of former political prisoners. Given the sexual nature of images of the torture of female political prisoners, this narrative disposssession seems explicitly gendered according to a trend in consuming images of the female body. The sexualization of the prison narrative points to a discord between the representation of torture and its lived experience; as Tashi Lodoeh suggests, Tibetan women reflect upon torture, including sexual violence, as an experience shared across gender. Additionally, as described in the Introduction, narrative spectacles of bodily suffering seem to present an aesthetic similar to and work in concert with diasporic imaginings (see p. 23-24). Although narratives of torture portray atrocity while nostalgic rememberings detail happiness, both seem to assert the Tibetan people's claims to the homeland. That is, diasporic imaginings of Tibet suggest an inherent, naturalized connection between the Tibetan people and the physical territory of Tibet, while vivid representations of torture communicate the moral imperative of reuniting the Tibetan people with their homeland.

As Tashi Lodoeh continues to speak, she juxtaposes gender and ethnicity while discussing
the social dynamics in prison. She says,

*Generally, the soldiers who are in charge of the prison operations are female, but during interrogations and torture it is always men, because they are more fierce and they can beat harder. In prison there weren't many Tibetans—only a handful. The Chinese prisoners weren't beaten or put through torture. They are not political prisoners, but had had disagreements with their superiors or something like that. Tibetans worked for the Chinese government in the prisons, but those who gave the commands were Chinese. Sometimes the Tibetan guards beat us, but they didn't beat like the Chinese did—like we were animals. The Tibetans beat us because they have to do it, otherwise they will be in trouble.*

Tashi Lodoeh attributes the gendered division of prison labor to innate characteristics of men and women. In this way, gender difference provides a lens through which Tashi Lodoeh seems to understand her experiences of torture. Also, Tashi Lodoeh seems to perceive a sense of solidarity among Tibetans, suggesting that Tibetan employees could recognize the prisoners' humanity while the Chinese could not. Tashi Lodoeh therefore describes the social dynamics in prison in a manner that mirrors common understandings of the political situation in Tibet. She suggests that the “Chinese” and “Tibetans” are opposed, which harkens back to her earlier reference to “the atrocities the Chinese perpetrate against Tibetans.” Tashi Lodoeh's narrative thus suggests that the essentialization of nationality and gender influences prisoners' understandings of their torture.

Politicalized understanding of ethnic difference seems to lead Tibetans to view interpersonal interactions as a microcosm of the political struggle. Among my informants, it seemed that Tibetans more frequently vilified “the Chinese” in discussions of specific human rights violations. Discussions of everyday relations between Tibetans and Chinese in Tibet were generally more nuanced. One woman told me, “*We don't hate the Chinese. It is the Chinese government that is our enemy.*” In fact, it was more common for Tibetans in Dharamsala to
distinguish populations from their governments when discussing India and China as opposed to the West. A number of Tibetans told me that although they are grateful for the Indian government, they dislike Indians. Tibetans told me that “the Chinese are not bad but their government is bad. In India, it's the opposite: the government is good and the people are bad.” And yet, in Tashi Lodoeh's narrative, national difference marks inhumanity; literally, Chinese guards treated Tibetans “like animals.” Avni (2006) writes that a discourse of “human rights crowds out other ways of understanding harm and recompense” (207). That is, humanitarian representation presents a framework that colors the interpretation, experience, and memory of violence. It seems that Tashi Lodoeh may understand inter-ethnic interactions from the standpoint of such humanitarian representations; she seems acutely aware of national difference in exile, and reflects on her imprisonment by expressing alienation from her Chinese guards. The heightened essentialization of nationality found in my informants' descriptions of human rights violations may reflect a normative international discourse. And, former political prisoners' statements that position “Tibetans” and “Chinese” in opposition suggest that this normative discourse shapes memories of torture, blurring the lines between personal violence and national conflict.

Tseyang

Like Tashi Lodoeh, Tseyang also highlights gender and ethnic difference in prison. She says that, upon arrest,

First, we were each put in a separate room. It was a Friday, and we weren't given anything because they said that the shift would change on Monday and we had to do with what we had until then. I was only sixteen when I was in prison, so I didn't think, “ok, I'm a girl, so I'm treated badly.” I was in prison for three years, and there were Chinese and Tibetans, and men and women, working. During the torture for each prisoner there would be one Chinese and
one Tibetan interpreter. There were two types of Tibetan interpreters: some were good and would allow you to go to the toilet to pee and would sometimes give you food, and some were bad. Usually, the Chinese would beat us during interrogations. My Tibetan interpreter was quite cruel and contributed to the beatings. Maybe this was because he grew up in an environment where his parents didn't care about him, an environment that was not religious enough.

Tseyang's description of Chinese and Tibetan interrogators demonstrates that ethnic difference colors the ways that prisoners make sense of interpersonal manifestations of the political conflict in Tibet (a pattern that Tashi Lodoeh's narrative also suggests). Tseyang seems to suggest that Tibetan interrogators may act with more kindness. And, she articulates the cruelty of her Tibetan interpreter by referencing family and religious upbringing, pointing to a sense of affiliation. Tseyang seems to view Tibetan enculturation (religious and familial) as a means of cultivating compassion. Retelling the prison narrative, therefore, provides testimony of the broader political and social conflict between the Tibetan and Chinese nations; she seems to present her Tibetan interpreter's violent acts as a result of a degrading religious climate in Tibet, caused by Chinese repression.

Noting Tseyang's statement she did not consider her gender in prison because of her age, I wonder if she thinks about gender difference now. I ask if prison would have been different if she were male, and she says,

*There was no difference, no separate treatment for men and women. Whatever men had to undergo, I had to also. It wasn’t that you would have women guards or interrogators because you were female.*

With this statement, Tseyang seems to reiterate Tibetan notions of gender difference, such as the idea that women can tolerate less suffering than men (see p. 54, 80). Like Tashi Lodoeh, she hints at an implied norm of gender differentiation between men and women that the prison

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38 It was unclear if she was speaking of specifically Buddhist religious thought, or religion in general.
guards violated. By emphasizing that she underwent the same suffering as male prisoners at the hands of male prison guards, Tseyang intensifies her description of atrocity. The torture of female political prisoners represents a transgression against what seems to be a Tibetan social norm of protecting women from pain.

**Sangmu**

As Sangmu continues speaking, describes her imprisonment, echoing Tashi Lodoeh and Tseyang's explanations of torture. She says,

> In 1989, I was imprisoned because I participated in an uprising from the Tibetan people against the Chinese. I didn't have a major role, the Chinese just used the usual argument to imprison me. It was like I was being framed. In prison, the torture was not less for girls, but totally equal between genders. They put electric shocks and barbed wire in our vaginas, but I never felt vulnerable or like I got extra pain. Everyone had pain, and the torture was equal. But, I felt that because I'm doing this for Tibet, I can do anything. Because I'm suffering for Tibet, I can handle everything. And I firmly believe that I am suffering now due to previous life cycles.

As described above, the prison narrative involves a generic plot. Narrative imagery orders key moments into this generic plot: imprisonment, sexual violence through torture, and ultimately, empowerment through Buddhist philosophy and connection to a Tibetan collectivity. Sangmu's narrative exemplifies this generic plot, since it ties together somewhat disjointed memories into the standardized form. This narrative form translates memory into testimony. Therefore, the framework of a humanitarian discourse seems to drive the ways that Tibetan women recall imprisonment. Scholars of humanitarianism argue that narrative testimony is the key mechanism through which human rights media make moral claims. McLagan (2005) writes of narrative testimony in human rights media as “a kind of intercultural technology, a mode of producing solidarity” between audience members and victims. Sangmu's description of torture points to the
dynamics of embodiment in the prison narrative's performative testimony. Narratives of embodied suffering serve to achieve an embodied response in a culturally distinct audience. Political prisoners' embodiment of Tibetan suffering thus highlights the values of universal humanism that mobilize human rights discourse and action. And, it seems that the manner in which women such as Sangmu narrate their experiences of torture responds to the humanitarian notion that bodily pain is universally comprehensible.

Sangmu continues to speak about gender, describing conditions different than those in the prisons where Tashi Lodoeh and Tseyang were held. She says,

*In the 1980s, there were three major demonstrations in Tibet and they took many political prisoners. The jails were over-crowded, so they put boys and girls together. Both men and women guards tortured us, and there was no difference. There were Tibetan and Chinese guards, and the Tibetan guards got angry more easily.*

Sangmu inverts the dynamic that Tashi Lodoeh described explicitly and that Tseyang hinted at, asserting that Tibetan guards, rather than Chinese guards, treated the prisoners with less humanity. That each woman mentions ethnicity yet discusses it differently complicates the prison narrative's portrayal of the micro-interactional manifestations of the political conflict. As described above, the prison narrative seems to project essentialized notions of national difference onto interpersonal interactions. However, women's individual experiences of torture, under the legal framework of the Chinese state, reveal inconsistencies with the prison narrative's standard plot. It seems that that ethnic difference provides a lens through which women interpret their experiences of imprisonment, although these interpretations seem idiosyncratic. Additionally, like Tseyang, Sangmu describes both male and female torturers, attesting to the depth of her suffering. Sangmu clarifies Tseyang's hints about gender separation, portraying unisex facilities.
as a perversion of social and institutional norms brought about by the intensity of Chinese oppression (i.e. the number of arrests). Sangmu extends the notion of perversion to her experience of torture, explaining that both male and female guards tortured her. In these three women's narratives, discussions of gender, although consistent with the plots of English language human rights reports, seem to communicate different notions of sexual violence. Whereas in human rights reports, sexual violence seems motivated by efforts to achieve an embodied audience response, these women negate the sexual nature of this violence in order to articulate the depth of their suffering. And, since suffering seems to produce cultural capital, describing sexual violence as a form of gender equality may provide a means for women to assert their symbolic power. As described in Chapter One, Tibetans sometimes competitively wield narratives of the suffering incurred through migration (see p. 68-69). Women's accounts of sexual violence may present a similar dynamic. Since women are supposedly weaker than men, their insistence that they endured torture as intense as the violence to which men were subjected may bolster the symbolic capital associated with their narratives of imprisonment.

Also, Sangmu describes Buddhist philosophy as a source of empowerment during her imprisonment. She explains that, as well as understanding her pain to be the result of karmic consequences, she feels that she suffered for the Tibetan collectivity. As Tashi Lodoeh will further explain, former political prisoners embody collective suffering in a manner that both endows them with symbolic power and validates belief in a Buddhist collectivity.

_Tashi Lodoeh_

Tashi Lodoeh echoes the idea that Tibetans have the strength to survive suffering because of their Buddhist faith. She tells me,
Generally, when you are put in extreme conditions and have to undergo torture, sickness, and mental trauma, many would consider suicide. But, when we went to protest, we were prepared [by other nuns and our teachers]. We knew that we were doing everything for a cause, for all of Tibet, and that gave us confidence. We kept praying to the Dalai Lama, and our faith in him kept us alive.

Tashi Lodoeh participated in the protest along with other members of her nunnery. She mentions two friends, in particular, one of whom remains in Tibet. The other shares responsibility for Tashi Lodoeh's restaurant. Friendship seems to have strengthened Tashi Lodoeh's understanding of the collective nature of her personal pain. As Tashi Lodoeh continues to speak, the strength of her personal connection to a Tibetan collectivity becomes even more salient. She says,

I have always wished that the torture I went through was worthy of other Tibetans. We have the ability to not get defeated in crises. Even if you are not educated, as a Tibetan you can overcome crises. We listen to the Dalai Lama's speeches and to his advice, and that helps. I'm happy [in India] (laughing). I miss my parents and that's a huge disadvantage, but it is better to stay outside a Chinese environment.

As in narratives of migration, Tashi Lodoeh reiterates normative messages that have become institutionalized. For example, Tashi Lodoeh expresses the sense that she possesses the strength to undergo suffering because of her faith in the Dalai Lama, and that she views torture as a sacrifice undertaken for the good of “Tibet” and “Tibetans.” Despite the pain (“disadvantage”) of social rupture she experiences from being separated from her parents, Tashi Lodoeh seems to feel empowered by her connection to the Dalai Lama and to the Buddhist community in exile.

The message of Tibetans' collective strength in suffering circulates from those representing institutions, such as Dolkar at the Torture Survivor's Unit (see p. 85). And, it is wielded, through the prison narrative, as a means of achieving international support based, in part, on romantic, almost mythical, ideas about Buddhism. For example, an entire industry of
Buddhist psychology has arisen in Europe and America. An American activist for Tibet living in Kathmandu told me that “practicing Dharma” was the only therapeutic technique that ultimately pulled her out of depression. The prison narrative is materially profitable because it has been incorporated into a humanitarian regime, international media, and Western understandings of Tibetan Buddhism. With the institutionalization and international dissemination of the prison narrative, ex-political prisoners' symbolic capital translates into symbolic power, since their suffering both mobilizes political action and strengthens the cohesion of collective Tibetan identity.

The connection between the prison narrative and nationalism in Dharamsala demonstrates the ways that Tibetan attitudes seem to have been molded within a liberal humanist discourse that frames the political tenets of human rights. Baumann (1997) asserts that, in the exile community, basic elements of Buddhist philosophy have shifted. He explains that “chos [the notion of faith in Tibetan Buddhism] now 'suddenly' also encompasses concepts like equality and justice, whereas, for centuries, monastic power monopolization and various sociopolitical inequalities were similarly justified by religious interpretations of chos” (381). The conceptual links between Buddhist thought and liberal humanist ideologies suggest that the religious convictions underlying the trope of collective suffering may be influenced by the discourse of an international humanitarian regime. As Venturino (1995) explains, the very meaning of “Tibet” has shifted drastically in response to the diaspora's formation. And, individual Tibetans, espousing a sort of “global consciousness” grapple with this shifting national identity (Nowak 1984: 103). Venturino writes,

Lopez (1998) traces this industry to Carl Jung's use of the Tibetan Book of the Dead in developing his theories of analytical psychology (59).
Tibetans cannot engage their traditions from outside the narratives of events and structures that determine their identities and futures. Tibetan identities already exist within competing ideologies and narratives...and Tibetans are directing their struggle for freedom toward the negotiation of these strands of narrative [1995: 156].

Venturino argues that imaginings of Tibetanness are molded in an international context. Individual Tibetans navigate within and between shifting notions of what is “Tibetan,” molding their personal history in response to these competing discourses. For example, given that Tibetan Buddhism has throughout history institutionally structured Tibetan societies (Avedon 1984: 14), changing interpretations of its tenets suggest a profound cultural shift, which plays out on the level of the individual and can be traced in personal narratives. Tashi Lodoeh's performance of the prison narrative points to a social practice of fitting personal experiences of suffering into an existing economy of suffering that reflects the structure of international engagement with the political conflict in Tibet. And, as described above, this international engagement involves Western fascination with Buddhism, as well as human rights discourse.

Tseyang

As Tseyang continues to speak, she also describes the significance of the Dalai Lama to Tibetan prisoners. She says,

> When I was in prison, the Chinese would occasionally ask about holidays, like the National Uprising Day (March 10th) and the Dalai Lama's birthday and ask, “Do you think they are still relevant?” If you give answers they want to hear, you can get through your sentence. But, there was one question they asked me, “If the Dalai Lama were to come back to Tibet, we would welcome him. Would you welcome him?” And I said that I'm not ready to welcome him, if the Chinese are the head of Tibet. If Tibetans and Chinese lived separately, then I would welcome him. I was put in solitary confinement. If you are about to enter prison and they interrogate you this way, it might prolong your sentence.

By highlighting the connection between performances of Tibetanness and political oppression,
Tseyang mirrors the circumstances of her arrest. Tseyang's narrative suggests that the Chinese government seeks to eliminate Tibetan traditions and destabilize the relationship between Tibetans and the Dalai Lama in order to gain political control of the Tibetan population. Openly expressing—that is, performing—Tibetanness in Tibet leads to political oppression. However, the prison narrative offers another rendition of the performance of the Tibetan collectivity. Like protesting within Tibet, telling the prison narrative presents a performative form of resistance, which employs the suffering that results from political oppression to affirm diasporic subjectivity.

Also, Tseyang speaks of her decision to migrate to India in a manner similar to Tashi Lodoeh. She explains,

Once you are a political prisoner, society looks down on you. It is very difficult to find employment... The main reason I protested was for the Dalai Lama, and since I had no means of living in Tibet, I came to India so that I could at least meet the Dalai Lama.... My parents were not aware when I had fled, and they came to know only when I was in India, through a friend's relatives.

According to her narrative, Tseyang chose to migrate due to the practical difficulties of supporting herself in Tibet. Her status as a former political prisoner created hardship in her daily life in Tibet, although it translates into symbolic power in exile. And, Tseyang's choice to migrate without her family's knowledge parallels her experience of arrest. In both circumstances, although her political knowledge (including her reverence for the Dalai Lama) was cultivated primarily through her family relationships, she made a singular decision to engage in political subversion. Tseyang's story thus presents a tension between different forms of belonging to the Tibetan collectivity—both familial and diasporic. By participating in the performance and spectacle of Tibetan suffering, Tseyang is displaced from a close-knit, familial,
social world at the same time that she is emplaced within a broader diasporic community. In the following excerpt, Tashi Lodoeh likewise explains difficulties that have arisen after her release from prison.

*Tashi Lodoeh*

Tashi Lodoeh had stated that men and women face equal torture. However, she emphasizes women's health problems, in particular, following imprisonment. She says,

*As a woman, once you are an ex-political prisoner, it is guaranteed that you will have physical problems. Some have gone blind, or they go to the hospital for constant migraines. Many have kidney problems, and everyone has back problems. I have gone to the hospital many times, and I am taking Tibetan herbal medicine now. I just got back from the hospital in Chandigarh because I have severe backaches and pain around my waist and hips. It is because in prison during the winter, we were made to stand in frozen water and beaten with electric batons. In winter now, my lower half is stone cold. Something happened to my nerves.*

Tashi Lodoeh therefore seems to understand her present illnesses to be the result of specific tortures she experienced in prison. She embodies the remnants of torture in her present suffering, suggesting that gendered embodiment *does* play a role in women's experiences of torture. That Tashi Lodoeh discusses gender in the context of health suggests that this embodiment aligns with the notion of inherent physical difference between men and women that women highlighted in their stories of migration. As described in Chapter One, my informants seemed to make sense of gendered disparities in migration patterns by highlighting men's strength. One woman, who migrated with her family of four girls, told me it would have been easier for them if they had had a brother to help them endure the physical struggle of crossing the Himalayan plateau. It seems,

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40 Tseyang's particular position within this new-found community also allows her access to the international community not available to all members of the Tibetan diaspora. Tseyang had mentioned to me at one of our first meetings that she had traveled to Belgium in 2008 with Gu Chu Sum to participate in demonstrations against China in the context of the upcoming the Beijing Olympics. In addition to the international dissemination of the prison narrative, therefore, former political prisoners' symbolic power allows them to navigate a wider geographical space.
therefore, that understandings of illness—an embodied effect of torture—follows Tibetan notions of gender difference that center on perceptions of physical strength.

Sangmu

As Sangmu continues to speak, she also describes the illnesses she has suffered following her imprisonment. She explains,

*I had a three year sentence, but I was released after one year. I was sick from the torture and I went to the hospital. Another prisoner had pleaded to the head of the prison to take me to the hospital. The prisoners had made sort of uprising in the prison before, so that I could get medical care, but that had failed.*41 In general, the guards don't care about our health, but torture is illegal in China. Many prisoners just die if they are deeply sick, like Lopa Tsering who died by torture.

With her last statement, Sangmu opens a file on her desk devoted to Lopa Tsering, a male political prisoner whose death Gu Chu Sum is investigating, and shows me his picture. That she discusses torture and its illegality with reference to a specific individual corresponds to the use of personal testimony in human rights discourse. She communicates the immorality of torture by painting it as a legal violation against an individual victim. Additionally, that Sangmu describes this suffering in the context of health and health care demonstrates a conceptual overlap between illness and torture as forms of embodied suffering. She articulates both through images of the suffering body, both hinge on identification with individual suffering, and both correspond to a discourse of human rights.

As Sangmu continues to speak, she shifts to describe life in India. She tells me,

*In India, there are problems for Tibetans who come from Tibet. I know five people who cannot have babies because of drastic changes in the environment because Tibet is so high. It's a problem for political prisoners, but for normal

41 The dynamics of uprising and protest that Sangmu describes within the prison have been documented in scholarly literature. Barnett (2005) notes that such uprisings were a specifically “feminized” form of protest, and often took the form of singing (334-355). Sangmu, however, does not say more about the prison uprising.
people, also. Coming to India affects our bodies, we go to the hospital and find that we have infections.

Sangmu expresses that the embodied suffering resulting from migration unites Tibetans from Tibet. In exploring conversation among Moscow's intelligentsia, Ries (1997) found that the categories people employ with regularity...are experienced as natural and essential, both to the users of those terms and to those who hear them. This constant and ubiquitous discursive naturalization of socially constructed categories accounts, in large measure, for the perception that ethnicity is biologically, genetically, or even climatologically reproduced [25].

Tibetan narratives, such as Sangmu's, portray the physical pain associated with migration as medical illnesses. Beyond symbolizing the collective suffering of the Tibetan people, illnesses associated with migration serve to naturalize the social division in Dharamsala between Tibetans born in India and Tibetans from Tibet. By describing common experiences of illness, Sangmu's narrative further demonstrates the ways that the prison narrative speaks to broader concerns of Tibetans living in exile. The prison narrative typically ends with a description of protracted illness, which, Sangmu asserts, many migrants face. The prison narrative thus streamlines a common Tibetan experience of corporeal suffering, expressing it in an extremist form (that is, as illness resulting from torture rather than migration) that carries symbolic efficacy in an international humanitarian regime.

As Sangmu continues to speak, she directs us towards reproduction as a central concern in the realm of health and illness. Sangmu opened her narrative by discussing her infertility, and continues to speak of this medical condition. She says,

_I was always willing to have a baby after I was released from prison, and I visited the hospital for fertility. I found that I have a lower back problem, but I never came to know the real problem. I had many relations with boys after prison, but it is because of all the pressures in prison that I couldn't have babies. I have never used any birth control, not even condoms. In prison, I was kicked_
all the time. I have problems in my intestines, ovaries, and joints. Even after coming to India and living with my partner, we have tried every possibility, but now I cannot have a baby because of menopause. And, even forty-four is young for menopause.

That Sangmu focuses on her infertility over the other health problems she lists points to the importance of reproduction in Tibetan women's lives. And, that she links her infertility to her experience of torture draws a connection between different forms of somatic suffering.

Conclusions

This chapter has analyzed the circulation of human rights discourse in Dharamsala in both English language human rights reports and Tibetan women's personal narratives. Through this analysis, I have sought to demonstrate the ways that hegemony operates to produce normative knowledge in Dharamsala. Human rights organizations and the exile government communicate a humanitarian framing of the political conflict in Tibet through narrative testimonies of imprisonment. This humanitarian framing seems to be hegemonic, since Tibetans women themselves invoke generic narratives of imprisonment that mirror those found in human rights literature. And, the genre of the prison narrative seems to have provided a pathway for Tibetan women's emergence into the narrative space of Dharamsala, granting them symbolic power unavailable to many other Tibetan women in Dharamsala. The prevalence of women's renditions of the prison narrative, in particular, suggests that the gendered use of spectacle in an international regime of human rights has profoundly shaped the narrative climate of Dharamsala. McGranahan (2010b) explains, for example, that in narratives of women who fought in the Khampa guerrilla movement,

It is not solely gender that is eclipsed in the Tibetan literature [on the war], but women as well...[Likewise,] in the Tibetan refugee community, there is neither a literary nor popular tradition of women's history. There is not a special genre of
or for women's history, nor do Tibetan women disguise their histories in other privately or publicly acceptable genres. Instead, most of those with whom I spoke tell their stories infrequently. When they do tell them, it is in the genre of straightforward, first-person historical narration [774].

McGranahan found that Khampa women rarely narrated their lives even when they had experienced the key scenario of political resistance. In contrast, it seemed that my informants felt I could access an authoritative knowledge of Tibet through former political prisoners, including women. That the exile community has granted to female former political prisoners the power to represent the Tibetan collectivity suggests a new performative possibility for women in Dharamsala. As in stories of migration, which link personal narratives to Tibet's mythico-history, the women cited in this chapter seem to communicate a moral ordering of the world by incorporating their life stories into the prison narrative. When women frame their personal narratives according to the generic conventions of the prison narrative, they seem to personally petition for Tibetan independence. This moral ordering figures as a sort of geopolitical strategy; since the exile community asserts moral claims to nationhood through a humanitarian discourse, it is through the international humanitarian regime that Tibet enters a world of nation states.

The narratives of female former political prisoners also clarify the ways that gender operates as a “hidden social infrastructure” in Dharamsala (Turner 1980:154). I spoke with male political prisoners, as well, whose stories were similar to those of women in their deployment of archetypes of raw, physical pain. But, I found that when women spoke of experiences of torture, they also mentioned gender by overtly denying its importance. That women mention gender while men do not suggests that it does, in fact, influence experiences of torture. Women's ability to speak of their imprisonment seems to result from a symbolic power that constructs them as a hegemonic social group in Dharamsala. As a unique social formation,
the emergent hegemony of female political prisoners is projected into the existing hegemony of
an international humanitarian regime. This international humanitarian regime capitalizes upon
gender difference, and women narrate their stories by invoking gendered imagery. And yet,
hegemonies do not represent rigid structures of domination (Lowe 2003). As Tibetan women tell
of their imprisonment, they seem to negate the Euro-American emphasis on sexual violence, a
process of narrative repossession which seems to be influenced by a sense of collective
embodiment.

Collective Embodiment and Sexual Violence

As described above, women's renditions of the prison narrative present a central contradiction:
they explicitly detail sexual violence, while stating directly that this violence is not gendered. I
argue that this contradiction responds to the dynamics of hegemony. The greater Tibetan society
grants female political prisoners narrative space within a humanitarian discourse. But, in
performing narrative testimony, women express their own understandings of gender. And, these
understandings of gender seem to contradict the intended impacts of sexual imagery in human
rights media. In a case study on political activism in the Philippines, Gregory (2006) writes that,
in human rights media, the “efficacy and achievement of 'impact' may clash with ethical or
truthful representation of the origins of the testimony or the context of a situation” (197). The
sexualized imagery of the Tibetan prison narrative seems to exemplify this process of
misrepresentation, since it directly contradicts the ways that women describe these experiences.
Like Gregory, Torchin (2006) argues that commercialization leads human rights media to
capitalize upon an audience's “titillation.” Torchin argues that “political advocacy can be carried
out through sexual stimulation, not despite it. Sensation provides an excellent mode of
publicity” (217). Since human rights literature, and the discourse that constructs it, operates in a neoliberal global political economy, we can locate its intended impact within processes of publicity and consumption that seem to be driven by sexual imagery.

However, the contradictions in women's narratives of imprisonment reach beyond simple misrepresentation. As Barnett (2005) argues, the violence perpetrated against female political prisoners in Tibet “seems, as far as those of us involved in the morbid archaeology of chronicling these events can tell, to have been gendered: prison interrogators in Tibet appear to have developed special forms of abuse for these women that were not recorded by the male prisoners” (348). As they tell the prison narrative, women seem to overlook the infrastructure of gender while they also respond to the demands of a Euro-American discourse. Das, Kleinman, and Lock (1997) speak of “the role of the speech genre of a society in molding the experience of suffering so that certain experiences of pain and grieving become expressible while others are shrouded in silence” (xiv). It seems that a humanitarian discourse has shifted the genre of tellable narratives in Dharamsala, rendering publicly expressible women's experiences of certain key scenarios. While women's suffering through political imprisonment confers to them symbolic power, other lived experiences of gendered suffering in key scenarios remain untellable. Women's migration narratives, which are less prevalent in human rights discourse and media on Tibet, obliterate the risk of sexual violence (see pp. 53-55, 59-60). Given the contrasting expressions of gendered violence in the narratives of these two key scenarios, it seems that the influence of Euro-American discourse on linguistic performances in Dharamsala has allowed for women's open expressions of sexual violence during torture.

It also seems that advocating gender sameness provides an avenue for Tibetan women's
empowerment. As they tell the prison narrative, women cope with seemingly unbearable suffering by highlighting the collective suffering of the Tibetan people. They abstract individual, bodily pain into a symbolic marker of Tibetanness. Asserting equal suffering across genders thus further articulates a sense of belonging. And, individuals seem to make sense of their experiences of atrocity through this sense of belonging. The systematic nature of torture accentuates this dynamic; systematic enactment of the same tortures aims to produce the same pain. In this way, the resulting suffering is embodied collectively. Additionally, since Tibetan understandings of gender seem to position women as inherently weaker and more vulnerable than men, women who have survived the same tortures as men can be seen as having experienced greater suffering. Because individuals seem to competitively wield narratives of suffering in Dharamsala, equating morality and social status with the intensity of suffering, women may seek to morally legitimate their symbolic power by describing pain superior to the suffering men have experienced.

Human rights discourse portrays collectively embodied suffering in an attempt to universalize bodily pain. However, through their statements about gender equality, Tibetan women explain torture in a culturally specific manner. In this way, the circulation of the prison narrative demonstrates a wider trend of the “globalization of local images stripped of their meaning” in human rights media (Gregory 2006: 201). For example, Adams (1998) writes that, in testimonies of human rights violations against Tibetans, “suffering has to be made into something that...results from a presumed universally shared suffering. Suffering is asked to speak in the language of the one who is perceived as being able to alleviate it” (82). Adams argues that human rights discourse communicates suffering through a process of translation that
privileges Euro-American modes of expression. Tibetan women themselves seem to respond to this translation, since they *portray* torture in accordance with Euro-American representations of sexual violence. They order individual experiences of torture into a gendered narrative spectacle that seems structured by a Western humanitarian discourse. And yet, they *reflect* upon these instances of violence by denying the importance of gender, emphasizing instead their belonging to a collectivity of suffering people.

The prison narrative thus presents the interactions between various hegemonies, both in Dharamsala, and abroad. Women seem to narrate their individual Tibetan selves within the structure of an existing hegemonic discourse—that of human rights. In describing this dynamic, Venturino (1995) argues that,

> the Tibetan 'prisoner-self,' developed in reaction to oppression...is an undeniable agent of Tibetan protest and cannot be dismissed...[But it] reveals a powerlessness when extracted as an essence, and its logic only tends to realize oppressive ideology [166-167].

The narratives in this chapter demonstrate, however, that women do not remain powerless against colonizing, hegemonic representations of their imprisonment. Asserting gender sameness presents a form of resistance to the discursive oppression that “dispossesses” women of their experiences of torture. Since suffering seems to produce value in Dharamsala, women morally legitimate their subjectivities by asserting that they, as presumably weaker incarnations, survived equal torture to men. Female former political prisoner have thus become a hegemonic group in Dharamsala, by structuring their symbolic power within the existing hegemony of an international humanitarian regime. The following chapter continues to examine the interaction between personal narrative and human rights discourse, in the realm of reproductive rights.
Chapter 3: Displaced People, Emplaced Births: Childbirth between Tibet and Dharamsala

Introduction

The previous chapters have demonstrated that as my informants tell their personal narratives, they (re)produce Tibet as an imagined community marked by suffering, through plots of migration and imprisonment. Through these common plots, the women with whom I spoke employ personal experiences of suffering to communicate the collective suffering of the Tibetan people. In this way, they shift between personal and collective history in a dynamic that seems to both affirm membership to the Tibetan collectivity and perpetuate a moral framing of the political conflict in Tibet. Narrating suffering becomes socially reproductive, since it allows individuals cultivate, disseminate, and internalize collective and individual subjectivities.

This chapter extends the discussion of narratives of suffering to the realm of physical reproduction, by examining the ways that the narratives of reproductive suffering carry metaphorical and moral overtones. Structured around narratives of childbirth that arose during four extensive interviews, the chapter also intertwines shorter narrative segments that were collected in both formal and informal contexts with English language human rights reports from the Tibetan Women's Association. In these diverse narratives, discussions of reproduction seem directed towards Tibet. When I spoke with women in Dharamsala about reproduction, they reiterated claims of genocide, enacted through forced abortion and sterilization, that are also found in English language human rights literature. Through these claims of genocide, women seemed to respond to a humanitarian framing of the political conflict in Tibet. These descriptions of forced abortions and sterilizations seemed to operate similarly to the prison narrative. In both cases, narratives of atrocity convey a moral ordering of the Tibetan conflict
that communicates the imperative of Tibetan freedom. My informants *politicize* discussions of childbirth and reproduction, in a manner that demonstrates a central concern with national and cultural renewal in the diaspora. In this way, even physical reproduction becomes a metaphor which my informants deploy as they shape and are shaped by exilic imaginings of the Tibetan nation and subject.

These politicized discussions of reproduction give women agency to counteract political conflict through their reproductive capacities. In an overview of symbolic representations of reproduction, Paxson (2004) notes a similar trend in political discourses on population. She explains that “Stories of fertility control and having children convey wider messages...[that] comment on the well-being or weakness of a population or nation” (30). That is, in different cultural contexts, birthrate symbolizes the health of the collectivity. In Dharamsala, it seems that concerns with population decline express broader anxieties about the annihilation of the Tibetan collectivity due to threats from China within Tibet, as well as population dispersal and birth limiting in exile. Pronatalism, as it operates in Dharamsala, involves rhetoric that directs women to reproduce multiple children by portraying a radically declining Tibetan population. However, this rhetoric rarely leads to action, since families prefer to limit births due to financial constraints (Childs and Barkin 2006). I know of no Tibetan families living in Dharamsala who have more than three children. In addition to my observations of family composition, demographic data suggest that the fertility rate in exile is much lower than in Tibet. The most recent demographic survey of exiled Tibetans (2009) notes that the fertility rate has declined to an average of 1.18 from an estimated 4.9 in 1987-1989. In response to the declining fertility rate, politicians and human rights organizations call on women to reproduce the collectivity. For example, Diki, a

female nurse working in Dharamsala explained to me that “We hear that the population is decreasing from talks on the Tibetan news channel, by discussions with the Prime Minister during the elections. The majority [of Tibetans] think that the declining population is a problem.” By circulating testimony of genocide, human rights organizations also seem to play a key role in constructing knowledge of a declining population. In Dharamsala, therefore, pronatalist rhetoric arises in the context of the exile government's political discourse, in discussions with NGO and health workers, and in personal narrative.

This chapter examines how the pervasive political discourse on reproduction that I encountered in Dharamsala influences women's attitudes towards and lived experiences of physical reproduction. Women's personal narratives of childbirth in Dharamsala and Tibet complicate the connections between regulated reproduction and atrocity. As women discuss their own experiences of childbirth in Dharamsala, they speak also of memories of childbirth, commonly of their parents and siblings, in Tibet. As will become clear throughout the chapter, these memories are rife with first hand accounts of maternal and infant death, which women attribute to a lack of access to biomedical care. And yet, the Chinese state enacts coercive reproductive regulation through biomedical establishments. In response, women's narratives seem to construct biomedical reproductive intervention as a tool in the execution of genocide. Women's narratives thus present what seem to be conflicting attitudes biomedical reproductive health care in Tibet, in the contexts of childbirth and state-mandated birth limiting. And, women also contrast encounters with biomedical reproductive health care in India and Tibet. This chapter grapples with paradoxes in narratives of childbirth and reproduction between Tibet and India.
I first encountered the framing of the political conflict in Tibet as a genocide in January, 2011, when reading John Avedon's history of the Tibetan diaspora, *In Exile from the Land of Snows* (1984), before my departure for Kathmandu, where I would be studying with the School for International Training. It was the only required reading in preparation for the program. Avedon's work was the first lengthy source I had read on Tibet, and I remember being struck by Avedon's description of a 1959 report by the International Commission of Jurists which "determined that Red China was guilty of 'the gravest crime of which any person or nation can be accused—the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such'--genocide" (79-80). As I read this sentence, I felt shocked that I had not known about the severity of the conflict in Tibet. I was extremely surprised, then, when I brought up the term in a meeting with my academic director at SIT, and she immediately questioned whether or not the conflict in Tibet really was a genocide. Our Tibetan language teacher was in the room, and she turned to him asking whether he believed it was a genocide. He looked towards the floor and stated simply, "Yes." From this interaction, it became clear to me that the deployment of the term is contested. I nonetheless continued to be struck by the term's persistent circulation, so I explicitly asked Tibetans for their understanding of the term. Shortly after meeting Tenzin Tsering, the twenty-seven year old woman who worked as my translator, we were drinking coffee at a café near my home, and I asked her if she considered the conflict in Tibet to be a genocide. She responded,

We say when someone kills more than one million people, it's definitely a genocide. Currently, they might not be shooting people, just like that, but there is definitely a cultural genocide, to remove the very existence of Tibetan identity in Tibet itself. They are trying to sinicize everything...So there is an attempt at cultural genocide...because what sets us apart from the Chinese is that we are Tibetans, they are Chinese, we are different. We have different history, totally
In Tenzin Tsering’s response, “genocide” connotes not physical, but cultural destruction. She explains that, rather than “shooting people,” the Chinese state has perpetrated a “cultural genocide” by forcing Tibetans to become Chinese. To me, the notion of a “cultural genocide” presented an oxymoron, since I associate genocide with physical annihilation. Barnett (2001) has likewise noted that the use of the term “cultural genocide” does not hold up in the realm of (Western) international law or scholarship (284-285). At first, I regarded the use of this term as a blatant misrepresentation of the political conflict in Tibet provoked by the demands of the international humanitarian regime in an attempt to garner sympathies for the Tibetan cause. If the Chinese government, in fact, intended to annihilate the Tibetan population, why would they enforce more stringent regulations on Han women (Zhu et al. 2009)? And, if local enforcement of the Chinese state’s reproductive regulations proceeded in a discriminatory manner, how is it that demographers have noted increasing fertility rates on the Tibetan plateau (Childs et al. 2005, Goldstein and Beall 1991, Goldstein et al. 2002: 34-45)? It seems that culturally specific understandings of an overlap between the physical and spiritual realms contributes to the belief in a genocide. Also, it seems that this overlap bolsters the symbolic dimensions of reproduction and reproductive suffering that, as will be further examined below, employ women’s bodies as symbols of the conflict in Tibet.

Reproducing the Collectivity

In late May, one week after I spoke with Tenzin Yangzom, the twenty-two year old nun from Utzang living at the Tibetan Reception Center (TRC), I returned to the TRC with Tenzin Tsering.
to conduct more interviews. I found myself participating in a conversation among four Tibetan women who, through their interactions, articulated the specific ways that reproduction manifests itself as a collective concern in Dharamsala. Since Mingyur, the TRC's director, gave Tenzin Tsering and I permission to enter the buildings and speak with whomever was willing, we climbed the stairs in the women's dormitory, one among several concrete block buildings, painted green and yellow, that make up the TRC's campus. We found a group of four women, sitting on the floor of the balcony that lines the building and chatting, three dressed in jeans and t-shirts and one wearing a nun's red robes. As we approached, I noticed two individuals who I had previously interviewed, Tenzin Yangzom, the nun whose narrative was cited in Chapter One, and Tsewang, a twenty-three year old woman from Amdo. I asked the other two women if they would be willing to speak with me about their lives. They agreed, after Tenzin Yangzom and Tsewang encouraged them. I sat down with Tenzin Tsering, and we began to speak.

The two women whom I had not met introduced themselves as Dawa Youdon and Tsering Dolma. At twenty years old, Tsering Dolma is the youngest. A small woman from Kham, she has a darker complexion said to be characteristic of Tibetans from this region. Tsering Dolma seemed particularly shy. She added intermittently to the following conversation, but seemed reluctant to speak directly to me, sometimes even turning her body slightly away from the circle we had formed on the floor. Also, Tsering Dolma speaks a particular dialect that was difficult for the other women, including Tenzin Tsering to understand. The women sometimes switched to speak in Mandarin amongst each other, and then summarized their words in Central Tibetan for Tenzin Tsering. Twenty-six year old Dawa Youdon is Tsewang's cousin, and they are visibly related; both women have long black hair and pale white skin, their cheeks dotted with freckles.
Tenzin Tsering commented to me on how beautiful they are. Dawa Youdon and Tsewang grew up together in Tibet, and migrated together to India. They reached Dharamsala only one month ago, as did Tenzin Yangzom. At first, Dawa Youdon is hesitant to speak, saying that since I have interviewed Tsewang, I have already “heard her story.” With this statement, Dawa Youdon seems to suggest that kin share personal history. Women seem to express similar sentiments by conforming to collective narratives of Tibetan suffering through migration, the prison narrative, and, as this chapter will demonstrate, reproductive suffering. That is, Dawa Youdon's understanding of her shared history with her kin seems to mirror the ways that women affirm collective belonging to the broader kin group of the Tibetan nation. However, Tenzing Yangzom and Tsewang continue to encourage Dawa Youdon to speak, and she agrees. I ask her why she came to India, and she explains that she left Tibet for the religious and educational opportunities that Dharamsala offers. Dawa Youdon says, “I want to study first because it is more important. I want to be self-sufficient, because then you can be on your own. Then, I will get married.”

I ask Dawa Youdon if she wants to have children, and she replies, “Yes, I will need to have babies.”

“How many?” I ask.

“One hundred!” Tenzin Yangzom calls out, loudly and jokingly.

Everyone bursts into laughter, except Tsering Dolma, who exclaims, “If you have one hundred babies, you will die!”

Dawa Youdon reiterates, “My first hope was to meet the Dalai Lama. My second was to study. And the third one, I haven't thought about yet, because if you study well, it can only get better.”
Tsering Dolma, quickly adds, in a joking manner, “What if the third is to get married and the fourth is to have babies?”

Another woman, possibly Tenzin Yangzom, interjects in a high-pitched voice, almost screeching, “She [Tsering Dolma] wants to get married. She has to contribute to the Tibetan population. She should have one hundred babies!”

We all laugh again. I ask Tsering Dolma why she wants to get married. She explains, “I don’t know, but I want to get married. There is a joke about young Tibetans here at the reception center: a foreigner came and asked the seventeen to nineteen year olds what their plans were, and they all said they wanted to join the monastery. So, I told them they shouldn’t join the monastery, that they should contribute to the Tibetan population. I wish, I am hopeful, that the Tibetan population will increase.” Tsering Dolma's description of this “joke” about young Tibetans entering the monastery reveals a contradiction in Tibetan discussions of survival. The Chinese state has threatened the Buddhist social order, and the establishment of monastic centers in exile encourages young adults to follow a religious path. By joining the monastery, one actively contributes to the survival of Tibetan Buddhist culture. However, monastic life requires celibacy, putting an increased strain for survival on a (supposedly) decreasing population. A few weeks earlier, I had mentioned this contradiction to Diki, (the nurse mentioned above who works in Dharamsala). Diki responded, “If you weigh it, preserving culture is more important [than having children]. Without religion, culture will vanish.” Such statements suggest that survival connotes both “preserving culture” and giving birth to Tibetan children.

I ask Tsering Dolma explicitly if she wants babies, and she says, “Yes, I like babies. I want two minimum, five maximum. Because five is not a really big number. It is just because my
mother had five children. Other families have eleven to twelve children, but, nowadays, most families have two to three children, so even five would be a lot. The [Chinese state's] child policy varies from two to three children....I think this is definitely not good, because Tibetans will become less.”

I ask Tsering Dolma how women limit their births, and she explains that women have a metal IUD (referred to in English as the “Copper T”) inserted in the hospital. She says, “Every year, you have to go to the hospital for a check-up, and if you haven't [gotten an IUD insertion], they will give it to you. It is not done properly, and many women have become sick and died. My neighbor died because it was not inside her properly and when they realized, it was too late to fix it. These days, some women also put plastic in their arms.”43

“And,” adds Tenzin Yangzom, “if they do heavy work, it pains them. For one week, you will not be able to move your arm.”

I ask if women ever voluntarily choose to limit their births, and Tsering Dolma replies, “I don't think there is any Tibetan woman who doesn't want her own child, because the Chinese government has said so strongly that you cannot have children. It is like a law, so there is no one in our race who would not want a baby.”

Tenzin Tsering adds (without my prompting), “What if I think I already have too many children?”

Tsering Dolma replies, “This wouldn't happen because the Chinese government right

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43 Tsering Dolma is probably speaking of Norplant (levonorgestrel) injections, whose rate of use scholars have estimated at up to 19% among Tibetan women aged 25-49 in certain localities (Goldstein et al. 2002:32). From my informants' reports, it seems that contraceptive injections and IUD insertion, are far more common in Tibet than oral contraceptive use, a pattern noted by demographers working in Tibet (ibid, Goldstein and Beall 1991).

44 The original Tibetan was mi rigs, a word also used to described the fifty-six population subdivisions in China. Tenzin Tsering, Lhamo Tso and Jangchup Choesto consistently translated mi rigs as “race” rather than “minority,” “ethnicity” or “nationality.”
now is saying you cannot have children and we want children. I am the youngest, so my parents had to pay the government for me. I don't know how much, but it must have been expensive.”

This conversation demonstrates the ways that women link political conflict, physical reproduction, and cultural survival in their narratives. All of these women have entered India within the last six months, and have lived only in the reception center. Therefore, their statements about reproduction occur in a context closely linked to knowledge and memories of reproduction in Tibet. As will be described throughout the chapter, statements from human rights organizations and the Tibetan exile government make similar pronouncements about the violation of Tibetan women through coercive reproductive regulation. That these women have not been in long-term contact with statements and publications from these organizations suggests that concern with reproduction presents itself from the onset of life in exile, and may also occur within Tibet. However, in addition to implying Tibetans' collective concern with reproduction, this conversation points to the ways that women navigate within the community's desire for more children. The women seem to advocate pronatalism, asserting that everyone “in the Tibetan race” wants children. At the same time, the women's hyperbolic statements about birthing one hundred children seem to deflect personal responsibility for the burden of reproducing the Tibetan “race”. That Tenzin Yangzom, a nun, set into motion the women's hyperbolic joking epitomizes this dynamic. She has removed herself from the realm of reproduction, but seems to anxieties about the survival of the Tibetan race (which she further describes later in the chapter) by exaggerating Dawa Youdon and Tsering Dolma's desire for children. Tsering Dolma responds by retelling a joke of her own about how she discouraged teenagers at the TRC from joining the monastery. The women's conversation thus presents contradictions between pronatalism and personal
reproductive choice. The women say that no one in Tibet would voluntarily use birth control, “because the Chinese government right now is saying you cannot have children and we want children.” And yet, as they joke with each other, they direct attention away from their own reproductive capacities, encouraging other women to carry the burden of physically reproducing the nation.

As will be further examined in subsequent sections, such discussions suggest that physical reproduction operates symbolically as a key scenario through which Tibetans enact political resistance and cultural renewal. Ortner (1978) describes key scenarios as a class of symbols “which both formulate[s] appropriate goals and suggest[s] effective action for achieving them; which formulate, in other words, key cultural strategies” (1341). According to Ortner, key scenarios extend values from the realm of cultural consciousness into the field of social action. In Dharamsala, discourse on reproduction pushes the topic into the political arena. Through the exile government's (and their associated NGOs') political attention to China's coercive reproductive controls, women's bodies become the site of political conflict. Birthing children, then, represents an embodied resistance to Chinese control since physical reproduction works towards the exile community's collective goal of freedom.

In addition, physical reproduction presents another trope through which my informants communicate collective suffering. The women's attempts to deflect personal responsibility for reproduction suggests a two-fold connection between reproduction and suffering. Birth limiting produces bodily suffering through the Chinese government's inadequate and forced biomedical reproductive interventions. Giving birth, however, also leads to a naturalized form of suffering. In certain contexts, this suffering seems explicitly gendered. Some Buddhist rites, for example,
are directed towards increasing one's spiritual merits by repaying one's mother for her suffering in childbirth. Buddhist notions of biologically determined gender difference also highlight women's natural, inevitable suffering in childbirth. As described in Chapter One, certain Buddhist philosophies explain women's tribulations in pregnancy and labor as one of the reasons that the female body represents a lower incarnation than the male body (see pp. 54-55). Yet, statements from my informants also suggest a universal association of childbirth and pain. In grappling with his future, including the possibility of joining a monastery, Pema, a twenty-eight year old man from Amdo explained,

If I live in the city like normal lay people, I will have to have children and a family. But, I'm thinking...maybe I could be a monk...But, I like children, why not? It's also some kind of personal responsibility to have ten or one hundred children, but I'm not that strong.

In asserting that he is not “strong” enough to raise many children, Pema suggests that reproduction creates suffering for men, as well, extending the naturalized suffering of childbirth beyond the confines of gender. Reproduction therefore seems to operate as a key symbol in two contexts. Through physical reproduction, women enact political resistance to China. At the same time, speaking of reproductive suffering (naturalized reproductive suffering, as well as that produced through interactions with biomedicine) strengthens connections between Tibetanness and suffering. In both contexts, the symbolic elements of biological reproduction elaborate the meanings of physical and cultural renewal in the diaspora.

**Reproduction in National Imaginaries**

As they construct the Tibetan nation as a community of shared suffering, my informants seem to

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45 In Maratika, a Buddhist pilgrimage site in northeastern Nepal, such rites (which I completed) can be performed by crawling through small crevasses in a cave where Padmasambhava (T. pad+ma 'byung gnas), an eighth century *rinpoche* who Tibetans widely regard as the second Buddha, is said to have meditated.
respond to political imaginings of Tibet that emanate from the China, Euro-American human rights discourse, and the exile state. As demonstrated by the conversation cited above, women in Dharamsala seem to internalize the discussions of reproduction that serve as a metaphor for the Tibetan-Chinese conflict. The women with whom I spoke articulate pronatalism and the damages of state controlled reproduction as a counter-narrative to the Chinese discourse of development that drives reproductive regulation. Greenhalgh explains that the One Child Policy presented a means for the CCP to “modernize” its population according to global norms of Western biomedicine and Malthusian population science (2005: 213). In implementing the policy, however, “modernizing agencies inadvertently create the underside of modernity, even as they attempt to fabricate modernity alone” (2003:199). That is, by associating low birth rate with modernity, the discourse driving the One Child Policy constructed high fertility as a marker of backwardness, and rural women’s bodies became the primary target of reproductive regulations (ibid: 203, Greenhalgh 2005: 214, Chen 2011). Many of my informants come from rural areas in Tibet, and report direct and indirect physical violence associated with these “modern” biomedical interventions. For example, informants at TTS described Chinese officers who committed infanticide against babies born in excess of birth limits. More commonly, women detailed physical illness resulting from forced IUD insertions and injectable contraceptives.

Gender and reproduction also infiltrate more abstract depictions of Chinese intervention in Tibet. Barnett (2001) explains that as Tibet gained international recognition, Western discussions of Tibet “focused on the uniqueness and the violation of Tibet...'The rape of Tibet is going on,' a politician told a 1999 hearing of the U.S. Congress, articulating an image that lies within much of the language of violation found in discussions of Tibet” (274). Such Western
political discourse portrays Tibet as a female sexual innocent violated by a Chinese male aggressor. Barnett points to Chinese texts, which “also speak of Tibet as a sexual innocent. There, however, the imagery involves marriage rather than violation, and the innocence is male, a result of...a lack of sophistication or modernity” (ibid). For example, Chinese literature on Tibet's relationship with China often employs metaphoric accounts of the marriage between a seventh-century Tibetan ruler and a Han Chinese princess who brought arts and technologies from the Tang dynasty with her to Tibet. Barnett argues that these accounts communicate China's “civilizing mission toward backward peoples” (ibid). According to Barnett, both Chinese and Western state discourses frame the political conflict in Tibet through the idioms of gender and reproduction. And, as we will now examine, gendered symbolism in political discourse seems to provoke contradictions in the ways that women narrate their reproductive experiences, hopes, and fears. These narratives shed light on broader insecurities that underwrite cultural and physical reproduction in exilic situations.

**Blurred Genres: Torture, Reproduction, and Cultural Genocide**

English language human rights literature provides an example of a Western discourse in which the violations of individual women, through torture and forced reproductive regulation, serve as a metaphor for Tibet's political relations. And, it seems that women reiterate the specific formulations of the political conflict in Tibet that are found in this literature. Women's narratives picture Chinese reproductive regulation as a driving force behind their decreasing population. Like the image of the tortured female body that arises in the prison narrative, vivid descriptions of the “forced abortion and sterilization” of Tibetan women circulate throughout human rights discourse. I encountered these narrative descriptions of “reproductive rights violations”
spontaneously in Dharamsala, much like the prison narrative.

In fact, human rights organizations' English language reports present overlapping narrative testimonies of torture and reproductive rights violations. Since the Tibetan Women's Association (TWA) is responsible for much of the human rights literature that I encountered in Dharamsala, and since my informants directed me towards the organization, I sought to speak with its employees. In particular, I was interested in understanding the connections between the TWA, the exile government, and Euro-American human rights organizations, as well as how the TWA collected the data mobilized in its reports. I was, however, unable to secure an interview with anyone working in the organization. They seemed both very busy and very tired of speaking with foreigners. Although TWA employees would not take time to speak with me, when I explained that I was seeking to learn about women in Tibet, they encouraged me to purchase their published reports, including “Tears of Silence,” a booklet devoted exclusively to population control in Tibet. Although the report was published in 1995, copies were available for purchase at the TWA's office.\footnote{Since the report was also available online, I did not purchase it. All citations come from the online version, retrieved from \url{http://tibet.dharmakara.net/tears1.html}.} Like other reports of human rights violations, “Tears of Silence” links sexual violence against female political prisoners and forced reproductive regulation. For example, the report recounts “an abortion technique that involves 'inserting electrical devices into the vagina of women who are two to three months pregnant, thereby killing the baby’” (emphasis in original, TWA 1995). As described in Chapter Two, Chinese prison guards employ this same technique in torturing female political prisoners. That Chinese officials execute torture and forced abortion, as alleged in human rights literature,\footnote{Reports from other organizations, including reports from the US based Tibet Justice Center (\url{http://www.tibetjustice.org/reports/women/chinas_denial.html}) contain similar descriptions of abortion.} through the same mechanisms connects the two phenomena. In both scenarios, Chinese programs of
political oppression violate the Tibetan collectivity through women's bodies.

My informants likewise discussed the overlapping nature of torture and reproductive rights violations. For example, Sangmu, the forty-four year old former political prisoner from Kham quoted in Chapter Two, described Chinese birth control policies as “another kind of torture. If you don't have money to pay the fines, you have to go to jail, sell your land, and one thing comes after another.” This statement portrays a repertoire of torture that mirrors the genres of suffering that arise in Tibetans' life stories. That Sangmu relates torture to reproductive regulation demonstrates connections between specifically political oppression and women's reproductive capacities. Sangmu's statement also demonstrates notions of joint physical and cultural violation. In Chapter One, Jangchup had explained that she tells her Tamil classmates “how China tortured Tibet” (p. 66). This statement, which employs the nation as a synecdoche for the suffering of the Tibetan people, suggests that “torture” provides a framework through which my informants seem to understand personal and political history.

As suggested above, the understanding of the political conflict in Tibet as a genocide seems to have arisen through a humanitarian framing of the Tibetan cause (Barnett 2001: 284-285). English language human rights literature explicitly portrays “forced abortions and sterilizations” as a tool in the execution of genocide. At the TWA's office, I also picked up a report created for a tour of American colleges (2007), because I fit the description of the report's intended audience.48 The report alleges “an organized and systematic approach to abortion and sterilization of Tibetan women...One woman reports a 'special abortion and sterilization unit for Tibetan women' in a Lhasa hospital.” In this description of atrocity in Tibet, the Chinese state

deploys reproductive technologies as weapons of genocide. And, the narrator links hospitals and the abortion procedures they perform to this genocide. The TWA thus portrays China's reproductive controls as systematic attempts to prevent Tibetan women from reproducing. Tibetans with whom I spoke reiterated these connections between the Chinese biomedical establishment and collective suffering. As explained above, Tsering Dolma had said that “Tibetans will become less” as a result of Chinese state controlled reproduction, and that “There is no one in our race who would not want a baby.” These statements articulate a similar understanding of reproductive regulation as a struggle between races that threatens the physical survival of the Tibetan people.

At the same time, Tibetans seem to imagine this genocide to be a joint physical and cultural assault. As described above, Tenzin Tsering explicitly referred to Chinese intervention in Tibet as a “cultural genocide.” Buddhist notions of reproduction may influence my informants’ understanding of the conflict as a unified physical and cultural violation. In Buddhist terms, as opposed to the framework of international law, a cultural genocide seems logical. As medical anthropologist Vincanne Adams (1998) writes, “the physical body for Tibetans is the site for social relationships among people who are believed to be connected to one another as a physical rather than a sociological fact” (89). Karma maintains this physical connection, and also governs the process of birth. According to Tibetan scriptural embryology (as explained by Adams), a life-force (srog) combines with consciousness (sems), and both become bound to the physical form of the fetus. Karma catalyzes the combination of srog and sems, and leads to physical conception at the moment that these spiritual elements join each other (ibid). Since it is a system of ethics, karma operates in the social field; karma is characterized by the results of an
individual's actions on other sentient beings. Therefore, Adams explains that “at rebirth, social relations with other persons become embodied in the physical presence of the person” (Ibid: 90). The effects of countless past social interactions are thus written on the body from the moment of conception. From Adams' description of embryology, scriptural understandings of reproduction seem to unite physical bodies to social worlds.

This understanding of karma seems to arise in women's narratives of reproductive regulation. During our interview at the TRC, Tenzin Yangzom explained reproduction and the moral consequences of state mandated birth control with reference to Buddhist embryology. While discussing her family composition, Tenzin Yangzom said,

_The Chinese government has said you cannot have many babies. They will get rid of the babies, give hysterectomies...[This] is very sinful, even worse than a mother killing something, because there are so many spirits waiting for bodies....When people have twins and triplets, that is because there are so many spirits who are desperate for human lives. Nowadays, you can have either two or three children, I'm not sure which, and then after that you have to get an injection and are fined. Even if you are not put in jail, you are still punished...There are announcements from the village head that it is the day to get the injection, and the women have to go to Shang to have it done. This happened to my sister-in law, and it was not her choice. In Tibet, if you are a nomad, you are always in need of more family members, so it is definitely not our choice...My mother's friend had more than the desired number of children given by the Chinese, and had to tell the Chinese government that her child belonged to a nomad friend who was far away. The village chief comes through to get the census and all the people are listed in a book. I was not very aware of the motivations while I was in Tibet, but now I see what it is, and it is definitely to decrease the Tibetan population, to make it less and less and to increase the Chinese population in Tibet._

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49 My informants also invoked the notion of karma in discussions of torture. Presenting an institutionalized version of the prison narrative, Dolkar, the employee at the Torture Survivor's Unit, had asserted that former political prisoners have very high coping mechanisms because “we believe in karmic relations, so we think that we might have done something wrong in a past life and that is the reason we are experiencing hardship now” (see p. 85). In what seemed to be accordance with this normative framing of coping with torture, Sangmu had asserted, “I firmly believe that I am suffering now due to previous life cycles” (see p.112). In these statements, “karma” provides a channel through which my informants seem to understand trauma and misfortune; as Dolkar and Sangmu articulate the function of the shared belief, it provides a relief from suffering.
In this statement, Tenzin Yangzom describes birth restrictions as a social transgression against the future generation of Tibetans; she makes a moral statement while engaging with what seem to be Buddhist theories of conception, such as those described by Adams. This religious proscription against Chinese birth regulation supports the interpretation of the political conflict in Tibet as a collective violation. Tenzin Yangzom portrays birth prevention as a form of violence against the spiritual world, which (as Adams suggests) Buddhist philosophies link to the social world. This unity between social and spiritual violation may influence understandings of individual and collective violation. Individual reproductive capacity, even when not exercised, provides an avenue for others' spiritual advancement (through their potential to obtain a human incarnation). Notions of karma seem to join the violation of individual women's reproductive capacities to collective suffering.

The pronomial structure of Tenzin Yangzom's narrative excerpt seems to further evidence the ways that reproductive regulation presents a collective trauma. When speaking of her sister-in-law's experience of forced contraceptive use, Tenzin Yangzom first emphasizes that “it was not her choice.” She then provides an example of nomad who wishes to have children, saying “If you are a nomad, you are always in need of more family members, so it is definitely not our choice.” Within the same sentence, Tenzin Yangzom shifts from third-person to second-person to first-person plural. Tenzin Yangzom's pronomial switching demonstrates a pattern that

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50 I analyzed Tenzin Yangzom's speech only from the translated English transcript, rather than the original Tibetan. However, this pattern of pronominal switching seemed consistent across narratives in both English and Tibetan. Consider, for example, Sonam's (English) narrative of going to college. She says, “I led a very protected, cocooned Tibetan life, but when you leave, that is when you really have to assert your identity as a Tibetan,” switching between first- and second-person when describing a generalized, hypothetical situation (see p. 71). Likewise, Jangchup switched between first-person singular, first-person plural, and third person when discussing (in English) her classmates at college: “They don't know much English, and the first time they met us, they called us Chinese because they had never seen our [Tibetan] faces. We talked about Tibet in class, how Tibet looks, differences between Tibet and India, and about how China tortured Tibet and how people suffered under the Chinese. I have never been to Tibet, but we used to get information from Tibet and we know how people are suffering at the Kirti Monastery. All this news we got. We heard much about how Tibetan people suffer” (see p.
constructs second-hand narratives and hypothetical circumstances as collective experiences (“our choice”). Ries (1997) noted a similar dynamic in conversational litanies during *Perestroika* in Moscow. In such litanies, speakers would begin telling a personal narrative through the first-person singular, but would switch to employ first-person plural pronouns within a single speech event. Ries argues that this pronomial switching serves to communicate “the fantasized bond of connection to and belonging in some kind of moral community—a community of shared suffering” (87). Since Tibetans in Dharamsala likewise express a membership to a moral community of suffering, my informants’ pronomial switching may function in a similar manner to that of Ries’ informants.

Tenzin Yangzom’s use of pronouns also mirrors human rights literature’s deployment of narrative testimony. Human rights reports multiply first- and second-person narratives to compile testimonies of systematic violation. “Tears of Silence,” for example, quotes women who have undergone abortion or sterilization in hospitals in Tibet, as well as doctors, nurses and other Tibetans who report knowledge of these procedures being forced upon women. Barnett (2001) names this form of humanitarian engagement with the Tibetan cause, in which human rights reports paint narrative testimonies as common-place occurrences, a “totalizing trend” (284-285). Barnett seems to argue that multiplying singular events into a general trend invalidates personal experience and misrepresents the reality of conflict. However, although human rights literature blurs individual and collective trauma, it seems that Tibetan understandings of violence and violation, informed by Buddhist philosophies and exemplified in speech patterns, do as well.

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65) Jangchup seems to communicate a division between Tibetans and Indians (“they” and “we”), at the same time marking her membership to the Tibetan collectivity (she seems to employ “I” and “we” interchangeably). Tibetan speakers differentiate self and other through both pronouns and cases, so it does not seem that these English speech events would arise from structural differences between English and Tibetan.
Descriptions of reproductive regulation as a collective violation seem to correlate with Tibetan women's narrative accounts of this particular violence. When discussing the health services provided at the Tibetan Reception Center, Mingyur tells me,

> in Tibet, sterilization is expensive, so women use the “Copper T” [a metal IUD]. The material is really bad, so it starts infecting the uterus. One woman came to us, and, in Tibet, the doctor did not give much attention to her when she got sick-- only some pain killers. We referred the woman to another hospital. At first, the doctor couldn't figure out what was wrong, and then she had to have a full hysterectomy. She was really emotional and crying so much, because one of her closest friends died from the Copper T.

Mingyur asserts that the woman views her illness with reference to another's death, suggesting that individuals make sense of personal ailments in the context of a collective social suffering. Mingyur's narrative presents the woman's affective reaction to her illness as a response to her friend's death. In this case, second-hand experience seems to produce first-hand trauma. In the context of South African women's testimonies before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Ross (2001) noticed that female witnesses “do not directly impute victimhood to the self,” describing their personal suffering through violence that their male family members have experienced (259). It seems that narrative testimony operates similarly in Dharamsala, since individuals recount second-hand tales of violence. My informants' narrative testimonies, however, present gender differently than those of Ross' informants: reproductive violations of individual women symbolize the collectivity. Women, including representatives of institutions such as Mingyur, recount collective suffering by telling other women's stories. And, it seems that women's stories figure as collective suffering because they produce personal suffering.

Over the past two decades, demographic analyses have countered claims of genocide (Childs et. al. 2005, Goldstein and Beall 1991). Goldstein et. al. (2002) assert that birth rates in
Tibet “blatantly demonstrate a lack of fertility control” (20). Other scholars have pointed to the official state policy of allowing two children per family among minority populations, which is in fact less stringent than birth restrictions on Han women (Zhu et. al. 2009). The use of the term “genocide” nonetheless persists with reference to reproductive rights violations in human rights literature and in my informants personal narratives. Ross (2001) argues that, in understanding responses to mass atrocity, “A focus solely on the body and its violation fixes an experience of violence in time, in an event, and draws attention away from ways of understanding that experience as a process that endures through time” (271). Both human rights literature and the demographic studies that counter their claims seem to focus bodily suffering in this manner. Since they employ individual bodily suffering as a communicative channel, human rights organizations' reports of violation may inaccurately portray the demographic reality of fertility control. This misrepresentation may influence women's belief in a genocide. And yet, as described above, it seems that the effects of state-mandated birth control linger, since women invoke them in descriptions of personal illness. Analyzing testimony of reproductive rights violations from a demographic perspective risks obliterating Tibetan experiences of violation. A focus on whether or not fertility rates correlate with allegations of systematic genocide overlooks women's reactions to violent acts as well as to their encounters with widely circulating narrative testimonies.

Sacrifice and Suffering through Reproduction

In addition to highlighting the unity of the Tibetan social and spiritual collectivity, my informants express culturally specific understandings of reproduction that naturalize suffering. As explained in Chapter Two, Sangmu had opened her narrative by explaining that she wanted children but
could not give birth due to health complications. She then described her infertility as a result of the torture she experienced in prison (see p. 121-122). In this way, Sangmu linked her concern with reproduction to violation, a connection also found in human rights literature. Sangmu demonstrates a narrative pattern in which women speak of reproductive violation as they recount a repertoire of tortures against the Tibetan people.

Sangmu explains that she and her partner “have tried every possibility” to have children. But, since Sangmu is now experiencing menopause, childbirth is no longer an option. She explains that forty-four is young for menopause, suggesting that early menopause may also be a result of the torture she suffered in prison. I ask Sangmu why she wants a baby, and she explains, “It's very natural to feel this way. Women like beautiful things, like small animals and babies. It's like a sacrifice for your partner. If I think my partner is really good, and I give my whole body to him, the baby is like a blessing, the result of this sacrifice.” The notion of intimacy (presumably sexual intimacy) as a sacrifice highlights yet another conceptual connection between reproduction and suffering. Sangmu portrays a biologically determined desire for children. At the same time, her reference to birth as a sacrifice articulates an inherent suffering associated with reproduction. Other informants likewise hinted at the suffering women must undergo through reproduction. Before coming to India, Dolma Dechen, whose migration narrative was presented in Chapter One, had joined a nunnery briefly. She told me, “One day, my mother's sister's sister is a nun, so I told my mother that I wanted to be a nun...Because a nun's life is very happy, you don't need to give birth or have a husband, you only worry about yourself.” Dolma Dechen portrays the act of removing oneself from the realm of reproduction as a path towards a more opportune, presumably less painful life; “giving birth” and “having a
husband” seem to detract from potential “happiness.” Giving birth seems to create suffering with or without medical care. How, then, do women describe suffering in their personal narratives of childbirth?

**Childbirth Narratives**

This section examines the tensions that arise between women's narratives of hospitalized childbirth in India and their portrayals of biomedical birth control as a tool of genocide. From my informants' reports, it seems that women in Tibet largely give birth at home, with the assistance of kin and neighbors. Despite extensive medical texts on pregnancy and childbirth, it seems that Tibetan medical practices lack attention to women's experiences of birth. Notions of ritual cleanliness may produce this dynamic. *Amchis* (practitioners of Tibetan medicine) do not attend births, possibly because the pollution (*grib*) associated with childbirth may negate the sacredness of Tibetan medicines (Craig 2009: 149, 153 and Gutschow 2010: 203). Additionally, ethnographers have noted that beliefs influencing cultural proscriptions surrounding Tibetan medical care during childbirth extend to biomedical obstetrics. Gutschow (2010) explains that many ethnically Tibetan women in rural Ladakh avoid hospitals because they are embarrassed to give birth in front of strangers and fear ritual pollution (201). Likewise, in Lhasa, Craig encountered “fears—comprehensible in both cultural and epidemiological terms—about hospitals being places of pollution, death, and further cycles of disease” (forthcoming: 20).

However, Gutschow's work also demonstrates that birthing practices can change rapidly. In 1990, most of Gutschow's informants had never given birth with a skilled attendant, but by 2007 73% had (2010: 192). That my informants' accounts of childbirth in India lack discussions of any proscriptions against hospitalized birth highlights the cultural specificity of reproduction in
Dharamsala. As Craig (2011) notes, different spaces are culturally and logistically conducive to different medical practices. The space of Dharamsala seems to ease tensions between the danger of giving birth without biomedical care and the strong ideological stances against biomedical reproductive care that women express in narratives of reproductive rights violations. Rather than associating biomedicine with Chinese reproductive controls, women seem to emphasize “choice” and “freedom” when discussing biomedical reproductive intervention in India. At the same time, women also seem to employ narratives of childbirth to express social displacement. By contrasting home births in Tibet with hospitalized births in Dharamsala, women articulate common political ideals and social realities of life in the diaspora.

Women in Dharamsala typically seek health care from two biomedical establishments: the Tibetan Delek Hospital, a privately funded institution located in McLeod Ganj, which operates for the Tibetan community (but is available to all in the Dharamsala area), and Rajendra Prasad Government Medical College, an Indian government hospital located in Kangra, about two hours away by bus and rickshaw (Fig. 5). Until recently, the Indian government ran another hospital, Zonal Hospital, in lower Dharamsala, about a twenty minute bus ride from McLeod Ganj. Delek Hospital seems to be the first choice for medical care, possibly because it is located closer to most Tibetan homes in Dharamsala, and is staffed mostly by Tibetans. However, Delek Hospital does not have a gynecologist and, while they perform routine births, many women seek care at or are referred to Rajendra Prasad and (in the past) Zonal instead. The following narratives trace women's experiences of reproduction in these hospitals, as well as their memories of family members' home births in Tibet.

*Rinchen Dolma*
Thirty-four year old Rinchen Dolma and I met at the Tibetan Reception Center, where she works cleaning and maintaining the dormitories and offices. Rinchen Dolma came to India in 1998, and studied at the Tibetan Transit School (TTS). She married four years ago, to a man she met at TTS. I ask Rinchen Dolma why she got married, and she explains,

> In Tibet, there are so many restrictions on childbirth and the population, so we thought we would get married, but we realized that we cannot have children. I have been really sick, and it may be because of a previous illness that I cannot have babies. I haven't been to the doctor for fertility, but I used to have problems with menstrual cycles when I didn't get my period and had blood clots. This problem arose in India, not Tibet. I went to different hospitals, not just Tibetan herbal medicine, and Indian doctors told me it was the changes in the weather that had caused the problem, from moving to a hot climate from Tibet. The physician to the Dalai Lama has passed away now, but I saw him first and he told me I already had a blood clot, and it might not be cured instantly, but medicine could help. I didn't get my period for one year, but now I do. I took the medicine for six months, and I think it worked because it helped lessen the pain. It used to be intolerable.

Rinchen Dolma articulates pronatalism as the factor driving her decision to marry. In a sense, Rinchen Dolma marries for the collective health of the Tibetan population, which has been threatened by the Chinese state's birth restrictions. According to this logic, her marriage provides an example of personal resistance to systematic violence. In this case, the symbolic role of women's bodies as a locus of the political conflict in Tibet transforms reproductive agency into political agency.

I ask Rinchen Dolma if she is still trying to have children. She answers, “We are still trying to have children, and praying for children.” Since Rinchen Dolma explains that she has not sought medical care for her infertility in particular, she demonstrates that Tibetan women address problems with childbirth through religion, as well as medicine. Also, Rinchen Dolma

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51 When my informants speak of “Indian doctors” and “Chinese doctors,” they are referring to biomedical practitioners in these two countries.
emphasized that she sought care for her reproductive health issues from a variety of treatment options. Gutschow (2010) likewise found that, among ethnically Tibetan women in Ladakh, “biomedical discourse has displaced rather than replaced both Tibetan medical and Buddhist discourses on birth in Ladakh...[since women] continue to employ both biomedical and Buddhist narratives around childbirth as each offers valid explanations for disastrous or dangerous events” (186). As Rinchen Dolma further explains below, she seems to view biomedical obstetrics as the most logical system through which to seek assistance with childbirth, which points to a sort of biomedical monopoly over pregnancy and labor. And yet, Rinchen Dolma also describes syncretic understandings of reproductive health and illness, involving Tibetan medicine, Buddhist ritual (prayer) and Western (“Indian”) biomedicine. Rinchen Dolma's choice to pray rather than to seek biomedical treatment for infertility suggests that a sense of being out of place alters understandings of illness. She makes sense of her illness with reference to climatological factors that reduce her control over her well-being. Rinchen Dolma does not seek treatment for infertility, possibly because she believes that the condition is connected to another illness created by the stress of India's climate. In this way, Rinchen Doma embodies geographic displacement.

Rinchen Dolma continues by describing her family in Tibet and complex birthing practices related to gender. She says,

My sister has two sons. I was in Tibet when they were both born, both at home. My parents were still alive, so my mother was there, and another woman from the neighborhood, and a maternal uncle's wife. During the pregnancy, my mother took care of her, gave her a lot of meat, and she was not allowed to do work, and we took her for walks. There was no special room for delivery, she just gave birth in her bedroom. I was young and I don't remember, but there is a belief that if the baby is a boy it will feel shy because of the presence of female siblings and will hesitate to come out. I saw my sister while she was in labor, but then not again until after the baby was born. When I was allowed to come in after the

52 It was unclear if she meant the mother's female siblings or the baby's female siblings.
In Rinchen Dolma's experience, gender difference influences birthing practices in accordance with understandings of modesty. Also, birthing practices engage a gendered kinship network, to which Rinchen Dolma alludes as she continues to speak. I ask Rinchen Dolma if she would want a hospital or home birth, and she explains, “Definitely, in the hospital, because there is no one at home to take care of me except my husband, who doesn't have experience.” Many of my informants likewise emphasized that their kin networks in India “do not have experience” with birthing, which presents an increased danger to displaced mothers living in India. In this way, women such as Rinchen Dolma portray the hospital as filling a social role performed by kin in Tibet, from whom they are separated in India.

Rinchen Dolma juxtaposes this discussion of hospitalized birth by reiterating claims of genocide enacted through reproductive technologies. She says,

*It should be entirely upon you whether you want to have children. You know when you are financially sound and mentally ready. The motivation of the Chinese is to slowly diminish the Tibetan population. They do sterilizations and make announcements for the operation...I know so many women because once you get married, after you have two children, it's like you go for your turn...The experience is horrible. They all had a lopsided posture, their shoulders were tilted. Women in India who have the operation tend to gain weight after a year or so but they can still stand straight. Doctors here are very good and professional. But the doctors who perform these surgeries in Tibet have different motivations. They work for the Chinese government. They want not only to do sterilizations but to slowly weaken Tibetan women.*

Rinchen Dolma draws clear parallels between the biomedical establishment in Tibet and a genocide enacted by violating Tibetan women. She also contrasts motivations of doctors in Tibet with those of doctors in India, implicating Chinese doctors in the government's destruction of Tibet and Tibetans. I ask Rinchen Dolma if birth control in Tibet is ever voluntary, and she
In Tibet, I haven't met Tibetan women who were considering preventing births. In the village, everything was in abundance, so women wanted to have as many children as possible. In India, I have met Tibetan women who have had enough after one to two children. It is financially difficult, you have to send your kids to college and pay the tuition fee. But, they never do permanent sterilizations. They insert a metal device inside, but they can take it out if they want to have children...The Chinese government's intention is to permanently prevent Tibetan women from having babies, to diminish the population. China has already occupied the land, but there are still Tibetans living there. They want to bring in Chinese people, make the Tibetans a minority and eventually invisible...When I was in Tibet, I didn't know what the Chinese government was doing. My knowledge was minimal compared to what I know now. I thought that maybe it was just in my village, because I did not know that the Chinese were doing this all over Tibetan lands. From the news, I came to know that it is in all of Tibet, I was more aware of China's policies and design over Tibet. It is far worse than I thought while I was in Tibet.

In this description of systematic violation, Rinchen Dolma again contrasts temporary birth control technologies in India with the Chinese governments' permanent responses to (perceived) over-fertility. She explains her awareness of systematic forced fertility control as part of a political consciousness cultivated in exile. In this way, narratives of reproductive violation seem to shape Rinchen Dolma's political consciousness, influencing her logics of family planning and kinship formation in exile.

Tenzin Dolma

Tenzin Dolma and I had spoken on a few occasions, since she works at a “cyber” (internet café) near the apartment where I was living. I realized we had a mutual friend, Rinchen Tsetan, when Rinchen Tsetan came to my apartment one day and stopped in to see his “older sister” at the cyber. I came with him, and he introduced us. Rinchen Tsetan and Tenzin Dolma had grown up in nearby villages in rural Amdo. They had, however, not known each other before coming to Dharamsala. Nonetheless, the geographic location of their natal villages seemed to create the
sense of kinship that Rinchen Tsetan expressed. I found that many of my informants from Amdo
described similar kinship ties, which are forged from the physical closeness of their homes in
Tibet, but arise only in exile. A few days after we had been introduced, Rinchen Tsetan
suggested that I interview Tenzin Dolma for my project. I did not have any interviews planned
for that afternoon, so I went to the cyber to see if Tenzin Dolma was available to speak with me.
The cyber was not busy, and her colleague was working as well, so Tenzin Dolma and I sat on a
bench outside and began to speak.

Tenzin Dolma is twenty-eight years old, and came to India when she was “seventeen or
eighteen.”53 She had studied at TCV Suja upon coming to India, where she learned English. She
has one older sister, one younger sister, and one younger stepsister, all of whom live in Tibet.
Although Tenzin Dolma has not experienced childbirth in India, she describes memories of
childbirth complications that profoundly shaped her life course. In addition, Tenzin Dolma
speaks of complex family bonds that shed light on culturally specific notions of gender and
reproduction. Tenzin Dolma tells me,

My mother had died, and at that time, I got lots of problems. I was just five or
six and my sister was three or four. From age six to ten, I was just farming in the
village. I helped my father with the farm. We had a big field, and my sister
didn't know anything about farming. She just tried to make food and bring it to
my father...My grandmother looked after me and my younger sister. My father
went to Lhasa—I don't know why—and he didn't come back for one year. And,
when he came back, he had one lady. She was a stepmother, from Lhasa, but
she didn't speak Amdo and we didn't speak Lhasa. She lived for three months
with our family and then went back to Lhasa with my father. After three
months, my father brought back another woman [laughing]--it's funny, right?

53 When recalling past events, my informants commonly referred to their ages within a one year range. This could
be because Tibetans frequently count the gestation period into a child's age, so that a babies are one year old
when they are born. As Childs (2004) notes in his study of life among ethnic Tibetans in the Nubri Valley, “To
Tibetans, life does not begin at birth, but rather at conception” (38). Also, I was told that all birthdays are
traditionally marked by the new year, rather than the specific date of birth. However, it seemed that the practice
of celebrating individuals' days of birth was becoming common (I attended three birthday parties for Tibetan
children during my time in Dharamsala and Kathmandu).
She is good, and she is still living with my father. She had a baby boy, but he died because we were not lucky to have a boy. He died because of some sickness. He lived for eight months in Tibet.

With her statements about her baby step-brother's death, Tenzin Dolma seems to be referring to common Tibetan understandings of the ways that karma governs the birth of new children. Scholars have noted that in Buddhist philosophies, conception occurs when a semi-conscious being (the combined *srog* and *sems* Adams described 1998: 89) is “impelled by the forces of its own karma to enter a womb at the instant of conception” (Childs 2004: 38). The parents' karma likewise influences which being will be drawn to their family. In Chapter One, Dolma Dechen had described a particularly strong relationship with her mother, because she is the only daughter. In her description of her family composition, Tenzin Dolma seems to express the same notions of gender in family relationships—namely, that it is important for families to include both male and female children. And, Tenzin Dolma suggests that it is due to her family's karma that her parents did not give birth to a male child that survived past infancy.

Tenzin Dolma also shares her first-hand experience of maternal mortality in Tibet. I ask Tenzin Dolma how her mother died, and she explains,

There was one grandmother in the village, and when there are births, she used to help by tearing and pushing. Women can't go to the hospitals. The conditions are very poor and there are no hospitals around, so women mostly give birth at home. There were two rooms in my house—one for my mother and father, their bedroom—where my mother gave birth. My father was there, but I can't remember exactly what happened. My mother died in childbirth. There was Tibetan medicine in my village, but not a big hospital. There was one very old grandfather who was good in Tibetan medicine, who was maybe seventy to eighty years old. He got medicine from plants in the mountains and made medicine at home.

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54 As Garrett (2009) explains, within Indian and Tibetan Buddhist writings on embryology, “All accounts of human development agree that conception is caused by three main factors: the joining of the two healthy reproductive substances of a man and a woman in intercourse and the consciousness of the transmigrating sentient being, which is generally said to be propelled toward that particular copulating man and woman by its own karmic imprints” (109).
Tenzin Dolma ascribes kinship terms to both the woman who helped during births, as well as to the Tibetan medical practitioner. That she describes them as a “grandmother” and “grandfather” suggests that they provide a form of social support, in addition to medical care. Also, Tenzin Dolma seems to connect her mother's death to the lack of biomedical care in the village. She emphasizes that women are not able to give birth in hospitals because of poor infrastructure. Further, Tenzin Dolma contrasts Tibetan medicine with “hospitals,” suggesting that she views Tibetan medicine to be an inadequate response to complications related to childbirth.55 And yet, as Tenzin Dolma continues to speak, she also draws connections between biomedical establishments in Tibet and coercive reproductive regulation.

I ask about common health problems in the village, and Tenzin Dolma says,

If we are sick, we have to go ourselves to the hospital. Some women go to the hospital to put metal in [their uterus]. Some women don't know how to not have children, but if they do they will get fined. All operations are forced by the government. It is a right to live, nobody wants this right to be controlled, but the Chinese government just controls everything.

At the same time that Tenzin Dolma associates the lack of biomedical care with her mother's death, she also draws connections between coercive reproductive regulation and Chinese biomedicine. She states that in Tibet, women frequently access biomedical care in order to avoid the fines imposed by the Chinese government, spontaneously reiterating the claims of English language human rights reports. She speaks of reproduction as a “right to live,” employing the liberal humanist vocabulary of human rights discourse. However, Tenzin Dolma's descriptions of her mother's and baby stepbrother's deaths complicate these statements about forced

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55 Tibetan medical practitioners in Nepal likewise told me that Tibetan medicine is ineffective for child and maternal health problems, and explained that the maternal mortality rate has drastically decreased with the introduction of Western biomedicine in Tibet.
reproductive regulation and biomedicine. On the one hand, hospitals provide a possible means of alleviating the suffering associated with maternal and infant mortality. On the other, hospitals are the sites of the Chinese state's violent control of Tibetan women's bodies.

Tseyang

As explained in Chapter Two, Tseyang married and gave birth to one son in Dharamsala, who is now five years old. She had opened her narrative by discussing her family, then proceeded to describe the circumstances surrounding her imprisonment (see p. 102). After she describes the contact she currently has with her sister in Tibet, Tseyang begins to speak of her family in India again. She says,

*I don't want any more children because it's very difficult with one child...In exile, it's very difficult to have many children because it is expensive...But, it's different in Tibet because you are being denied the right to give birth...In my opinion, the motivation is just to annihilate the Tibetan race. They already have the land occupied, so the next step is to get rid of the Tibetan people. Then, the freedom struggle in exile would be very difficult.*

Like Rinchen Dolma, Tseyang joins discussions of her personal reproductive decision-making in India and of reproductive regulations in Tibet. As in narratives of migration, women seem to unite their personal lives with collective memory. In this case, Tseyang shifts from a discussion of the general life conditions in exile to a politicized description of the conflict in Tibet as she describes her logics of birth planning. Mirroring human rights literature, Tseyang speaks of reproductive regulation as a genocide, meant to “annihilate the Tibetan race.” Tseyang contrasts the situations in Tibet and India through a focus on “the right” to give birth. Whereas Rinchen Dolma had explicitly stated that she hoped to marry and have children in response to the political conflict, Tseyang portrays a more generalized concern with political and reproductive freedom.

Since Tseyang says she has chosen (at this moment) to only have one child, I wonder if
women in Tibet voluntarily limit their births. I ask if women ever choose to have fewer children in Tibet. Tseyang answers, “When I was in Tibet, I had not heard of voluntary contraception because once you have two children, you are forced to be sterilized before you can have a third.” It seems that, for Tseyang, there is no question of choice in relation to birth control in Tibet. She uniformly associates birth limiting in Tibet with medicalized birth control. And, these forms of birth control figure consistently as forced abortion and sterilization. I ask how women are forced, and Tseyang replies, “They do operations. When you are pregnant and have to go to the hospital, if they come to know you already have three children, they will forcibly abort the baby. I have heard of instances when they kill the baby past when you should do an abortion.” With this statement, Tseyang seems to be reiterating a general politicized knowledge about human rights atrocities in Tibet. Like Tseyang's first-hand account of imprisonment, her discussion of forced abortion presents a simplified conflict between “them” (the Chinese perpetrators) and Tibetan women. However, in contrast to her vivid personal narrative of imprisonment, Tseyang details unspecified “instances” of reproductive rights violations. Her descriptions of imprisonment and of reproductive rights violations are, in a sense, generic; both follow what seems to be a consistent narrative pattern, meant to communicate the same message, of the moral imperative of humanitarian intervention in Tibet with the ultimate goal of Tibetan independence.

I ask about Tseyang's experience of giving birth in exile, and she explains,

*During my parents' time, all deliveries were at home. Now, all women have to go to the hospital to get a birth certificate that they need later in life for their children. Women are supposed to do monthly check-ups. When my sister was pregnant, she didn't do the monthly check-ups, but only went if she thought there was something wrong. I went for check-ups at Delek hospital, but I went to Zonal hospital for my delivery because they couldn't handle the situation at Delek. The baby excreted in my stomach and he was swallowing the stool and couldn't breathe, so they told us to go to Zonal hospital because they had*
equipment for that. My son was in the hospital for eighteen days after birth. In Zonal, they are maybe more qualified. There are also female doctors to deliver. At Delek, there are new, young doctors, but I decided to give birth there anyways because it was supposed to be a normal delivery.

Tseyang portrays compulsory birthing practices that differ by generation. Tseyang explains her decision to give birth in a hospital by asserting the importance of birth certificates. According to my informants, parents need birth certificates from the exile government in order to register their children in schools, as well as to receive the necessary residency permits from the Indian government. She emphasizes that all women need birth certificates for their children. This statement seems to apply to women in Tibet as well as in India. Tseyang describes a significance of birth certificates beyond the fact that they present a means of achieving official identification as a Tibetan refugee. Her discussion points to a heightened concern with bureaucratic citizenship, in general. It seems that this concern responds to the association of birth certificates with geographic mobility. Birth certificates allow a freedom of movement across the borders of nation-states that alleviates the suffering of migration. For example, one day, I was eating dinner with a group of three friends from Amdo. There was another young man with them, whom I had not met. With a joking, somewhat sarcastic tone, my friend told me, “Ask him how he came to India, how he crossed the snow mountains.” The young man responded, “I flew from Beijing to Delhi,” and everyone burst into laughter. I asked how he could have flown, and he explained that since his father is Chinese, he grew up mostly in Beijing and was able to get a passport with his birth certificate. Government policies towards citizenship and movement seem to give new

56 According to their website, the Indian Immigration Bureau requires a birth certificate, the registration certificates of both parents, proof of residence, and a recommendation letter from a Tibetan settlement officer in order for individuals born in India to receive their own registration certificate (http://www.immigrationindia.nic.in/Instr_Tibetans2.htm).

57 However, an informant explained to me that even Tibetans with passports often choose to migrate illegally because if one has a registered visa and does not return to China before the visa expires, “there will be problems.”
significance to bureaucratic identification, which, in turn, influences birthing practices.

Pema Tsering

Like Tenzin Dolma, Pema Tsering and I met through my friend, Rinchen Tsetan. Pema Tsering is from Chabja, the same county in Amdo as Rinchen Tsetan and Tenzin Dolma. She and Rinchen met when they worked together at a restaurant run by Sonam Dolma, their “older sister” from a nearby county in Amdo. Pema Tsering lives with her husband and daughter (eight months old at the time of the interview [Fig. 12]), in their home, which also functions as a restaurant, near the Norbulinka Institute. We met for the first time when Rinchen and I stopped in to her restaurant after visiting Norbulinka. At this point in my research, I recognized a persistent emphasis on reproduction among my informants. But, I had not met any women who had actually given birth in India. So, I asked Pema Tsering if she would be willing to speak with me about her life, and about her family, in particular. Pema Tsering agreed. Pema Tsering studied English at TCV Suja for a few years, but was not confident in her ability to conduct the interview without a translator. I enlisted the help of my friend, Lhamo Tso, and we made an appointment with Pema Tsering to conduct the interview in her home a few days later.

Pema Tsering's home consists of a main room with a television and tables, where guests at the restaurant can eat, in addition to a large kitchen, and a bedroom. When Lhamo Tso and I arrive, we head into the bedroom with Pema Tsering and her daughter, while Pema Tsering's husband stays in the main room to look after the restaurant. Pema Tsering begins her narrative by speaking about her family in Tibet. She explains,

I am the youngest in my family. I have an older brother, and two older sisters.

58 While Rinchen Tsetan refers to Tenzin Dolma and Sonam Dolma as his “older sisters,” Pema Tsering is his “friend.” The difference in kinship titles may be based on age. Pema Tsering and Rinchen Tsetan are both twenty-five years old, but Sonam Dolma and Tenzin Dolma are older.
From when I was fourteen until I came to India, I was a singer, dancer, and a
waitress [in Tibetan cultural shows]. I moved away from my family to Chinese
cities, like Beijing and Shanghai. I earned money for my sisters' school fees,
and my brother stayed at home. I was very happy at this time. I would call my
family every day, and every few months I would visit home. Then, I would
return to the city. It was my first time with the Chinese, so at first there were
many problems because I couldn't speak Chinese. But, after some years, I could
speak. After I had been to many cities, I realized that if we don't have
education, we cannot go anywhere and speak and make friends. In the city, I
realized that this was the problem. Also, I didn't know about Tibetan culture
and society. My older sister told me that if I came here, I would understand so
much about Tibet. I also wanted to see the Dalai Lama.

Pema Tsering's experience as a dancer exemplifies the ways that the Chinese state builds an
image of diversity through gendered performance. Gladney (1994) explains that Chinese
nationality discourse constructs identity in “binary” terms such that,

Minority is to the majority as female is to male...The widespread definition and
representation of the “minority” as exotic, colorful, and “primitive” homogenizes
the undefined majority as united, monoethnic, and modern...[Therefore,] the
objectified portrayal of minorities as exoticized, and even eroticized, is essential
to the construction of the Han Chinese majority, the very formulation of the
Chinese “nation” itself [93-94].

Whereas Barnett had traced masculinity in Chinese representations of Tibet, Pema Tsering's
employment in Tibetan cultural shows suggests that feminine portrayals of Tibetans likewise
influence the Chinese state's purported union between Tibet and China. Furthermore, working as
a dancer and singer positions Pema Tsering as a symbol of the Tibetan nationality, objectifying
her femininity.59 As Pema Tsering and I speak, I wonder to myself if her understandings of
gender and reproduction respond to these different politics of representation.

Pema Tsering continues her narrative by discussing her marriage in India. She explains,

I met my husband after three days in India. We became friends because he is a

59 As Gladney further explains, in addition to their roles in cultural performances, “The commodification of
minorities is accomplished through the representing, packaging, and selling of their images, artworks, and
‘costumes’ in the many pictorial-gazeteers...as well as in museum displays,” all of which are explicitly feminized
singer in a group and he called me to do a dance performance with them. He helped me a lot when I was in school. He would give me money and bring me medicine when I was sick. So, we married in November, 2009. Then, we had our daughter. I want more children, one boy and one girl, because when parents pass away, children are left with no family. If they have no siblings, they will feel alone. But, in Tibet, now you can only have one child, and if you give birth to two, you must pay a fine because the Chinese government decided that they don't want people to have so many children...But, I don't like the policy, because we need at least two children so that siblings can help each other.

Pema Tsering speaks about the logics of kinship formation in exile. For Pema Tsering, financial and social support influenced her decision to marry, and experiences with familial death seem to drive her desire for multiple children. And, Pema Tsering juxtaposes Chinese government-mandated reproductive controls with her own logics of family planning, like Rinchen Dolma and Tseyang. She suggests that these reproductive restraints place additional strain on families, because of the prevalence of familial death in Tibet. It therefore seems that micro-dynamics of kinship, in addition to the broader imagined kinship ties that unite the Tibetan population, influence individual resistance to the One Child Policy, since birth restrictions present threaten the survival of the individual family, as well as of the population.

As Pema Tsering continues to speak, she describes her own pregnancy and childbirth. She explains,

*When I was pregnant, I ate lots of apples and watermelon and drank milk—I ate nicer food than usual, and I also ate in restaurants. Then, when the baby came, I had to give birth in a hospital to get a birth certificate. It was the only way I could get a birth certificate for my daughter. I went to an Indian hospital in lower Dharamsala. I did a check up after one month, and then after nine months, I went every week. But, the care was not good. When I was giving birth, the doctors told me not to shout, and pressed down on my body.*

I ask if she plans to go to the hospital for her next birth, and she explains, “I will go to the hospital, because it's safe.” Even though she seems to have had a negative experience with her
first birth, she considers home births to be dangerous. And, like Tseyang, Pema Tsering emphasizes that she “had” to obtain a birth certificate, and that a hospitalized birth “was the only way” to do so.

Lhamo Tso adds, in English, “Here, there are no old people, no experienced people to help with giving birth.” Lhamo Tso suggests that it is a generational division, rather than simply ruptured kinship ties, that complicate birthing practices. However, with this statement, Lhamo Tso seems to overlook earlier generations of Tibetans born in India, whose parents and grandparents also gave birth at home. For example, twenty-seven year old Tenzin Youdon told me that her mother (who was also born in India) gave birth to all the children in her family at their home in Dharamsala. She compared her mother to the Dalai Lama’s elder sister, who Tenzin Youdon said was known to carry scissors in her chuba to assist mothers during birth. That Lhamo Tso makes sense of widespread hospitalized births by citing a generational gap points to the differing life experiences of Tibetans from Tibet and Tibetans born in India. For Lhamo Tso, the immediacy of ruptured kinship ties means that she does not have contact with “old people” to the same extent as multi-generational families settled in India. In this way, women's attitudes towards birthing practices reveal their broader life circumstances of social displacement.

As Lhamo Tso spoke, I remembered that, in our interview, Dolma Dechen had clarified the connections between the experience of social displacement and childbirth practices that Pema Tsering and Lhamo Tso suggest. As described in Chapter One, Dolma Dechen has first-hand experience with infant mortality, explaining that two of her siblings died shortly after birth (see p. 41). However, Dolma Dechen does not link the lack of biomedical care to infant death, as did
other women. Rather, Dolma Dechen explains that, when giving birth, women in Tibet stay at home, since they don't need to go to the hospital. I saw my aunt when she was having a baby. She was screaming and making noise and was very hurt. Every girl in India should go to the hospital, because they don't have experience giving birth. Mothers and fathers in Tibet have experience, but some women should go to the hospital. Sometimes it's very difficult. Sometimes the mother dies, sometimes the baby dies, sometimes both die. There was one woman in my village, and after the baby came out, blood was coming out and the floor was covered in blood. She died...In India, most go to Delek hospital. One day, I saw a woman who was looking after another woman who was pregnant. The woman was screaming and said there was no husband, no family, just her friend.

Dolma Dechen's description of these three different births (of her aunt, a woman in her village, and a woman at Delek hospital) highlights the ways that women in Dharamsala invoke a trope of kinship when describing labor practices. Like Lhamo Tso, Dolma Dechen suggests that social displacement in India necessitates hospitalized birth. But, she also speaks of the death of her village mate, despite the “mothers and fathers in Tibet” who “have experience” assisting women in labor, demonstrating that, even with the support of kin, reproduction carries the potential for profound suffering. As described above, Dolma Dechen explained that she had joined a nunnery briefly because removing oneself from the realm of marriage and reproduction—that is, from a heteronormative life path—can lead to happiness (see p. 150). Additionally, that Dolma Dechen associates Delek hospital with a woman who gave birth without her husband or family again demonstrates that hospitalized birth seems to connote social displacement in women's narratives in Dharamsala. Dolma Dechen describes the woman's kinship situation in contradictory terms, first saying that the woman “said there was no husband,” then recounting that the friend “said that the baby had many fathers,” then asserting that if women engage in intercourse with multiple partners, “there is no father.” In these statements, Dolma Dechen seems to normalize
the association between marriage and reproduction, using “husband” and “father” synonymously. Since the woman had no husband, the child had no father, and the woman was left to give birth in the hospital without any kin, with “just her friend.” In this story, Dolma Dechen communicates social rupture through the idiom of childbirth, like Lhamo Tso. She also, however, points to a seemingly inevitable suffering associated with reproduction, and, by extension, with compulsory heteronormativity. Chapter Four will examine the ways that women navigate their own hopes for the future in the context of normative processes of kinship formation in exile.

Conclusions

My informants' narratives of childbirth complicate the conceptual connections between genocide, reproduction, and the biomedical establishment in Tibet. Like English language human rights reports which portray China's One Child Policy as a genocide, my informants' descriptions of medical care in Tibet focus on coercive interventions in reproductive health, including involuntary abortion and sterilization. Human rights reports, and the narrative testimony that my informants reiterate, portray hospitals as the site of genocidal controls of Tibetan women's bodies. And, this persistent emphasis on forced abortion and sterilization implies a collective embodiment. As in narratives of migration and imprisonment, discussions of reproductive suffering highlight the shared affect of imagined community. In their work on social suffering, Das, Kleinman, and Lock (1997) argue that “Cultural representations of suffering—images, prototypical tales, metaphors, models—can be (and frequently are) appropriated in the popular culture or by particular social institutions for political and moral purposes. For this reason, suffering has a social use” (xi). Like the prison narrative, narrative testimony of reproductive
rights violations seems to serve a political purpose, since experiences of suffering carry symbolic
capital in Dharamsala and symbolic efficacy in Western humanitarian discourse. Women's
narratives of reproductive suffering present a social reality, although scholars contest the
authenticity of these allegations. Regardless of whether or not the Chinese state has perpetrated
a genocide, women say that they have witnessed medicalized reproductive violations in Tibet
about which they “now know.” Normative understandings cultivated in Dharamsala therefore
seem to influence a collective affect marked by reproductive suffering.

Culturally specific notions of health, illness, and reproduction also play into these
understandings of collective suffering. My informants' descriptions of karma bolster the
possibility of collective embodiment, especially in the realm of reproduction. Karma creates
embodied connections between individuals, since the results of previous social interactions
influence the kin group into which one is born. Also, in discussions of karma, my informants
emphasize the importance of reproductive potential. For example, although Sangmu portrays
reproduction as a “sacrifice” that involves suffering, she expresses great concern with infertility.
Likewise, Tenzin Yangzom describes compulsory birth control as a violation against “spirits
waiting for bodies.” These understandings of karma suggest that the violation of individual
Tibetan women's reproductive capacities produces suffering in the social and spiritual worlds.
Since my informants describe specific instances of suffering related to the political conflict
between China and Tibet, they paint reproductive suffering as uniquely Tibetan. However, as
will be examined in Chapter Four, my informants also seem to feel an embodied connection to
social worlds beyond the Tibetan community, in particular, to Western nations.

In his study of women working in politics (as both dissidents and government officials) in
Lhasa, Barnett (2005) noticed similar evidence of collective embodiment related to political violence. Barnett argues,

The connection of women's bodies with their political experience does not reside in specific incidents, or even in the alleged practices of forced abortion and sterilization...It manifests as an endemic condition of somatic connectedness... [For example,] negative political experiences, such as betraying compatriots or witnessing the abuse of others, express themselves as bodily or mental illness [362].

In the case of my informants, however, it seems that this “endemic condition of somatic connectedness” relates explicitly to reproduction, including narrative testimony of reproductive rights violations. And, it seems that individual experiences of various “tortures”, including reproductive violation, communicate a uniquely Tibetan suffering that bolsters collective identity. Although human rights reports speak of “forced abortion and sterilization,” my informants seem to understand reproductive technologies, in general, to be part of China's violation of the Tibetans. Women seem not only to experience distress from memories of their friends' encounters with reproductive biomedicine, but also to make sense of personal health and illness through these memories. And, human rights reports order such memories into narratives of political violation that women seem to reiterate. In his work on political imaginings of Tibet (2001), Barnett challenges the narrative authority of human rights reports, explaining, for instance, that allegations of forced abortion and sterilization “provoked independent scholars, obliged by academic conventions to contest evident inaccuracies, to disprove the claims. This was childishly easy to do when campaigners had described abuses as occurring systematically throughout Tibet” (285). However, although scholarly, demographic data makes clear that the Chinese state has not successfully decimated the Tibetan population, Barnett seems to overlook the consequences of widespread belief in genocide. The production of knowledge of systematic
violation shapes Tibetans' understandings of the political conflict. Cultural representations of suffering influence the lived experience of social suffering. And, in diaspora, these cultural representations hinge on the notion of joint physical and cultural violation.

Additionally, women's collective embodiment can be traced through experiences of maternal and infant death in Tibet. Despite the social suffering associated with biomedicine in China, my informants cite the lack of access to hospital facilities as a factor driving the deaths of family members and friends during birth and infancy. In this way, women's narratives both naturalize and pathologize the suffering associated with childbirth. And, memories of maternal and infant death in Tibet and attitudes towards birthing practices in India present biomedical care as a means of alleviating this suffering. Women's narratives thus reveal contradicting stances towards biomedicine that seem to be shaped by the cultural and political realities of life in Tibet and India. In India, women emphasize their “choice” to limit births, positioning political freedom in line with reproduction in a manner that correlates with the association between political oppression and reproductive regulation in Tibet. In Dharamsala, women's attitudes towards biomedical reproductive care thus seem to mirror political sentiments.

The processes that construct official Tibetan exilic subjectivities also seem to produce birthing practices specific to Dharamsala. From descriptions of childbirth in personal narratives, it seems that women in exile choose hospitalized births in order to obtain birth certificates. Through their emphasis on birth certificates, women highlight the importance of bureaucratic identification as a Tibetan refugee. Hospitalized births provide an avenue for children to become officially emplaced in the exile community. However, although displaced women describe heightened concern with obtaining birth certificates for their children, from my observations, it
seems that most adults in Dharamsala do not possess any official identification apart from their registration certificates. This dynamic suggests experiences of migration (and, as Chapter Four will examine, hopes for continued geographic movement) may enhance the importance of birth certificates.

The absence of kinship ties also seems to influence women's decisions to access biomedical obstetric care. Many Tibetan women living in the diaspora lack the assistance of their kin throughout pregnancy and childbirth. They access this assistance, instead, through biomedical establishments in Dharamsala, emplacing themselves in new systems of care. Therefore, the biomedical establishment in India demonstrates new configurations of kinship and citizenship that have emerged in Dharamsala. Hospitals provide an avenue towards obtaining bureaucratic diasporic citizenship, at the same time, filling a social role left empty in diasporic kinship networks. Foucault (1973) traces the connection between illness and the institution of the family, asserting that, “The natural locus of disease is the natural locus of life—the family: gentle, spontaneous care, expressive of love and a common desire for a cure...allows the illness itself to attain its own truth” (17). My informants seemed to similarly naturalize care within kinship networks, especially during childbirth (which figures as a sort of illness given the prevalence of maternal and infant mortality in Tibet). In describing scholarship on diaspora, Anand (2003) directs us towards the concept of “displacement as productive of, and not a hindrance to, structures and practices constituting diasporic culture and identity” (219). In Dharamsala, displacement seems to shape understandings of reproduction and practices of childbirth through social and political forces. Ruptured kinship ties, that is, social displacement, may lead women to view hospitalized childbirth as a response to a lack of social support. At the
same time, discussions of reproduction consistently turn towards the conflict in Tibet, producing another narrative genre of Tibetan suffering that relies upon the national sentiments cultivated in exile.
Chapter 4: Migrant Futures and the Status of Tibet

Introduction

Chapter Three demonstrated the centrality of childbirth and reproductive health in women's life narratives, suggesting that physical reproduction provides a powerful metaphor through which my informants articulate key anxieties of diasporic existence. These anxieties center around the future of Tibet and Tibetans. Given this concern with the future of the collectivity, how do individuals plan for their own futures? Chapter Three examined notions of cultural and physical survival and associated aspects of family planning in (relatively) stable kinship networks; women's narratives of childbirth were set in the context of heterosexual partnerships in Dharamsala or in families in Tibet. This chapter extends the examination of Tibetan diasporic kinship and citizenship ties to the narratives of young, unmarried Tibetan migrants who have not settled in India. As these individuals grapple with their futures and look towards their own romantic, marital, and reproductive prospects, they express hopes and fears about the reproduction of the Tibetan people and nation, clarifying connections between the reality of protracted liminality in the diaspora and narrative emphasis on the survival of the Tibetan imagined community. In my informants' narratives, the survival of Tibet and Tibetans is contingent upon both personal and collective responsibilities. Some women express that they hope to give birth to and nurture children, at the same time emphasizing the importance of stable kinship networks to achieving this goal. Others show resistance to marriage and reproduction, while they acknowledge that these processes form a normal life course.

I am refraining from characterizing these partnerships as marriages. Although the four women cited in Chapter Three are married, many women have no formal marriage ceremony and consider themselves unmarried. For example, one woman explained that there was no reason for her and her partner to get married because they do not have family in India who could organize the marriage celebrations. Marriage seems to connote connections to an extended kin network which is not present for many in Dharamsala.
Also, as they consider their own futures, my informants articulate collective concern with the future of the Tibetan nation. Sometimes, they portray this concern to be outside the realm of personal agency. In these cases, political developments and the movements of kin seem to drive their plans to migrate beyond Dharamsala, either back to Tibet or to “the West.” This continued migration reinforces the form of Tibet as a diasporic nation. Even when individuals return to Tibet, they communicate information about the exile community, which in turn impels new migrants to journey to South Asia. Given that nationalist sentiment communicates the moral imperative of realigning the Tibetan people with the Tibetan territory, perpetual migration calls into question understandings of “Tibet” and of the freedom movement. At the same time, some women seem to see the reproduction of the Tibetan nation in diaspora as a personal responsibility that they can uphold by disseminating the commitment to Tibetan freedom to an international audience as well as to future generations. Tibetan migrants’ futures are thus bound to the reproduction of the Tibetan nation, a dynamic which can be traced in narrative expressions.

Narrating the Future: Imagining Communities through Continued Migration

Many of my informants live in institutions that represent and solidify a liminal state. Given that their time in these institutions is limited (the Tibetan Reception Center finds new institutions to house the recent arrivals, students at TTS can matriculate for a maximum of five years, and students at branches of TCV and ES Trust either graduate or leave before finishing their degrees), I found myself wondering about my informants’ futures. As I spoke with them, I found that my informants who live at the TRC or who are in their early years at TTS focus more on the present. For example, as described in Chapter One, those living at the TRC articulate their goals according to the normative narrative of dual motivations for migration—firstly to meet the Dalai
Lama, and secondly to study—possibly because they have not yet fully realized these goals. Students at TTS likewise explain that they remain focused largely on their education, seeing graduation as a concrete aim that drives their daily lives. In contrast, students who have graduated or will graduate soon express longer-term goals that intersect with memories of life in Tibet. In this way, examining my informants' narrative expressions of their hopes and plans illuminates the connections between memory, that is, imagined pasts, and imagined futures. These connections seem particularly relevant to the diasporic situation, in which understandings of “Tibet” and the future of the nation is in question. How do individuals situate themselves within their personal hopes and memories, while simultaneously remaining committed to Tibetan freedom?

The following narratives come from three young women who have not married or given birth. Two of these women, Kunchang Dolma and Tenzin Sonam, were born in Tibet. One woman, Pasang, was born in Dharamsala. I present the chapter as a conversation between Kunchang Dolma and Tenzin Sonam, followed by Pasang's narrative. By juxtaposing Pasang's narrative with those of the women who have migrated from Tibet, I hope to illuminate similarities and differences in notions of national and cultural renewal across a central social division in the exile community. As described in Chapter One, Tibetans born in India and Tibet seem to identify as migrants, either through personal experiences or family and mythico-histories of journeying between Tibet and India. Despite my informants' common identification with migration and a sense of collective displacement, it seems that place of birth profoundly influences their world views. Tibetans born in Tibet and those born in exile are subject to different dynamics of social displacement and have different educational and political
This chapter explores contrasting understandings of the diaspora that these different life experiences seem to engender. All three narratives clarify and extend the metaphorical dimensions of biological reproduction introduced in Chapter Three. In addition, Kunchang Dolma, Tenzin Sonam, and Pasang explain their future goals in terms of gendered notions of nurturance that seem to link nation-building to the formation of individual families. Although their attitudes towards gender and nurturance seem diverse, all three women highlight a concern with nurturing the Tibetan imagined community in the diaspora.

**Kunchang Dolma**

After meeting Dolma Dechen in McLeod Ganj, she invited me to visit her school, Education Support Trust (ES Trust), to interview her classmates. Dolma Dechen described the community at ES Trust as her “family.” This family encompasses twenty-four students who live together in one house with English teachers and a few Tibetan administrative workers. All students matriculate together for two years and therefore progress through their education together. Among the schools in Dharamsala, ES Trust is unique because it operates through donations from a Swiss NGO rather than through the exile government. Also, the school focuses exclusively on the English language, and all the teachers are native English speakers, who stay for a few months until their visas expire (and sometimes return). By contrast, the teachers at the exile government schools are mostly Tibetan. Since many individuals in Dharamsala seemed desperate to continue their English studies, the spots at ES Trust are coveted among graduates of other institutions who must take an entrance exam as part of the admissions process. Students at ES Trust complete the Cambridge Primary School exam upon graduation, and receive certification of their English abilities. Since the school is not related to the exile government,
this certification can be used to find employment in Chinese government jobs in Tibet.

ES Trust is located near the Norbulinka Institute, so, as instructed by Dolma Dechen, I boarded the bus that hobbled down one of the two main mountain roads leading out of McLeod Ganj, getting off at the stop nearest Norbulinka where she met me. Together, we walked down a dusty road dotted with a few large, fenced-in houses for about twenty minutes. I was struck by these homes, which seemed more characteristic of suburban America than rural India. As we walked, Dolma Dechen explained to me the landscape, pointing out the well from which the students sometimes must fetch water when the pipes are not working. It seems that, despite the impressive architecture, the area's infrastructure was similar to that of McLeod Ganj. We reached a white house, its roof lined with Tibetan prayer flags, and entered.

I met the school's director briefly, who knew of my plan to visit and interview students through Dolma Dechen. After we had spoken, Dolma Dechen gave me a short tour of the two storey house, which included a large room lined with bunk beds where male students stayed, and two smaller dorm rooms for female students located upstairs. Dolma Dechen and I spent some time chatting in her dorm room, whispering as three other students napped on nearby bunks. Since the women in the upstairs dorms all seemed to be sleeping, Dolma Dechen led me back downstairs, to a room where students were finishing what she referred to as “art projects” that they had begun earlier in the day. She pointed me towards three students, two young men and a young woman, who were scratching away with colored pencils on white paper. Dolma Dechen instructed me to enter and speak with the students, and then walked back up the stairs.

I walked over to the young woman, who was drawing what appeared to be a map of the Dharamsala area. I introduced myself as Dolma Dechen's friend, and asked what she was doing.
She did not seem surprised to see me. Perhaps Dolma Dechen had told her classmates (as she had told the director) that I would be coming. Also, since the students at ES Trust speak English quite fluently and form friendships with their Euro-American teachers, they have more experience interacting with foreigners than individuals at the reception center and TTS. Also, it is possible that other students have cultivated friendships with foreigners, since, like Dolma Dechen, they sometimes travel to McLeod Ganj on their weekends. The young woman, named Kunchang Dolma, confirmed that she was, in fact, drawing a map of Dharamsala. I explained that I was conducting a project for my school, and asked if she would be willing to speak with me about her life. She agreed. Although she seemed shy and spoke quietly, Kunchang Dolma shared with me a narrative that included many short, vivid sketches of her life in Tibet and in India. I asked few prompting questions. She continued to color throughout the interview while I took notes, both of our hands continuously moving across papers laid out in front of us.

Kunchang Dolma is twenty-two years old, and comes from a rural area of Kham. She has six siblings, including “two sets of twins, one sister, and one brother.” Her brother is older, and migrated with her to India in the winter of 2008. Kunchang Dolma and her older brother both entered TCV Suja together. Kunchang Dolma has graduated and is finishing her second year at ES Trust, while her brother continues to matriculate at TCV Suja. Kunchang Dolma and her brother left Tibet without their family's knowledge, after living by themselves in Lhasa. In Lhasa, her brother worked and she attended school, performing labor as needed to help pay for the school fees. As she speaks, Kunchang Dolma joins temporally distant moments, juxtaposing memories of Tibet with her future hopes. She says,

Our parents gave us school fees, then we used them to pay a guide and just came here. When we reached Nepal, we phoned our parents. Of course, they are very
sad. They can't believe it. My mom cried so much. I said that I came here to study, for no other reason, and that the rest is free. Because of that, they are quite relieved. I plan to go back, but right now it is quite difficult to go back because the Chinese don't want us to come...Even I tried to go back after I finished class eight at TCV, but when I got to Nepal, I could not get a visa. My parents are afraid we won't see each other again because they are quite old. If the situation is easy, I will go back, but everything depends on the situation.

Since she was unable to return to Tibet when she could not get a visa, political management of migration has shaped Kunchang Dolma's life course. She portrays her personal future to be caught up in that of the Tibetan nation. She hopes to return to Tibet in order to be reunited with her parents before their deaths. And yet, she says that “everything depends on the situation,” imagining her future to be limited within the confines of political stability and instability. In this narrative excerpt, the Chinese state governs Kunchang Dolma's personal sense of stability and instability; Kunchang Dolma explains that her uncertainty about returning to Tibet arises “because the Chinese don't want us to come”. In this case, therefore, political conflict drives Kunchang Dolma's protracted liminality, which she hopes to alleviate in being reunited with her family.

Kunchang Dolma continues to speak about her family, explaining that her brother and sister are married in Tibet. Then, she tells me,

Really, I want to get married, but not now. In the future I want to be a good wife and mother. That is my aim, because for girls it is very important to be a good wife and mother because then your children will be good, too. I can't say how many children I want because if I have very good conditions and work, then I will need probably three or four. It all depends on my conditions in the future. Because, my mother already has seven children, and right now she is very happy. My brothers and sister\textsuperscript{61} are all very good to my parents. My mother always tells me this on the phone. One day I asked her if she regrets having seven children. She said that when we were small, she had some problems, but now she is happy and she never regrets it. During that time, the Chinese came to our place and

\textsuperscript{61} Kunchang Dolma did not clarify whether the two sets of twins in her family are male or female, but since she pluralized “brothers” and not “sister,” it seems that they are all male.
decided to control our place. They made a revolution.\textsuperscript{62}...It was very difficult for my mother to take care of us.

Again, Kunchang Dolma seems to connect personal well-being (“conditions”) with the political situation in Tibet. She compares the difficulties her mother faced in nurturing her family to her own future, which remains uncertain due to ongoing political conflict. She explains that these conditions will dictate the number of children to whom she plans to give birth. Through her description of birth planning, Kunchang Dolma draws connections between the status of the Tibetan nation and her personal family formation. Additionally, she emphasizes that forming a family carries significance because of her gender. Kunchang Dolma thus naturalizes conceptual connections between gender and childbirth.\textsuperscript{63} As Kunchang Dolma explains, being female endows her with the responsibility to build a “good” family. She describes personal agency, but also a potential burden, in her hopes to raise and nurture a family, which she again links to political conflict. For example, Kunchang Dolma asserts that her mother achieved a present state of happiness, despite earlier struggles that resulted from Chinese intervention and were exacerbated by her need to provide for seven children. Through notions of instability and nurturance, Kunchang Dolma articulates a specific form of heteronormative pronatalism that idealizes overcoming political conflict in the realm of the family. As described in Chapter Three, pronatalism seems to operate as a form of discursive political resistance in Dharamsala. Kunchang Dolma seems to express resistance by emphasizing the eventual merits that can arise from struggling to raise many children in the midst of political strife and its resulting material hardship.

\textsuperscript{62} It was unclear which “revolution” Kunchang Dolma was describing. She may have been describing the general situation in Tibet following the Chinese invasion, or she may have been referring to a number of periods of unrest that occurred throughout the 1980s.

\textsuperscript{63} Sangmu presented a similar dynamic, with her statement that it is “natural” for women to desire children (see p. 150).
However, Kunchang Dolma also restricts her imagined future to the confines of a normative, gendered life path. Kunchang Dolma seems to sense a duty to have children. Although this responsibility presents resistance to Chinese political control over the Tibetan population, it also constrains Kunchang Dolma's plans for her future to a heteronormative life course. In contextualizing the occurrence of the issue of population in Greek political discourse, Paxson (2004) notes a cross-cultural trend in “the use of a female figure to symbolize, rather than represent, nation-states” (177-178). Through this gendered symbolism, women “have been accorded a maternal citizenship that has come at the price of full inclusion in the so-called public sphere, or political citizenship” (177-178). Paxson argues that, rather than being granted authoritative power to represent the collectivity, states have appropriated women's bodies as symbols. The symbolic use of women's bodies has called on women to carry the burden of physically reproducing and nurturing the nation. “Maternal citizenship,” then, refers to women's devotion to the nation through giving birth to children, rather than through political participation. Kunchang Dolma describes a similar maternal citizenship, in which her reproductive capacities determine her life course, leading her back to the existing institution of the family in Tibet. She seems to sense a duty to enact her commitment to Tibetan freedom through her reproductive capacities. As Paxson further explains, maternal citizenship involves two distinct duties: “Qualitatively, women's traditional service in raising children within patriarchal families has been harnessed to national interests...Quantitatively, women have been responsible, and frequently commended, for birthing new citizens...” (ibid:178). Kunchang Dolma speaks to both aspects of maternal citizenship, highlighting her hope to give to birth many children and to nurture them into “good” Tibetans. And yet, her uncertainty about her future conditions seems to
lead her to doubt her ability to follow through with these gendered responsibilities.

_Tenzin Sonam_

Tenzin Sonam and I met at TTS after she had participated in the class I interviewed in early May (described in the Introduction). At the conclusion of the class, my translator, Tenzin Tsering, and I had asked if any students would be available for individual interviews. Tenzin Sonam was among the students who raised their hands in affirmation. When Tenzin Tsering and I returned to TTS as scheduled a few days later, we found Tenzin Sonam in her dormitory. We sat together on the concrete steps outside with the summer sun, almost oppressively strong before the start of the monsoon season, beating down.

As she begins to speak about herself, I learn that nineteen year old Tenzin Sonam is about halfway through her education at TTS. She came to India in 2009 to learn literary Tibetan in an exile government school, because although she studied throughout her childhood and adolescence in Lhasa, she was unable to find a curriculum that offered the level of Tibetan language instruction she sought. The youngest of eight children, Tenzin Sonam lived with her parents in rural Utzang during her early childhood, until they sent her to live with her brother and sister in order to attend school in Lhasa. Like Kunchang Dolma, Tenzin Sonam expresses a personal duty to remain committed to Tibetan freedom. She says,

_In my school in Lhasa, there was a senior Tibetan teacher who knew about political history, so my interest in and knowledge of Tibet and Tibetan language increased. In school, I heard from friends about the Dalai Lama, and I wanted to study more. My sister and brother contributed money, and that is how I came. My parents knew that I was planning to come. Initially, they were hesitant because we had a neighbor who had gone and suffered a lot on the way. They were concerned because I was the youngest, but then they started saying it would be good for me to go, because I would be the only one working for the Tibetan cause, since my brothers and sisters are busy with their own lives. Once I went to Lhasa, my father was no more, but when I left, those were the words my mom_
Tenzin Sonam articulates the importance of working towards the Tibetan freedom through a story about leaving and losing family members. Through her mother's words, she portrays her exile as a sort of sacrifice in response to the political conflict. Unlike other informants, who “knew” of the Tibetan cause only upon arriving in the exile community, Tenzin Sonam's schooling in Lhasa provoked a political consciousness that catalyzed her desire to migrate. And, her mother's parting words seem to encourage her political consciousness, granting Tenzin Sonam the responsibility to learn for the sake of the Tibetan nation. Whereas Kunchang Dolma explained that political stability and instability will restrict her movement between Tibet and India, Tenzin Sonam paints the political conflict as a driving factor behind her decision to migrate. She migrates in spite of political instability, and, as implied in her mother's charge to “work for the Tibetan cause,” she expresses a sense of agency in alleviating Tibetans' collective suffering. In contrast to Kunchang Dolma, who seems to see her own reproductive capacity as her primary means of contributing to the Tibetan freedom movement, Tenzin Sonam suggests that education can serve a similar goal. And, like stories of migration, Tenzin Sonam's narrative communicates the political conflict in Tibet through the idiom of ruptured familial relationships—that is, through her father's death and her own migration.

Tenzin Sonam's description of her father's death seems to coincide (in the form of her narrative, if not in the temporal sequencing of lived experience) with her moment of departure from her family. The way that Tenzin Sonam raises her father's death as she describes leaving her family constructs a clear plot line. In this plot, Tenzin Sonam seems to associate political conflict with personal agency, as she will further explain when discussing her future plans. And,
she marks her dissociation from her family—from her father upon his death and from her other family members through migration—in political terms. I ask how her father died, and she explains,

_He was not well when I was in Lhasa. There was no doctor in my village, they had just one for six villages. He had a disease, something to do with the lungs. He was coughing a lot. The fee for the hospital was very high—of course it was expensive because it was a Chinese hospital, and it was difficult for us to take him to the hospital every day. I didn't know about it for a year, and then five to six months after I found out, he just passed away. I am very attached to my parents, very attached to my parents. In the hospital we took him to, they have Chinese medicines._

_64 There is a Tibetan doctor, but it is difficult for him to practice Tibetan medicine. You can only take Tibetan medicine for private use, because the Chinese have laid restrictions. Tibetans generally feel that Tibetan medicine is better, so otherwise they would stop going to Chinese hospitals. And, I've heard that the Chinese medicines distributed to Tibet are all expired. They are dumped to Tibet from the cities because no one will take them, and Tibetans think that if it is expired less than one month or one year it is ok._

Tenzin Sonam's description of medical practices in Tibet presents a microcosm of the political conflict, like the plot of the prison narrative. She positions Chinese medicine and doctors in conflict with Tibetan patients. This excerpt thus reiterates women's mistrust of Chinese biomedical interventions in the realm of reproduction (described in Chapter Three). Tenzin Sonam portrays practices such as restricting access to Tibetan medicine, charging high fees, and distributing expired medication as intentional marginalizations of the Tibetan people. And, that Tenzin Sonam had linked her father's death to a description of the Tibetan cause again draws personal experiences of familial illness and loss into the political realm.

*Kunchang Dolma*

As Kunchang Dolma continues to speak, she further explains why she hopes to return to Tibet.

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64 As described in Chapter Three, my informants often referred to Western biomedicine as “Chinese” or “Indian” depending on the country in which they accessed it. Tenzin Sonam is most likely referring to Western biomedicine practiced in a Chinese hospital, rather than other forms of (“traditional”) Chinese medicine.
However, she begins to articulate insecurities in this plan. She says,

I don't want to marry here, but everything is possible, everything is changing...I'm quite afraid, whether or not that man would be good to me...We are girls, and if you meet a boy who doesn't take responsibility for you after you're married, it's quite difficult. If we had a baby, and he left me, my life would be over, I think. Here, we have lots of different people together, but in Tibet, if we were married we would probably know each other well, and if he treated me badly he would have problems, also. But here, you hear so many stories that first they love each other, then they get married without telling their parents. They just stay together, get a baby, and then they get divorced and the girl has so many problems. I can love someone, but for me it's very difficult to get married...We don't have parents or relatives here, so if we get problems, there is no one to go to, nowhere to go to, no one to tell our problems to.

Kunchang Dolma seems to consider her future through her present state of liminality (that arises from ruptured kinship ties). Although she hopes to marry in Tibet, Kunchang Dolma seems to express anxiety about her possibility for return. This anxiety leads to further concerns about her life course in exile, since marriage and reproduction are fraught with uncertainty without the support of the extended family. And, Kunchang Dolma's attitudes towards marriage portray the necessity of producing new kinship ties within the existing infrastructure of the Tibetan family, which serves as a form of social reproduction. For Kunchang Dolma, the social reproduction of the extended family carries significance because of its security. And, since she expresses a desire to return to Tibet for the purposes of physical and social reproduction, she communicates the importance of reproducing the Tibetan imagined community (an extension of the kinship ties of the family) in the physical territory of Tibet. She seems to view social and physical reproduction, tied to the place of Tibet, as a pathway to resolving her present liminality. Given that Kunchang Dolma ties her hopes to the physical territory of Tibet, she seems to envision an end to her personal state of diaspora, emplacing her within her natal kinship network, as well as within that of her future husband. Additionally, since Kunchang Dolma portrays migrating back
to Tibet to be contingent upon political stability, she links her future to that of the nation. In her narrative, political instability and social displacement intertwine. Due to these intertwining political and social forces, Kunchang Dolma's desired return to her homeland alleviates both personal and national liminality. She presents an unfinished narrative plot, whose denouement depends upon the future of the Tibetan nation.

Kunchang Dolma's explanation of her desire to marry in Tibet can be understood in the context of changing patterns of heterosexual partnership, romance, and marriage in exile. Many marriages in Tibet seem to be initiated and settled through the extended family, which informants often referred to as “arranged.” According to my informants, arranged marriages are particularly common in rural areas, whereas, in Lhasa, “love marriages” are becoming more common. In “love marriages,” the couple may meet through the extended family, but decides to marry without official consultation, or economic transaction, between their families. My informants explain that, in exile, “love marriages” are the norm, among both Tibetans born in exile and Tibetans from Tibet. The dichotomy between arranged marriages and love marriages correlates with notions of modernity and cultural change that are associated with migration, both internal and transnational. In contrast to Kunchang Dolma's hope that her family in Tibet would arrange a suitable match for her, other informants portrayed parental involvement in marriage less positively. Some women presented a diachronic alteration in marriage patterns, associating arranged marriages with the past. Some women drew distinctions between arranged marriages as economic contracts (as one woman described them, “the same like selling”), and marriage as an

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65 In addition to “love” and “arranged” marriages, my informants described a form of marriage (rogs aphrad la song) in which a woman purposefully leaves her window open, and a man with whom she is acquainted enters through the window and “kidnaps” her, taking her to his home. The couple then spends the night together at the man's home, and in the morning, his family is obligated to negotiate a marriage with the woman's family. Lhamo Tso told me that these marriages are rare, and occur mainly in Amdo.
affective bond. And yet, economic transactions continue to figure in love marriages. For example, it seemed common for husbands to work in Europe and America, sending remittances to their wives in Dharamsala who hope to eventually join them abroad.

Additionally, like Tenzin Yangzom, Kunchang Dolma demonstrates the tendency to mark collective identity through shifting pronomial use (see p. 146-7). While Tenzin Yangzom spoke in Tibetan, Kunchang Dolma spoke in English, suggesting a pattern of pronoun switching between languages (see p. 147n50). Kunchang Dolma said, for example, “we are girls,” “if you meet a boy who doesn't take responsibility for you,” “I can love someone but for me it's very difficult to get married,” and “we don't have our parents here.” Since Kunchang Dolma communicates her attitudes towards marriage through personal (first-personal singular) statements and collective (first-person plural) experiences, she constructs a collectivity within which she emplaces herself. And, Kunchang Dolma employs hypothetical examples (second-person), that reiterate the importance of stable heterosexual marriage; even when speaking hypothetically, she seems to imagine, or, at least to articulate, a single possible life course. Kunchang Dolma thus expresses affiliation with a collectivity of displaced women through pronomial shifting. She seems to highlight women's particular need for an extended kin group as they formulate new, romantic kinship ties. And, she constructs a proper female life course, presented as a shared community ideal, which drives the gendered logics behind her hopes of where to marry.

Then, Kunchang Dolma interjects a statement that seems to reiterate her reasons for wanting multiple children. She explains,

Many families, even though they have a very good situation, they only want one child. But, I don't think that family is very happy. Only one child, and that child
feels very lonely, with no one to play with. And, if that child goes to another place to work, then in that big house, there is only a father and mother. It's quite lonely in your future. If you have three to four children, it's quite difficult to give them everything, but in the future it will be good. If your first child doesn't look after you, then probably your second child will. And, in Buddhism, it's very good if we give more births. Because right now, people control births, but if everyone controls births, then how can the next people be born? My mother told me that, and she said that when she had twins she got lots of problems, but she still gave birth to seven children. If you have more children, your life will have more happiness. Some of my friends have only one or no siblings, and they told me they admired those who have brothers and sisters. So, for me, one child is not enough.

In this excerpt, Kunchang Dolma links “happiness” to giving birth to many children, explaining that multiple children create more opportunities for stability, from the perspective of both children (since they will have playmates) and parents (since some of their children may leave or reject familial responsibilities). Kunchang Dolma reiterates her earlier portrayal of family formation as a struggle through which one can achieve happiness through secure social bonds. It also seems that her own decision to leave her family in Tibet may influence her desire for multiple children. She says, “if that child goes to another place...then in that big house, there is only a father and mother. It's quite lonely in your future.” Although she articulates a strong bond with her mother, and seems to admire her mother's strength in birthing seven children, Kunchang Dolma also seems to acknowledge the difficulties that her own separation has brought upon her mother.

Kunchang Dolma also expresses what seem to be connections between karma and her personal motivation to give birth. She explains that “in Buddhism, it's very good” to reproduce many children, for the sake of “the next people.” Again, Kunchang Dolma expresses both heteronormative pronatalist sentiments and gender ideals by portraying birth as a woman's

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66 This statement seems to communicate a similar message to Tenzin Yangzom's assertion that birth control presents a spiritual dilemma because “there are so many spirits waiting for bodies” (see p. 145)
spiritual, as well as political, responsibility to the greater collectivity. Furthermore, by extending
discussions of pronatalism to spirituality, Kunchang Dolma presents giving birth as a gendered
virtue. Paxson (2004) likewise notes the affiliations between ethics, religion, and maternal
thinking in Greece, explaining that “Athenian women, regardless of whether they have children,
perceive and inhabit motherhood and womanhood as kinds of technologies—that is, as tools
with which they craft ethical selves and social relations” (254). Kunchang Dolma seems to
similarly engage with notions of motherhood, since she associates her plans to give birth to
many children with a spiritual ethic of providing human incarnations for future generations.
Therefore, as Kunchang Dolma articulates her future plans, she seems to perform her femininity
in line with ideals of motherhood.

Kunchang Dolma continues to speak, explaining that her sister lives with her husband
and his family. She tells me,

Of course, I will have to go live with my husband's family. But, I have a plan: if I
get a husband and his parents are still living, I will really be good to them.
Really, I think like that all the time, because I love older men and older women. I
don't know the reason.

With this statement, Kunchang Dolma applies the same emphasis on the nurturance of children
to older people. She again portrays care and nurturance to be central among her future goals,
also explaining plans to reproduce the existing infrastructure of the extended family in Tibet. As
explained above, Kunchang Dolma depicts nurturance as a struggle which results in a state of
social stability and personal happiness. That she extends this formulation of nurturance across
generations, to the elderly as well as to children, further suggests that this value underlies the
gendered logics of social reproduction.

Tenzin Sonam
Tenzin Sonam also explains that she hopes to marry in Tibet, associating marriage with customs relating to gender. She explains,

In Tibet, I want to get married because I already have plans to go back. I think it is good, because in my village, there is no such thing as men being put on a pedestal. But, people follow customs, so men do hard work and women do household work. When men come home from work, it is women's duty to pour them tea. In Lhasa, though, everything is equal. Whatever men can do, women can do. Even if women just want to go and hang out, they can do that.

Tenzin Sonam seems to view marriage as a typical course of action, explaining that she will marry in Tibet because she has other plans to return. In this way, Tenzin Sonam normalizes marriage as a part of women's life courses. In this way, she mirrors Kunchang Dolma's naturalization of women's desire to marry, reproduce, and nurture children. However, rather than stressing the necessity of physical reproduction as Kunchang Dolma did, Tenzin Sonam speaks of the influence of marriage on existing gender relations. She describes a division of labor in her village different from that in Lhasa. Nonetheless, Tenzin Sonam does not seem to consider marriage to be constraining, explaining that although “people follow customs,” men are not positioned as superior to women. These notions of gender equity seem to drive Tenzin Sonam's willingness to marry as part of a normative life course.

As she continues to speak, Tenzin Sonam describes residency patterns and the rituals surrounding marriage in Tibet. She explains,

When people marry, if they are going to stay on their own, the respective families will contribute to them building a small house, give them utensils and other things. The ceremony will take place three times: at the bride's house, at the groom's house, and then at the couple's new house. These days, many people might live separately because the family is getting too big to accommodate more people, but it used to be that they would just live with their families.

These details of familial organization point to ritual adaptation. Other informants spoke of this
three day marriage celebration, which marks the arrival of the bride (namas) into the home of the
groom's family. In her narrative description, Tenzin Sonam links notions of change to patterns of
residency, since she portrays a ritual progression from the homes of each partner to their new
residence. The couple's new residence figures as an icon of changing family structure. This
changing family structure ironically contrasts with pronatalist sentiments and fears of
demographic demise that (most) other informants expressed.

Tenzin Sonam's description of marriage rituals can help illuminate the significance of
kinship ties in Dharamsala because these ceremonies seem to influence patterns of kinship
formation in exile. Marriage carries a ritual value that Tibetans in Dharamsala seem to
conceptualize according to the social dynamics of geographic displacement. It seems that,
among Tibetans in Dharamsala, marriage connotes specific ritual practices, such as those Tenzin
Sonam detailed, rather than affective bonds ("love") or monogamous, heterosexual partnership
for the purposes of reproduction. For example, when I was interviewing one woman, Lhamo Ja,
who lives in McLeod Ganj with her one year old son and her son's father, I assumed that she was
married. When I asked about her husband, she replied, "We aren't married. We didn't have any
wedding, because, we have no relatives here, so there was no need for a wedding. Everyone
does like this—they don't have a wedding, they just live together." That marriage seems
insignificant to Lhamo Ja, while Tenzin Sonam detailed marriage rituals in Tibet, points to the
ways that displacement seems to contribute to shifting attitudes towards family formation.
Practices that carry ritual significance in Tibet lack meaning in exile, due to women's isolation
from their extended kinship networks.

In focusing on customs and ritual, Tenzin Sonam's narrative sheds light on the ways that
Tibetans in Dharamsala seem to navigate life in the diaspora with reference to their memories of social worlds in Tibet. For example, Tenzin Sonam portrays her own ruptured kinship ties through the political conflict, linking her father's death and her mother's call to work for the Tibetan cause to her departure. In this way, Tenzin Sonam marks her migration as the beginning of a journey, whose denouement remains tied to Tibet. In describing her future plans to marry in Tibet, Tenzin Sonam accepts both change and continuity in rituals, gender relations, and the division of labor in Tibet. Although Tenzin Sonam seems to place importance on marrying in Tibet and, like Kunchang Dolma, reproducing existing social infrastructures, she also accepts change. She seems less concerned than Kunchang Dolma with reproducing the life paths of previous generations.

Kunchang Dolma

Kunchang Dolma seems to have finished her narrative. So, I ask if she has anything else she wants to tell me, and she responds with a lengthy story that draws her past, her future goals, and her values of nurturance around the focal point of an anecdote about three children she knew in Lhasa. Kunchang Dolma answers,

One thing is, when I was fourteen or thirteen, because my parents didn't have lots of money, all the children would go to school and I wanted to also. So, that year I just went out and found a job during the holidays to pay for the school fee. A group of Chinese people was constructing a building, and I asked to join them, and I worked for almost one month. Sometimes I cooked for them, sometimes I made cement—that was really hard. In my past life, I think that thing [making cement] was very hard for me to do and I never forgot that [how hard it was]. My parents told me to quit school, but I saw my friends going to school and I always admired them. I was always in first or second place in my class, but these things I don't want to tell here [at ES Trust], I tell only you. Many people

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67 Kunchang Dolma seems to be referencing a philosophy of karma. In a study of understandings of karma in an ethnically Tibetan area of northern Nepal and among Tibetan refugees in India, Lichter and Epstein (1983) note a “version of a Puritan ethic, which insists that real gratification can only be got from earnest effort, and undeserved gains can never be as good” (229). This “Puritan ethic” seems linked to Buddhist understandings of causation, in which one must suffer to achieve happiness (ibid: 247-254).
told me “You are too small, you can't work,” and I just lied and told them I was eighteen or nineteen. Because the school fees were not enough to pay the guide, I worked more and earned money. In a hotel, I worked washing clothes and sheets. Many things I want to do, but right now, our place is not free. I have three aims: one, to be a teacher. I know Chinese language, and I want to learn more English. I'm also good at Tibetan. I'm best at Tibetan, then Chinese, then English. But, it's difficult to work under the Chinese government because they know that I have come from here, so if I get a problem, I want to be a social worker. If that doesn't work, a business woman. And, if I got lots of money, I would construct a school for orphans because there are so many in Lhasa. I had three orphan friends in Lhasa...They didn't have a home, they just lived in the streets. When I was in the hotel [working], they would always come and were begging and I gave them some food. I felt pity for them. My older brother was working in Lhasa, so I stayed with him, and these orphans would always come near my home, and if we had extra food or clothes, I gave it to them, so they loved me very much. I told these orphans not to beg, to think and try to earn money yourself. But, they said it's hard and they don't have any ability. People who clean shoes, they earn twenty, fifty, or one hundred rupees, they probably earn a lot. So, I told them I would prepare boxes for them [with supplies for cleaning shoes]. They said that the first day they would clean my shoes, but I said, “No, I don't want to let you clean my shoes. Only our condition is different, but we are the same.” Every day, they would get at least twenty to thirty rupees, and they showed me always. Really, I felt happy. I told them that if you get old, begging doesn't work. For your whole life, you can't be a beggar, so you should try to get some knowledge. I think that if they get good habits of how to spend their life, then their life will be good. Because my mother, even though she never had the chance to go to school and she is illiterate, her thinking is very high. She always taught us about relationships with people, about having a good life.

Kunchang Dolma portrays her interactions with the orphans as a key moment in her narrative, connecting the values she acquired from her mother to her future goals to work with children.

With her anecdote about the orphans, Kunchang Dolma thus unites her past, present, and future through the importance of nurturance; she again portrays nurturance as a virtue, through which one can achieve merits, including happiness and love.

_Tenzin Sonam_

Since Tenzin Sonam began by describing her migration, I ask if she likes living in India, and she

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68 Although this story takes place in Lhasa, Kunchang Dolma refers to the currency as “rupees.”
replies with an expression of physical displacement, tying her future goals and present
frustrations to Tibet and India as unique places. \(^{69}\) She explains,

There are two ways to look at it: I grew up in Tibet, so I think Tibet is a better
place for me. But, I can learn more about Tibet here, so in that way it is good.
Honestly, it [my life in India] is less than I expected. It all started in the
reception center in Nepal...I said my age was eighteen, but I was actually
seventeen. \(^{70}\) Here, most of the students are older than me [and did not go to
school in Tibet]. Maybe it's my surroundings, maybe something in myself, but I
cannot study that much. It's difficult for me to improve my English. After I
learn good English, though, I want to teach in Tibet, but you need a certificate
from the Chinese government. It's hard to get the certificate if you've gone to a
Tibetan school in India. So, I maybe want to work in an orphanage and teach
English. Also, I will try to talk to my students, to teach them about Tibet, unlike
my childhood. My idea is to study a lot and then work for the Tibetan cause.
Now, it's like I have lost my opportunities, because you can only stay here five
years. I have always loved orphanages, so I want to go back and work in one in
Lhasa.

Tenzin Sonam expresses a connection to Tibet because she “grew up” in its physical territory. By
articulating a personal connection to a physical territory, Tenzin Sonam seems to portray Tibet as
her homeland, a place to which she is naturally tied by virtue of her birth and childhood. And
yet, Tenzin Sonam also explains a contradiction in her imagining of the Tibetan nation: she can
“learn more about Tibet” outside of her physical homeland. Tenzin Sonam, however, also
explains that her idealized notions of life in India have not compared to her experience of life in
the diaspora, asserting that she has not been able to achieve her academic goals.

Also, Tenzin Sonam presents similar future goals to Kunchang Dolma. Both hope to
further their own education and to teach children. However, Tenzin Sonam explicitly articulates
a desire to develop political knowledge among her students, whereas Kunchang Dolma seemed

\(^{69}\) Scholars of diaspora, such as Gupta and Ferguson (1997) have noted the difference between “space” and “place,”
that is, a geographic space which has been endowed with a specific identity (or identities) (8).
\(^{70}\) Through the exile government’s system for managing refugees, students under age eighteen are sent to branches
of the Tibetan Children's Village, while students aged eighteen to thirty-four are sent to TTS. From my
informant's reports, it seems that TCV provides longer-term opportunities for education, including the possibility
of studying at an Indian university upon graduation.
more focused on nurturance. Again, it seems that these differing stances towards a similar life path may arise from contrasting ideas of agency and understandings of gender ideals. While Kunchang Dolma explains that her future is dictated by political conflict, Tenzin Sonam hopes to reproduce national consciousness by teaching in Tibet, because she personally could develop political knowledge only in exile. Through her statement that she hopes to teach her students about Tibet, Tenzin Sonam connects her future plans to the story of ruptured kinship ties with which she opened her narrative; she seems to respond to her mother's charge to “work for Tibet”. Also, although Tenzin Sonam hopes to marry and have children, she does not express strong ideals of feminine virtue, as Kunchang Dolma did. Like Kunchang Dolma, however, Tenzin Sonam's memories and sense of displacement, both social and physical, seem influence the ways that she envisions her future.

Pasang

When I first arrived in Dharamsala in early April, 2011, I sought out informants through NGOs including Students for a Free Tibet (SFT). One afternoon, I entered the office of SFT, explaining that I wished to speak with Tibetan women about their lives in Dharamsala. There was only one woman who worked in the office, and she was busy organizing events throughout the month. But, she gave me a list of five names and phone numbers, among which were those of Tenzin Tsering, who became one of my translators, Sonam (quoted in Chapter One) and Pasang. In contrast to the other women quoted in this chapter (and the majority of my informants), twenty-seven year old Pasang was born and lived for most of her life in Dharamsala. Since her mother was born in Dharamsala, and her father migrated to India with his parents, she has the support of an extended kinship group in exile, including parents, grandparents, siblings, and relatives.
Pasang's relationship to the diasporic community differs profoundly from women born in Tibet. She remains emplaced within her natal kin group in Dharamsala, has had contact with Westerners, Indians, and Tibetans from all regions throughout her life, and has grown up amidst political activism and strong nationalist sentiments in Dharamsala.

When I called Pasang, I told her that I was studying anthropology at an American college and that I hoped to speak with Tibetan women about their lives. She agreed to meet me the next day in a restaurant near the Dalai Lama's temple, where we sipped the rich, milky coffee I had become accustomed to throughout my travels in India and Nepal. As we sit down, Pasang asks, “What do you want to know about Tibet?” I am slightly taken aback and a little unsure as to how to answer. I had just arrived in Dharamsala about a week before, and I feel nervous about asking leading questions that will impose my own understandings of “Tibet” on Pasang's. I start explaining my interest in reproduction, stating that I am looking into women's attitudes towards childbirth. As I am describing the connection I have noticed between gender, reproduction and narratives of human rights violations, Pasang begins to speak about herself. She says,

I think I should have one baby, at least, if I marry. I think it's just the procedure, I guess, I'm just going through the procedure. Seriously, I'm not really a huge fan of kids and stuff. I don't know, I have never been fond of kids. But, everyone, all my friends tell me you will change, as things change. And, as you get older, I guess, you change your mind. Maybe I will. As of now, I just want to enjoy myself. My friends tell me this because they also experienced the same thing. They said like “Oh, we never used to like babies,” but now they are totally into children, they just want more, which is weird, I don't know why. So, I think I will marry, even though I don't like babies, right? My friends say once you marry you'll feel that, you'll want babies. Maybe I'll adopt because I'm not a huge fan of being a mother and stuff like that, and there are so many kids who don't have homes. Of course, having your own baby is different. It just comes from your own body, keeping it in your stomach for nine months, feeling that thing for nine months coming from you, not just taking the baby from someone. I'm sure it will be different, but I'll try as hard as I can not to make the baby feel like I'm not its real mother. So, I'll get married if I fall in love with someone and if [we] want to
take the relationship to a different level. It's not necessarily that you have to marry. I would just rather have a partner, but social norms and everything make that difficult. Once you have the tag of marriage, things become complicated. If that tag is not there, it's more exciting, the relationship keeps building. But I don't know what kind of partner I will have and he might want to marry.

Like Kunchang Dolma, Pasang situates reproduction and marriage as social norms that figure as part of the women's life course. But, she articulates a variety of possibilities for family formation that contrast with Kunchang Dolma's description of a proper female life path. In particular, she does not seem to naturalize reproduction in the same manner as Kunchang Dolma, stating that she might prefer to form a somewhat unconventional nuclear family, through adoption or long-term partnership rather than marriage. And yet, she nonetheless asserts that women's biological capacity for reproduction leads to the development of affective ties between children and their biological mothers, which are absent in the case of adoption. That Pasang labels marriage as a normative form of kinship and positions her own hopes in opposition suggests that she accepts diverse social bonds in the realm of kinship. At the same time, she seems to recognize the constraints posed by social norms, explaining that her future plans will be influenced by her partner. In comparison to Kunchang Dolma and Tenzin Sonam, Pasang seems more comfortable considering uncertainty in her future. Whereas the two women born in India emphasized the insecurity that arises from depending on their (hypothetical) husbands for familial support, Pasang does not express similar anxieties. Instead, she articulates an ambivalence towards marrying and bearing children. Pasang communicates a sense of distance from the compulsory reproductive heteronormativity implied by social norms and understandings of feminine virtue in Dharamsala.

As we speak further, I learn that Pasang attended school at Lower TCV (a branch of TCV
almost exclusively for children born in exile) and received a BA in English Honors from Delhi University. She explains that she recently completed a MA in History from Himachal University by correspondence, while she was working as a tour guide, leading American groups through Nepal, Bhutan, and North India. Pasang discusses her past and future by focusing on education. She explains that when completing her MA,

I was a bit fascinated with Indian history and world history, so I thought maybe I'll first focus on where I'm living. But, I couldn't do much because I was working. I couldn't really do the whole study. I really want to do a PhD in anthropology, focusing on the history of Central Asia and Tibet. I want to go to the States for a PhD because here in India it's difficult to get scholarships. Maybe I would work part time and also study, but I don't now how all these things are going to happen. And, I don't think people are really happy there [in America]. Here, somehow you kind of survive [even if you don't work]. It just seems difficult, life just seems so hectic, you can't really chill out, not as much as we do here.

Like Kunchang Dolma and Tenzin Sonam, Pasang presents education as her most immediate aim. However, since she was raised in India, attended TCV throughout her life, and pursued higher education, Pasang has come into contact with different educational models than Kunchang Dolma and Tenzin Sonam. In addition to the political values cultivated through her schooling, Pasang has come into contact with Western varieties of education and research throughout her life in Dharamsala. Earlier, Pasang had explained that she had worked with anthropologist Melvyn Goldstein on an oral history project, collecting the life stories of elderly Tibetans in exile, but she had to leave the project in order to find a more permanent position. It is possible that Pasang's contact with Western anthropologists has fueled her own interest in the discipline. For Pasang, it seems that personal history and academic interest have intertwined, both in her

71 Goldstein is an American anthropologist who has written extensively on demography and life course in Tibet. He is currently employed by the United States National Academy of Sciences, and previously worked in a number of appointments at Case Western Reserve University.
own work and the work of others. Pasang's narrative suggests that, like tourists and human rights activists, Western scholars form bonds and exchange values with Tibetan refugees that shape individual lives in Dharamsala. Western scholarly interest in Tibet, and by extension, in her own experiences of living as a refugee in Tibet, seems to have influenced Pasang's hopes.

However, although Pasang explains that she hopes to pursue further education in America, she seems to feel more connected to the cultural realities of life in the Tibetan community in India. She expresses uncertainty about her future happiness, if she were to live in America. As she continues to speak, Pasang processes further anxieties about what she views as a growing trend of Tibetan migration to the West. She says,

And, because so many Tibetans are going abroad these days, everyone feels like oh my god, it's just finishing. Even if you have a country it still happens that you worry about extinction, but being refugee, in exile, not having a country—a lot of Tibetans living here and the amount of progress they are making that's really good. Actually, I won't even nearly call it extinction, not at all. I think that Tibetans are doing really good...What I see is all these young people, my classmates who have gone abroad, in the States, when we were in like seventh grade together, they left after that and I haven't seen them since then, and they come back now to work here. Isn't that great?...Even though they are abroad they are still totally connected to the community and to the cause...But, the fear is there, because when you actually see a major amount of Tibetans who always wanted to go abroad--not only Tibetans, a lot of Indians want to go abroad, a lot of Asians want to go abroad, all these Bhutanese that I meet [through my tour company], they want to go abroad--so that's always there and that brings a lot of fear among the people. It's like, oh my god what's going to happen, and you feel like everything is going to finish...But, Tibetans marrying with other races or cultures is becoming more and more, so the fear is there...You wonder about the kind of mixture, and who is that kid going to marry? It totally depends upon the parents, if they want them to be Tibetan or not, but so far I've found among cross-cultural marriages, I've found the kid more Tibetan in many of them, because, I don't know why, but even a guy marrying a foreign [Western] girl, maybe like those who actually fell for those Tibetans are more into the Tibetan cause and...want their kid to be raised up in that way as well...And like my friend, also, he was married to this French girl, but his kid was totally Tibetan. I actually said, I know that everyone is moving in and out but I see a big amount coming back and working. And, I'm connected with other people back in the States who are
still totally committed to the cause and who are still doing everything they can even when they are abroad, so what's the difference if they are abroad? In a way it is helpful because they are in a way trying to spread more news about the cause.

In this excerpt, Pasang focuses on the diasporic reproduction of Tibetans. Although she seems to express some anxiety about the future of Tibet and Tibetans, she also articulates that further migration can, in fact, serve the Tibetan cause by disseminating international awareness of Tibetans' collective plight. Because she describes migrants' potential to develop a global network of support for Tibetan freedom, Pasang does not link the reproduction of Tibetanness in diaspora to a specific location. Pasang explains that perpetuating the diaspora on a global scale serves to renew political interest in Tibetan freedom. In contrast to the women born in Tibet, who expressed anxiety about protracted exile, Pasang suggests that refugees can also enact a duty to the nation through continued migration, affirming their political identity as a displaced people.

Additionally, Pasang demonstrates that by forging transnational ties through migration, refugees can confer a sense of kinship to non-Tibetans living abroad. In particular, she links traveling abroad to exogamous marriages. Pasang suggests that Tibetanness can be passed on to children through the parents' political convictions, explaining that “maybe those who actually fell for those Tibetans are more into the Tibetan cause.” In this way, refugees can reproduce Tibetan children in diaspora and with non-Tibetans. In Pasang's description of physical reproduction and enculturation in the Tibetan diaspora abroad (i.e beyond, South Asia), political affiliation seems to carry significance beyond biological affiliation.

The political undertones of Pasang's discussion of exogamy can be contextualized within what seem to be norms of cross-cultural marriage in Dharamsala. Pasang presented the hypothetical example of “even a guy marrying a foreign [Western] girl,” and also referenced a
male friend who married a French woman. Marriages and relationships between Western women and Tibetan men seem strikingly common in Dharamsala, and to a lesser extent, in Kathmandu, as well. Apart from these partnerships between Tibetan men and Western women, I knew of only two other exogamous marriages, one between a Tibetan woman and an Indian man, the other between an Indian woman, Rithu, and a Tibetan man. I ask Pasang about other exogamous arrangements, including Western men settling with Tibetan women, and she replies, “Tibetan girls and Indian girls they think like, 'Oh, foreign men, they just come here for a while, maybe they'll play with us and they won't necessary live with us.'” In this statement, Pasang presents a common mindset among Tibetan and Indian women, which contrasts sharply with a tendency I perceived among Tibetans, especially those born in India, to describe the self in opposition to Indians and Indians society. Since Pasang seems to be suggesting a mutual understanding between Tibetans and Indians, I ask if Tibetans ever marry Indians. She explains,

I don't know, I would personally not marry an Indian guy. I would not at all, it's just the character, it just doesn't work out. Like when we go to college, we feel like their words are cheezy, tacky, like you know, we don't want to be with them. We have our own choice, we want to be with certain men who are understandable. I'm not saying all Indians are [bad], but the people we come across, the way they dress, the way they think, the way they do certain stuff, it's totally opposite to us and also the way we carry ourselves and they carry themselves and the way they think and we think I think is in many ways different, but it's not like it doesn't happen. We have Tibetans marrying Indian men, but it will be like gossip of the town, seriously, people will be like talking about it more than a guy marrying a foreign girl.

In this statement, Pasang seems to position Indian men across a social divide from Tibetans; she

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72 In a study of family planning in Dharamsala, Childs and Barkin (2006) noted that the Department of Health distributed flip-charts aimed at HIV/AIDS prevention that portrayed Western-Tibetan (but not Tibetan-Tibetan or Tibetan-Indian) sexual relationships in cautionary images about the transmission of the virus. Childs and Barkin suggest that this may result from the prevalence of Western-Tibetan relationships and marriages in the city (46-48).

73 As I've described elsewhere, Tibetans in Dharamsala express binary oppositions between themselves and Indians, especially in the realm of family planning (forthcoming).
asserts that Indians are “totally opposite to us” in their living habits. But, Pasang does not seem to apply this opposition to other forms of exogamy. Pasang states that Tibetan-Indian marriages provoke more “gossip,” suggesting that they present a greater breach of social norms, than Tibetan-foreign (“Western”) marriages. Interested to hear more, I explain that my classmate at SIT had met a Tibetan filmmaker who produces documentaries about Tibet with his Indian wife, Rithu. Pasang clarifies,

Oh, yeah, that's one I know, but that's again different. When I say like Indians in general, it's like the typical Indians who are here locally. Like Rithu is from one of the good families who comes from a different background and they are more understandable...High class Indian families, they are totally different than the usual Indian people. Rithu is totally different, she's like good family and stuff like that, and they are both from this film background, and stuff like that. So, it does happen. I don't know, of course all human beings think same about stuff, but I'm sure he could understand if he were a fully fledged educated young Indian man, [if we told him,] “You know what, we lost our country, blah blah blah.” Like Rithu, she can totally understand what the hell we are talking about, so I think when a mutual understanding will be there between two partners, even though they are Indian or foreigner, I think that doesn't matter. And it's not like Tibetan men are not dating Indian women. Right now in colleges, I'm sure Tibetan men are dating Indian girls but they won't necessarily marry. It's just like the culture difference, you know? We just think like this is not going to work. They have their Hindu beliefs, we have our Buddhist beliefs, which is different. If a relationship exists between a boy and a girl among Tibetans, I'm not saying everyone is pure and good and stuff like that, but things are there like commitment. The commitment is there, which I don't think is there in the foreign people...So, maybe for men, it's much more easier because they are more cool. I think these are the men who maybe think like they don't necessarily want to get into fully committed relationship or they think more from the foreign ideas of being open, not like into each others’ faces all the time. I'm not saying all Tibetan girls are like that, but some people they just have that kind of mentality and that's how it works, I think.

In her description of Rithu, Pasang again portrays a connection between exogamous marriages and political ideals. She characterizes higher class Indians, such as Rithu, as “understandable” based on the belief that they can engage with the Tibetan cause in a manner similar to Tibetans...
themselves. Pasang explains that shared political knowledge allows for committed relationships that can potentially lead to marriage. Pasang thus suggests that commitment to the Tibetan nation intertwines with commitment to one's partner. However, Pasang articulates clear differences in exogamous marriages between Tibetans and individuals from different nationalities. She seems to perceive an essentialized, inherent divide between Indians and Tibetans, which she expresses through a list of oppositional qualities: “the way they dress, the way they think, the way they do certain stuff...the way we carry ourselves and they carry themselves and the way they think and we think I think is in many ways different.” With the example of Rithu, however, Pasang suggests that unified political ideals can bridge this social division so that “mutual understanding will be there between two partners, even though they are Indian or foreigner, I think that doesn't matter.” Pasang had described reservations about marrying with Westerners (“foreigners”) in terms of a lack of commitment, rather than broad cultural differences. And, her earlier description of the ways that Tibetan-Western couples often raise children who are “more Tibetan” out of their commitment to the Tibetan political cause suggests that Pasang uniformly associates shared political ideals with acceptable exogamy.

Pasang also reiterates concerns about the instability of long-term relationships in exile. She genders this concern with instability, in a manner similar to Kunchang Dolma. She seems to suggest that women, in particular, require security, whereas men can be “more cool” in engaging in shorter-term relationships, which makes Tibetan women less likely to form relationships with non-Tibetan men. Additionally, the specific vocabulary through which Pasang describes the insecurity a Tibetan woman marrying a Western man faces suggest notions of cultural difference distinct from those demarcating Tibetans and Indians. For example, Pasang described foreigners
as “open,” in contrast to the “commitment” that comes more naturally in endogamous relationships. Through her discussion of exogamy, Pasang demonstrates national distinctions between Tibetans, Indians, and Westerners, that present strains on diverse configurations of exogamy.

Pasang's understandings of exogamy can be contextualized with similar statements from other informants. Like Pasang, Sangmu portrayed unique differences based on culture and nationality that make exogamy more common among Tibetans, Chinese, and Westerners than among Tibetans and Indians. During an interview, Sangmu had explained,

In my environment in Tibet, many were into marrying Chinese people. I grew up among mixed married people and children. But, these families are mainly in cities, not in villages, because there is more contact between Tibetans and Chinese there. Tibetan-Indian marriages are very rare. There are girls who go out with Indian men but don't stay together for life. In Tibet, we feel like we actually have a country, feel like it is our land, feel like we belong, so we have more choice. Even though the Indian government has been helpful, kind, and generous, thinking [of Indians as] marriage partners blocks us down. Indians are more uptight, and they are difficult to mingle with, just in their way of thinking and character. Westerners are more cool, and frank. They have freedom and democracy in person to person interaction, which is more liberal and makes it easier to communicate with them.

Like Pasang, Sangmu seems to view Tibetan-Indian marriages as an anomaly in contrast to exogamy between Tibetans, Westerners, and Chinese. In describing these different forms of exogamy, Sangmu politicizes national difference, characterizing Westerners according to specific ideals of “freedom,” “democracy” and “liberal[ism].” This political vocabulary, reminiscent of Pasang's inference that Westerners who marry Tibetans hold a political commitment to Tibetan freedom, highlights the tendency of Tibetans in Dharamsala to essentialize nationality along the lines of the political conflict. Pasang and Sangmu seem to suggest that, even in everyday interactions and intimate relationships, Westerners think and behave according to liberal
humanist values.

This essentialization is, however, complex, multifaceted, and contested, particularly with attitudes towards the Chinese. I perceived a more generalized tendency to idealize the support of Westerners and Western governments for the Tibetan cause (especially among Tibetans born in Tibet) and to describe Indians through binary oppositions to Tibetans. On the other hand, while individuals proclaimed that the Chinese had violated Tibet and Tibetans, they would sometimes within the same statement express that they don't hate all Chinese. As described in Chapter Two, the portrayal of the Chinese as victimizers of the Tibetan people seemed to arise in the context of specific narratives of suffering, such as the prison narrative. In other contexts, I encountered the statement, from multiple Tibetans, that “The Chinese government is bad but the people are good, but it's the opposite with Indians; the Indian people are bad but the government is good.”

Therefore, it seems that Tibetans in Dharamsala feel a stronger cultural affiliation with the Chinese, and tend to invoke stereotypes of other nationalities more often than of the Chinese. When discussing exogamy, in particular, it seems that Tibetans politicize Tibetan-Western marriages and Tibetan-Indian marriages more readily than Tibetan-Chinese marriages.

Through narrative, Pasang seems to process her concerns about cultural change and racial “mixing” brought about by continued migration. She seems to ultimately argue that the reproduction of Tibetans and Tibetan ideals can occur in the diaspora. In fact, since the children

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74 Attitudes towards Westerners seem more diverse among Tibetans born in exile. Whereas I never encountered “Tibetans from Tibet” criticizing Western involvement in or appropriation of any aspect of Tibetan culture, religion, or politics, Tibetans born in India seem more wary of Western encroachment. I found that it was more difficult to speak with Tibetans born in India; they were more frequently employed and thus had less free time, but also seemed less willing to make time for me. Some of my informants also explicitly expressed discomfort with Western fascination with Tibetans. Tenzin Youdon, for example, told me a story of a friend whose elderly mother spontaneously encountered a caricatured photograph of herself praying at the Dalai Lama's temple on a postcard being sold at a tourist shop in Delhi. McLagan (2002) noted similar critiques among young Tibetans living in New York, which centered around the appropriation of Tibetan culture as a trope in Western media.
of mixed marriages are often “more Tibetan,” and since life abroad provides Tibetan individuals with the opportunity to garner global support for Tibetan political goals, extending the diaspora beyond South Asia strengthens the Tibetan nation. For Pasang, in addition to (and maybe more so than) its physical territory, “Tibet” seems to connote shared values and commitments which translate across national, cultural, and “racial” boundaries. Pasang positions Tibetans as global citizens, whose allegiance to Tibet transcends geographic space.

**Migrant People, Migrant Citizennships: Clarifying Transnational Ties**

Chapter One described migration from Tibet to India as a social drama. Physically performing the social drama of migration emplaces individuals in a diasporic community of Tibetan refugees. In this way, Tibetan refugees share ties of diasporic citizenship that mirror the more intimate kinship ties between individuals and families. Like migration from Tibet to India, which *confers* this diasporic citizenship, continued migration serves to *re-affirm* membership to the Tibetan nation in exile. The narratives of Kunchang Dolma, Tenzin Sonam and Pasang present complex connections between the perpetuation of the diaspora and the reproduction of Tibetans and Tibetanness. All present differing attitudes towards continued migration. Tenzin Sonam asserts a unique connection to Tibet as a homeland, nonetheless describing the benefits of a free life in exile. Kunchang Dolma hopes to return to Tibet, due to the location of her kinship network, rather than a unique connection to the physical place of Tibet. Nonetheless, Kunchang Dolma's determination to return presents kinship as localized, in contrast to other women's descriptions of global kinship ties.

In contrast to Kunchang Dolma and Tenzin Sonam, Pasang describes the formation of the nuclear family through marriage and childbirth simply as a “procedure,” expressing more
enthusiasm for a future of continued education. Nonetheless, Pasang expresses a central concern with the reproduction of Tibetan subjects. She articulates her own hopes to migrate to America in search of education, then considers these hopes within the context of what she perceives to be a general trend in Tibetans seeking opportunities in the West. In her narrative, Pasang seems to come to the conclusion that continued migration attests to the strength of Tibet and Tibetans. Pasang asks, “So what's the difference if they are abroad?” articulating that Tibetans present themselves as members of a collectivity based on continued political support which can take place on a global scale. Additionally, my informants explain that the reproduction of diasporic citizens occurs through shared political ideals rather than endogamy. Through continued migration, and the formation of kinship bonds across the globe, Tibetan migrants maintain the diaspora. It seems that the transnational situation of Tibetans influences flexibility in the realm of marriage and intimacy.

Revisiting the Western-Tibetan connection

Sangmu had referenced political ideals in the realm of intimacy, describing the “democratic” interpersonal qualities of Westerners that allow them to easily marry Tibetans. Individuals who had formed exogamous relationships also seem to politicize their discussions of marriage, but in a more nuanced manner. Nyima Tsering, a man from Amdo explains,

Love is free, if I love someone and want my life together with her. The Dalai Lama always says we need originally Tibetans, not mixed. But, anyone can marry anyone. Even I married one German girl. We met in the Dalai Lama’s temple, and we were so in love [sarcastically]. We are completely different, so we got divorced. We were married for four years, and I lived in Germany for six months to help look after our baby, but there were a lot of problems. We couldn't understand each other very deeply because she had her way and I had my way. Like, if we are among Tibetans, we can understand deeply, but sometimes she or I
got jealous and we couldn't communicate. After that, I promised myself that I will marry a real Tibetan, because German and English people, we can't show everything with each other. And, my son is not Tibetan because my wife never gave me a chance to look after him. I would say that he is Tibetan, and she would say, “No, he's German.” But, it's also good for him to live in Germany, because here the conditions are poor. If he stays with his mom, he can get a good education, he can know things.

Like Sangmu, Nyima Tsering invokes liberal humanist values when describing intimacy. Rather than characterizing Westerners according to these values, he describes love as “free,” advocating an extension of the political ideals to an understanding of human relationships. However, like Pasang, Nyima Tsering also describes difficulties in cross-cultural understanding between Tibetans and Westerners that complicated his marriage. Nyima Tsering emphasized that “if we are among Tibetans, we can understand deeply,” constructing an inherent, generalized affiliation between Tibetans. Through his narrative, Nyima Tsering simultaneously advocates freedom in the realm of the family, at the same time arguing for a more natural kinship among all Tibetans.

Additionally, it seems that the political descriptions of exogamous marriage sometimes refer explicitly to the connection between Western humanitarian aid and the Tibetan freedom movement. For example, Pema, another young man in a relationship with an American woman explained, “Since we talk about freedom and human rights, that [exogamy] is part of human rights. You can still marry, you are a same human being, we can still live together, study each others' culture and religion. As long as there is more happiness, you should live that way.” Pema reiterates the liberal humanist notion of “freedom” in love that Nyima Tsering invokes, explicitly linking it to “human rights.” And, as described in previous chapters, the notion of human rights plays a key role in the ideological and practical operations of the exile government.

As Pasang explained, exogamous marriages are more common between Tibetan men and
Western women. Such novel gender relations may be influenced understandings of acceptable forms of intimacy and gendered concerns with stability. Pasang had emphasized that it is more difficult for women to form transnational relationships, since they suspect that foreign men will abandon them (see p. 204). Similarly, Kunchang Dolma had explained her anxieties about surviving with a baby if the baby's father were to leave her (see p. 212). These gendered fears of abandonment may give rise to gendered patterns of exogamy. Additionally, notions of gendered virtue may influence the importance that women place upon stability. Women such as Kunchang Dolma and Tenzin Sonam suggest that becoming a good mother to Tibetan children is virtuous. It therefore seems that women hold greater responsibility than men for reproducing the Tibetan family, which may lead to less flexibility in their choice of marriage partners. Women assert that the community in Dharamsala allows for gender equality, at least more so than in their natal villages in Tibet (see p. 192). The gendered trend in exogamy, however, allows Tibetan men a greater geographic mobility than Tibetan women. Since many Tibetans in Dharamsala hope to continue traveling, either beyond South Asia or back to Tibet, the opportunity for legal mobility presents a significant advantage. That men can access this advantage more easily, possibly by virtue of women's unequal burden for reproduction, presents a central gender inequality in Dharamsala.

Tibetan-Western marriages are embedded within complex ties political ties between Tibet and Euro-American governments and economies. As explained above, narratives of exogamy articulate the political ties between Tibet and the West in the realm of the intimate. Notions of “freedom,” “democracy” and “openness” in Western micro-interactions mirror broader assumptions about the operations of Western governments that I encountered in Dharamsala. As
described throughout the first three chapters, narratives of essentialized Tibetan suffering seem to explicitly petition for aid. These petitions, although they seem to advocate political support for the Tibetan “cause” are more often realized in transfers of economic capital between Western donors and Tibetan individuals. Human rights organizations facilitate these economic transfers. Scholars have noted that such organizations often operate according to an ethic of salvage ethnography, in which the plight of the Tibetan people, as an endangered species, threatens the survival of the Tibetan Buddhist faith (Baumann 1997, McLagan 2002, Barnett 2001). And, Euro-American practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism are responsible for a significant amount of the total financial contributions to the Tibetan cause (Baumann 1997:383). These spiritual and financial exchanges can lead individuals to develop relationships that mirror Tibetan kinship ties, of which Euro-American contributors seem unaware. McLagan notes that through his spiritual and (enormous) economic patronage of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan political movement, Richard Gere became incorporated into a patron-client relationship known as sbyin-bdag, in which a student of Tibetan Buddhism provides material support to his teachers (2002:94). Since, as described in Chapter One, Tibetans trace lineage through such spiritual relationships, Gere has entered into Tibetan spiritual kinship ties. Euro-American sponsors seem to develop similar kinship relations with lay Tibetan refugees. Prost (2006) notes that informal sponsorship often occurs through third part intermediaries, who organize a relationship of financial exchange between Tibetans and their sponsors. Such relationships of sponsorship, known as rogs ram, mirror an older system of exchange in Tibet (known by the same name), which refers to general social or financial support (239). Among my informants, I observed the translation of rogs ram as “sponsorship,” and the seemingly analogous use of the term to describe general financial
support between Tibetan friends as well as their relationship with a Euro-American sponsor. Twenty-five year old Rinchen Tsetan, for example, receives money and packages from a French couple with two adopted children who he refers to as “my French family”. While he was employed at a restaurant in McLeod Ganj, another French woman asked if he would like a sponsor, and asked for his name and address. For the past few years, Rinchen Tsetan has received letters in written in English, photographs, and money from a family to whom the woman gave his address. Other *rogs ram* practices take place through the exile government's schools. Tamdin Tso, a graduate of the Tibetan Homes Foundation in Mussoorie who currently lives with her family in McLeod Ganj, explained that while she was in school, she wrote letters to a woman in England, her “sponsor-mother,” who was paying the school to support her. “Sponsorship,” however, also operates informally among friends. When my informants in Dharamsala eat together at restaurants, a single person will “sponsor” the meal, meaning that he or she will pay for the entire bill. Tibetans employed this English word in both reciprocal and non-reciprocal relationships. For example, a Tibetan acquaintance once complained to me in English that his friend was asking him to “sponsor” his beer every night at the bar. Through such informal social practices, I also “sponsored” Tibetans on a number of occasions (including in buying tea or coffee for my informants as I interviewed them), and my Tibetan friends and informants “sponsored” me. Beyond exogamous marriage, therefore, Tibetans living in diaspora have cultivated kinship ties with Westerners in a number of contexts.

Understandings of rebirth likewise suggest transnational kinship ties. A number of Europeans and Americans have been self- and officially identified as reincarnated Tibetan Buddhist lamas (*sprul sku*). American action film star Steven Seagal, for example, was identified
as a reincarnated Tibetan lama in 1997 by his spiritual teacher (McLagan 2002:94). McLagan argues that such celebrity connections to the Tibet issue that proliferated in the 1990s have pushed the cause into mainstream media more effectively than other forms of political activism (ibid). Also, statements from my informants suggest that they view rebirth as a transnational, cross-cultural phenomenon. For example, as Tenzin Dolma and I were chatting outside the cyber where she works, I commented on the number of dogs that hang around the area. In a moment of frustration, Tenzin Dolma exclaimed in response, “Tibetans are like stray dogs! In my next life, I want to be born in a free country!” This statement suggests that Tenzin Dolma considers reincarnation to offer the possibility for political freedom. In explaining place of birth as fluid, Tenzin Dolma implies that nationality identity is also fluid. Given that Tibetans living in diaspora grapple with the importance preserving Tibet's unique cultural and national identity in response to a political threat, such notions of flexible kinship and fluid identity complicate understandings of the reproduction of the Tibetan nation.

One day, I mentioned to Sangmu that the possibility of rebirth beyond the Tibetan community, and the flexible kinship ties that Tibetans form with Euro-Americans, seems to contradict the concern with survival that seems so pervasive in Dharamsala. Sangmu explained to me,

*There is no threat for our identity. It is always there. Being Tibetan has been unique, and we have been influenced by other people. We are trying to preserve our culture through this [influence], and if there is no control from above, then there is no threat. Loving kindness is affecting everyone, even people with yellow hair. We are trying to preserve culture that way, so as long as Buddhism survives, Tibetan identity won't be lost. The Chinese have been trying but even if there is a single Tibetan who speaks Tibetan and has Buddhism blood in them then they can fight.*

Sangmu at first asserts that there is no threat to Tibetan identity, but then continues to explain
that language and religion define Tibetan identity. In communicating the connection between
Tibetan identity and religion, Sangmu even employs a biological metaphor, of “Buddhism
blood,” that can foster resistance to political oppression. It seems, therefore, that notions of
survival and reproduction in the diaspora are dissonant. On the one hand, the political conflict in
Tibet lends itself to a dynamic in which Tibetans imagine themselves and are imagined by others
as an “endangered species” (Barnett 2001). However, culturally specific understandings of
reproduction, which seem rooted in Buddhist concepts of rebirth, and transnational support for
Tibet (which Sangmu links to “loving kindness,” a central tenet of Tibetan Buddhism), allow for
the reproduction of Tibetans beyond the ethnic Tibetan community. Like Pasang's understanding
of exogamy, in which political attitudes confers “Tibetanness” to children, Sangmu asserts that
features of “Tibet,” including language and religion, allow for collective survival.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined diverse formations of transnational kinship through which individuals
seem to consider the reproduction of Tibet and Tibetans. The chapter opened with a discussion
of Kunchang Dolma's and Tenzin Sonam's plans for endogamous marriage. Kunchang Dolma
and Tenzin Sonam seem to connect marriage and reproduction to the notions of nurturance and
stability, presenting the formation of the nuclear family as a necessary part of the female life
course, which upon the achievement of one's educational goals. The women born in Tibet
advocate reproducing Tibetans in the realm of the family, upholding social institutions either in
Tibet or in exile. Furthermore, both Kunchang Dolma and Tenzin Sonam hope to work in
orphanages, extending nurturance to the future generation beyond the individual family.
However, other informants such as Pasang explicitly formulate Tibetans as global, diasporic
citizens. All three women, through their hopes to migrate and form families, have positioned themselves among these diasporic citizens, affirming their commitment to nurture future Tibetans and the Tibetan nation.

My Tibetan informants living in diaspora therefore articulate a complex relationship between political and personal goals. While all seem to view freedom in the Tibetan homeland as a moral and political imperative, many nonetheless plan to remain outside of the physical nation. Such seemingly discordant attitudes can be understood through scholarship on diaspora, which has advocated for a reconceptualization of the relationship between space and identity. For example, Gupta and Ferguson (1997) assert,

Something like a transnational public sphere...has enabled the creation of forms of solidarity and identity that do not rest on an appropriation of space where contiguity and face-to-face contact are paramount. In the pulverized space of postmodernity, space has not become irrelevant: it has been reterritorialized in a way that does not conform to the experience of space that characterized the era of high modernity [9].

Gupta and Ferguson thus argue that the association of “cultures” with postcolonial nation-states can no longer encapsulate cultural phenomena. Rather, the local is simultaneously global, and affiliation between self, culture, and territory has been reconfigured in a way that transcends the conceptual, political, and geographic boundaries of the nation-state. In the case of Tibet, the nation has been defined in a fragmented space, as exiles organized in India around the figure of the Dalai Lama, with the backing of the Indian and American governments. And, “Tibet” is continually redefined throughout changing political circumstances as Tibetan migrants, officially identified as refugees, become simultaneously displaced from kin in Tibet and emplaced within the diaspora.

In describing these dual experiences of displacement and emplacement, my informants'
narratives shed light on the reconfiguration of interpersonal affiliation in an interconnected world. By migrating, Tibetans constitute themselves as global citizens. They are also constituted as such by international actors, such as humanitarian workers, Euro-American Buddhist practitioners, and political activists, who also formulate (and advocate for) a specific imagining of Tibet as a “nation”. At the same time, my informants cultivate more immediate transnational kinship ties, through marriage, economic exchanges, and acquired kinship among other Tibetans in Dharamsala and beyond. Although seemingly discordant with the political goal of realigning the Tibetan people with the physical space of Tibet, these immediate kinship ties represent another means of ensuring survival. In a study of kinship and reproduction in Havana following the Cuban socialist revolution, Andaya (2006) notes that Cubans deployed kinship as a “survival strategy” (255). Andaya explains that, “In the context of the familial and international politics of migration...'doing kinship' not only encompasses the creation, reinforcement and, at times, termination of ties to existing persons [but also]...entails the strategic management of relationships to the potential persons who may hinder or advance individuals' life prospects” (266-267). That is, Cubans calculated the weight of potential kinship ties, especially those that entailed remittances and physical reproduction, with reference to possibilities for social and geographic mobility. My informants seem to describe similar dynamics of imagined kinship. In Cuba, many of Andaya's informants lost contact with their transnational families through the embargo. Likewise, Tibetans in Dharamsala struggle to maintain relationships with their natal kinship networks in Tibet, since the Chinese government seeks to monitor and undermine these connections. Also, potential kinship ties to Westerners through sponsorship and marriage provide an avenue for financial support and even carry the possibility of obtaining foreign
citizenship. Few Tibetans seek Indian or Nepali passports, although they travel across state borders within South Asia. However, European and American passports are more desirable, possibly because they make it easier to obtain visas to visit Tibet and China. Acquired kinship ties among Tibetans in exile also serve to recreate social supports they have left behind in Tibet. And, my informants seem to view physical reproduction strategically, as a means of ensuring material sustenance or nonmaterial merits, including happiness and social support.

The narratives in this chapter suggest that migrant Tibetans' attitudes towards kinship formation and family planning intertwine with their future goals. In discussing their future plans, women seem to attend to both collective and personal concerns, strategically negotiating between their desires for stability (both material and social), relationships with existing kin, and community norms of education, marriage, and reproduction. Collective concerns also reached beyond personal relationships to the Tibetan imagined community. In mediating between the personal and collective, my informants' discussions of their futures illuminate imaginings of the diaspora. While some necessitated returning to their kin in the Tibetan homeland, others sought continued global movement. That motions towards both the local and global simultaneously reproduce the Tibetan collectivity brings into question the future of “Tibet” itself.
Conclusion

On March 26, 2012, I opened my internet browser and the New York Times World News, my homepage, appeared on the screen. The main story of the day concerned Jamphel Yeshi, a Tibetan man who had self-immolated in Delhi. March 2012 marked a full year of ongoing conflict at the Kirti Monastery in Kham, where several monks have self-immolated and Chinese authorities have mobilized military support to suppress the unrest. Jamphel Yeshi burned himself during a Tibetan-organized demonstration in Delhi that aimed to express discontent with Chinese president Hu Jintao's visit to the city for an economic summit in the context of Chinese aggression against protestors in Kham. On March 30, 2012, Rinchen Tsetan, a friend from Amdo who had introduced me to his social network in Dharamsala, called me, explaining that the community was holding a funeral for Jamphel Yeshi, whose remains had been transported from Delhi. Rinchen Tsetan told me that Jamphel Yeshi was well known in Dharamsala. In fact, they had been friends and classmates at TTS. Jamphel Yeshi's death was one among about thirty-five Tibetan self-immolations that have taken place over the last year. McGranahan and Litzinger (2012) explain that, since, the vast majority of these cases have occurred within restricted areas in Tibet, Jamphel Yeshi's death in Delhi provoked novel access to the phenomenon for journalists and newscasters, who spread images and reports of his death across the globe. In addition to holding a funeral, the community in Dharamsala coped with this event through political demonstrations calling for an end to Chinese suppression of protests in Tibet and, ultimately, for Tibetan freedom (Fig. 13). As I conclude this study of the performance of narratives of suffering, I thus find my work situated within a heightened social drama that

76 [http://culanth.org/?q=node/526](http://culanth.org/?q=node/526)
reaches from Tibet, through the circuits of international media, to the exile community, and which has resonated deeply with my informants in Dharamsala.

The ongoing developments around these self-immolations seem to reflect the themes that I have identified in this thesis. Self-immolation seems to present, in a more extreme form, the performances of essentialized Tibetan suffering that arose in my informants' life narratives. In a recent series of articles about Tibetan self-immolation published on the journal Cultural Anthropology's blog, “Hot Spots,” Tsering Shakya (2012) explains that “giving one's body is one of the key modern idioms of nationalism: the conflating of body and nation.” This form of protest, however, is relatively new to Tibet.  

And yet, my informants' narratives of embodied suffering, resulting from migration, imprisonment, and reproductive violation, speak to this conflation of the individual body and the imagined community. Tsering Shakya suggests that the practice of self-sacrifice in the name of the nation arose in Tibet in response to Chinese political intervention. Rather than being rooted in Tibetan religious traditions, as the deployment of images of monks' and nuns' charred bodies in international mainstream media seems to suggest, self-sacrifice for the collectivity represents an “alien concept that Tibetans now have appropriated from the language of resistance coined and championed by the Communist Party” (ibid). In describing the emergence of self-sacrificing national sentiment, Tsering Shakya buttresses the idea that Tibetans' understanding of their selves, their communities, and their territories as a “nation” arose only with colonization. While China seeks to expel and eradicate this national sentiment, it flourishes in exile communities such as Dharamsala. It seems that support from Western nations and foreigners contributes to national sentiment. And, tactics such as self-immolation present a performance of suffering that, like the bodily pain portrayed in

http://culanth.org/?q=node/524
human rights literature, circulates in Western understandings of political protest and atrocity. In an ethnographic study of the practice of suicide as national protest, Andriolo (2006) traces the emergence of self-immolation to Buddhist monks during the Vietnam war (105). She explains that, although self-immolation has historically occurred throughout Asia in different contexts, its use as a form of political protest spread across the globe following the anti-colonial movements in Vietnam. Practices of self-immolation in Tibet seem to have developed along with this global trend. Contemporary Tibetan self-immolations thus seem to manifest the Tibetan freedom movement's location in a nexus of global political imaginings and activism.

While this thesis has dealt almost exclusively with the linguistic performance, I understand self-immolation as an embodied performance of the same key scenario, that of resistance, that my informants invoked in narratives. As described in throughout the thesis, women told of embodied suffering as they ordered personal history into generic plots. The women with whom I spoke expressed the pain of geographic and social displacement through the illnesses caused by India's hot climate. They portrayed violence and violation in prison through idioms of bodily suffering found in human rights media that seemed inconsistent with their own understandings of gender. They spoke of the collective suffering of a genocide perpetrated through their reproductive capacities, at the same time asserting agency to resist annihilation by giving birth to future Tibetans. And yet, the natural suffering associated with reproduction seemed to construct birth as a personal sacrifice for the nation. And, women expressed different senses of duty to follow a heteronormative life path, the mode of action implied by the deployment of the female body as a symbol in Dharamsala. In the same series of articles on “Hot Spots,” Litzinger (2012) calls attention to
how the self-immolating body, the body that protests through flames and charred tissue, a body that is often wrapped in barbed-wire so it can not be saved (cared for) by the Public Security or Health official on the ground, is not just giving itself to a greater cause. It is using fire to steal from the state its foundational relationship to violence. It is denying the state...its sovereign claim to determine how individuals, in this most precarious of times, will be cared for, how they will live, and how they will die.78

Litzinger contextualizes embodied resistance within the Chinese state's violent demonstrations of biopower. Through reproductive regulation and torture, two genres of physical violation that my informants described, the Chinese state manages the births and deaths of its Tibetan subjects in a manner that violates their spiritual beliefs and their sense of themselves as a unique collectivity. That is, Chinese control over Tibet and Tibetans violates a moral community whose members seem to perform their affiliation through pronouncements of collective suffering. And, these pronouncements of collective suffering shed light on the gendered nature of the connection between the body and the nation. The symbolic connection of body and nation seems to produce a burden for women to ensure the survival of the Tibetan people through their reproductive capacities. Exile heightens the ramifications of gendered symbolism in the portrayal of the Tibetan conflict, since diasporic existence, as well as the political conflict in Tibet, threaten the survival of the Tibetan people.

Collective suffering and exilic concerns with survival construct an imagined nation. Anderson's (1983) treatise on nationalism overlooks the affective ties experienced among members of an imagined community. The ways that my informants employed the notion of suffering as a narrative trope exemplifies the role of affect in uniting imagined communities. Since narratives of collective suffering bolster the sense of a shared moral community, these personal expressions represent the co-construction of the nation. And, they suggest a perpetual

78 http://www.culanth.org/?q=node/540
process of co-construction that exemplifies what Appadurai (2003) calls “imagination as a social practice” (29). According to Appadurai, it is not simply that collective communities are imagined. Rather, applying Appadurai's concept to my field site, by telling personal and collective narratives, Tibetans living in diaspora imagine and re-imagine a uniquely Tibetan form of suffering that defines the Tibetan moral community. In addition, the shared affect of Tibetan suffering functions to legitimize claims to nationhood. As I have sought to demonstrate, idioms of suffering have been an effective channel through which Tibetans can communicate their nationalist goals to an international audience.

Additionally, as suggested above, narratives of collective suffering speak not only to political conflict in Tibet, but also to the anxieties and tensions of exilic life. Due to their liminal state, Tibetan refugees continually re-experience suffering in exile. In this context of protracted liminality, the reproduction of suffering as a narrative trope can be understood as a sort of survival strategy. Clifford (1994) writes that, among displaced peoples,

Experiences of loss, marginality, and exile...[form a] constitutive suffering [that] coexists with the skills of survival: strength in adaptive distinction, discrepant cosmopolitanism, and stubborn visions of renewal. Diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension [312].

In Tibetan diasporic consciousness, suffering marks ethnic and political distinction, cosmopolitanism associated with social rupture, and renewal predicated on the perpetuation of collective suffering. This thesis has revealed narrative expressions of shared affect which bolster a discourse of nationhood meant to ensure the survival of the Tibetan people. And, it seems that in Dharamsala, this concern with survival arises not only because of ongoing political strife but also because of the daily lived reality of social rupture and liminality that Tibetans experience as refugees and exilic citizens.
Given my understanding of a discourse of collective suffering, I have attempted to sort out the implications of narrative performances (which both reproduce and are produced by this discourse), for the narrators themselves. My field material is comprised of individual linguistic expressions that reached beyond the cultural realities I experienced by living in Dharamsala. While I encountered the persistence of both memories of Tibet and imaginings of continued migration, I neither observed nor participated in wanderings between these localities. My interpretations of my informants' self-reflections led me to understand that subjectivities shift between the social worlds through which Tibetan refugees move. And, my Tibetan informants seem to tie these social worlds to geographic places. This thesis has sought to demonstrate that the women with whom I spoke drew distinctions between the freedom, kinship and gender relations, and personal knowledge they cultivated in their natal homes, their migrant destinations within Tibet, and in Dharamsala. I hope to extend my understanding of Tibetan migrant worlds and subjectivities beyond the realm of elicited narrative.

Questions for Further Research

My time in Dharamsala allowed me to appreciate the ways that refugee subjectivity is shaped in this specific locality through political discourse. For example, my informants described a sort of personal rebirth that occurred when they reached the reception center in Kathmandu, viewing the flag of the Tibetan nation for the first time. Although I have traced narrative accounts of this transformation, my existing work calls for a more extensive exploration of the specific social dynamics that produce a sense of rebirth. As described throughout the thesis, it seems that the institutions that house and care for refugees play a key role in shaping subjectivities. As evidenced in the Introduction, these institutions are sites of knowledge production in which
teachers and employees explicitly articulate normative understandings of life in Tibet. However, while in the field, I did not experience life in these institutions and could not fully grasp the ways that self-transformation occurs. A salient question that remains is: how do micro-interactions in institutions produce refugee and national identity? Additionally, while I could trace vestiges of liberal humanist ideals in my informants narratives, and I encountered these same ideals in human rights media towards which they directed me, I do not fully understand how my informants came to internalize them. Since my informants employed specific vocabularies of human rights in their narratives, I am curious about the role of language in shaping bureaucratic identity and subjectivity. I hope to address questions such as: How do institutions put liberal humanist ideals into action in managing refugees? Given linguistic and cultural barriers, how are these ideals communicated to refugees? And, how do refugees understand and resist these ideals when they first encounter them?

Long-term participant observation in an institution that houses and cares for refugees could provide an opportunity to address these questions. The Tibetan Reception Center in Kathmandu seems an ideal venue, since it is the point at which individuals from Tibet first come into contact with the exile community and with international mechanisms of refugee management. The UNHCR operates the refugee reception center in Kathmandu, and works to provide refugees with the proper bureaucratic requirements to travel to India or, less commonly, to stay in Nepal. Although Tibetan refugees have a somewhat secure agreement with the Indian government, dating to the Dalai Lama’s entry and negotiations with President Nehru (Avedon: 50), the Nepali government has taken a less accommodating attitude towards Tibetan refugees.

79 From my experience living in the Tibetan community in Kathmandu, it seems that most Tibetans from Tibet who reside in Kathmandu have spent time in Dharamsala before returning to or settling in Nepal.
Especially following Nepal's civil war, which ended in 2006 with the Maoist party gaining prominence in the government, the situation for Tibetans has become complicated. The escalated political tensions within Nepal, including increasing ties to China, have heightened Tibetans' reliance on international mechanisms. Conducting participant observation in Kathmandu could give me further insight into the role of the international humanitarian regime in shaping refugee subjectivity. For example, Malkki (1990) has examined the ways that life in refugee camps in Tanzania influences Burundian refugees' understandings of history, both personal and collective. Similarly, Lempert (forthcoming) has examined the role of micro-interactions and language in disciplining and socializing monks at a Tibetan monastery in India, arguing that liberalism has become incorporated into the monastery's ideals. Research at the reception center in Kathmandu could take a similar approach, that my field material encourages, to understanding the socialization that Tibetans experience in institutions operated through humanitarian support.

Additionally, from my informants' reports, it seems that the reception center in Kathmandu provides refugees with one of the first forums for relatively long-term contact with Tibetans from other regions. As described throughout the thesis, recent arrivals cannot always understand the speech of Tibetans from different regions, and they sometimes resort to using Mandarin to communicate (see p. 133). Also, scholars have noted that a pan-Tibetan identity is crafted largely in exile, and that the regional distinctions, which I observed in the field, are stronger in Tibet. Again, while I could trace pan-Tibetan and regionalist sentiments in my informants narratives, my field material does not address how initial exposure to diversity influences refugees. In this context, examining communication across dialects would provide another axis of analysis for understanding the micro-interactional aspects of socialization into the

pan-Tibetan identity associated with the exile community. While this thesis has dealt largely with elicited narrative, longer-term participant observation would give me access to conversation and spontaneous narratives. I am left with questions including: How do language differences influence the social dynamics of life at refugee institutions? What role does gender play in shaping changing speech patterns and social interactions?

Also, although I could imagine aspects of life in Tibet from my informants' narratives, I have neither experienced nor observed the direct effects of religious repression, internal migrations, and the lack of education that my informants describe. Examining processes of socialization within the institution of the Tibetan family could provide an opportunity to examine the forces that lead individuals to migrate. Given that the Chinese state has actively marginalized rural Tibetans while simultaneously trying to usher them into modernity (Craig 2012), how do Tibetans understand these interventions on the ground? My informants describe language as a key marker of Tibetanness, and explain that the monopoly of the Chinese language within Tibet actively threatens ethnic survival. I am left wondering: How do Tibetans communicate with Chinese, and how do tensions around language play out in social interactions? In this vein, attention among Western scholars has focused upon overt political unrest in Tibet (Barnett 2005, 2001). However, my informants described that while their parents may have “known about Tibet,” they, themselves, did not until reaching the exile community. Of what, then, does Tibetan subjectivity consist in Tibet? Living with a rural family would allow me to explore micro-interactions within Tibet, including between Chinese and Tibetans. And, since my informants state that they came into contact with knowledge of Tibetan politics and religion only through their families' oral histories, I could explore these oral histories, themselves. My field
material has provoked unexamined questions including: What is the form and content of cross-generational narratives in Tibet and how do they shape understandings of history? Since religious repression is common, how do families cultivate and communicate cosmology, including knowledge of the Dalai Lama?

This thesis has dealt centrally with the ways that women speak of embodied suffering, and the ramifications of gendered metaphors of this embodied suffering for women's kinship relations. Since my informants described the collective suffering resulting from reproductive regulation, I am left wondering how women speak of and/or resist biopolitical controls such as the One Child Policy in Tibet. Additionally, since reproductive regulation has the potential to shift family composition (as ethnographers have noted in studies among Han Chinese [Anagost 1995, Chen 2011]), how do Tibetan families manage themselves in the context of strict but differentially implemented government regulations? And, how has kinship been reconfigured in the context of Chinese biopower including but not limited to reproductive regulations? Also, given that my informants described internal migrations that prefigured their journeys to South Asia, how do such internal movements influence family life in Tibet? And, since most of my informants remain in limited contact with their kin in Tibet, how do Tibetans in Tibet experience these ruptured kinship ties?

In conclusion, the complex ties among Tibetans in Tibet and Tibetans in exile, as well as the political context of the Tibet issue that I have briefly encountered leave important, unresolved questions that have broader implications for current anthropology. The postmodern turn in cultural studies has altered understandings of locality, kinship, governance, and gender. Ethnographers have attended to the micro-manifestations of politics, for example, in examining
the ways that marginalization is produced and internalized through contact between communities (Tsing 1993). Studies of modernity and migration have attended to the reconfigurations of gender relations and kinship in internal diasporas and communities changed by industry, such as those my informants described in Tibet (Rofel 1999). In addition, ethnographies of speech have addressed the ways that language reproduces gender hierarchies (Inoue 2006) and how linguistic practices in communities spanning across borders influence understandings of rootedness and tradition (Falconi 2011). Ethnographic work either at the Tibetan Refugee Reception Center in Kathmandu or within Tibet itself could speak to these ongoing scholarly conversations, which are altering our interpretations of life in an increasingly interrelated world.
Appendix One: Figures

Fig. 1: Typical Migration Route from Lhasa to Dharamsala
Fig. 2: Hillside in Dharamsala

Fig. 3: Tibetan Martyr's Memorial in McLeod Ganj
Fig. 4: Approximate Location of Institutions

Fig. 5: Greater Dharamsala
Fig. 6: Aerial Map of McLeod Ganj
Fig. 7: Map of Tibet (Three Regions Model) (Retrieved from: http://tibetantrekking.com/tibet/plateau/)

Fig. 8: Map of Tibet Autonomous Region in Comparison to Greater Tibet (Retrieved from: http://tibettravelblog.wordpress.com/map-of-tibet/)
Fig. 9: Advertisement for LIT Tuesday Talk with Former Political Prisoners (Retrieved from: http://learningandideasfortibet.org/81-photos/)

Fig. 10: "Thank You Banner" at the Department of Health
Fig. 11: Drawing of torture similar to those at Gu Chu Sum (Retrieved from: http://www.ishr.org/Systematic-Torture-in-the-People-s-Republic-of-China.1268.0.html)

Fig. 12: Pema Tsering's Daughter at a Birthday Celebration
Fig. 13: Demonstration in Dharamsala Following Jamphel Yeshi's Death
Appendix Two: Referenced Informants

Dawa Youdon: Twenty-six year old female from Amdo; migrated with cousin (Tsewang) three months ago; living at Tibetan Reception Center

Diki: Female employee at Delek Hospital in Dharamsala; born in India

Dolkar: Female employee at the Torture Survivors' Unit; born in India

Dolma Dechen: Twenty-six year old female from Uztang; graduate of TTS and student at ES Trust; has lived in Dharamsala since 2004; migrated alone

Jangchup: Helped with translation; twenty-two year old female from Kham (Khadtze county); graduate of TCV Gopalu; second year college student at Ethiraj Women's College (Chennai), studying English Honors; trilingual in Tibetan (Central), English, and Hindi; migrated with village-mate (Metok) in 1998

Kalsang Tsomo: Forty-year old female from Utzang (Lhasa area); married with two daughters; left Tibet without family two months ago; living at Tibetan Reception Center; hopes to return to family in Tibet

Kunchang Dolma: Twenty-two year old female from Kham; student at ES Trust, graduate of TCV Suja; migrated with younger brother in 2008

Lhamo Ja: Twenty-three year old female from Amdo (Rebkhang); has one son and lives with son's father; studied at TTS; migrated alone

Lhamo Tso: Helped with translation; female age late-twenties from Amdo (Chabja); migrated alone

Metok: Twenty-six year old female from Kham; coffee shop employee in McLeod Ganj; migrated with village-mate (Jangchup) in 1998

Mingyur: Director of Tibetan Reception Center; born in India

Nyima Tsering: Male in early-thirties from Amdo (Chabja county); graduate of TTS; divorced with one son; was married to woman from Germany for four years; migrated alone

Pasang: Twenty-seven year old female born in Dharamsala; works as tour guide and hopes to study in America

Pema: Twenty-eight year old male from Amdo; engaged to American woman from San Francisco and hopes to live in America
Pema Tsering: Twenty-five year old female from Amdo (Chabja county); graduate of TCV Suja; married with eight month old daughter; migrated alone

Sangmu: Forty-four year old female from Kham; studied at Tibet University; former political prisoner; employee at Gu Chu Sum (association of former political prisoners)

Rinchen Dolma: Thirty-four year old female; employee at Tibetan Reception Center; studied at TTS; married with no children; migrated alone in 1998

Rinchen Tsetan: Twenty-five year old male from Amdo (Chabja county); coffee shop employee; unmarried; youngest of five children; migrated alone

Tamdin Tso: Twenty-year old female from Amdo; graduate of Tibetan Homes Foundation in Mussoorie; migrated with family who now lives in Dharamsala; studying nursing in Bangalore

Tashi Lodoeh: Twenty-nine year old female from Utzang; owns restaurant near Norbulinka; former nun and political prisoner; migrated alone

Tenzin Dolma: Twenty-eight year old female from Amdo (Chabja county); studied at TCV Suja; married with no children; hopes to join husband in America; migrated alone

Tenzin Sonam: Nineteen-year old female; attended school in Lhasa; student at TTS; migrated alone in 2009

Tenzin Tsering: Helped with translation; twenty-seven year old female; born in Bylakuppe; parents from Utzang

Tenzin Yangzom: Twenty-two year old female from Utzang (Shang county); has lived as a nun for three years and plans to join monastery; living at Tibetan Reception Center; migrated alone

Tenzin Youdon: Helped with translation; twenty-seven year old female; born in Dharamsala; Khampa heritage; program assistant at SIT

Tsewang: Twenty-three year old female from Amdo (Ngaba county); migrated with cousin (Dawa Dolma); living at the reception center

Tseyang: Thirty-six year old female from Utzang (Pempa, near Lhasa); former political prisoner; married with one son; migrated alone
Appendix Three: Sample Questions

- Where were you born and where have you lived?
- Why did you come to India?
- Tell me about your family
- What is it like living without your family in India?
- What has your experience with education been like?
- What do you think it means to be Tibetan?
- What is happening now in Tibet?
- How was your life in Tibet different from your life in India?
- What are the main challenges that Tibetan women face?
- What are the main challenges the Tibetan people face?
- Are the challenges in exile different from the challenges in Tibet?
- What would freedom mean for Tibet?
- How are Tibetans in Tibet different from Tibetans born in exile?
- How do Tibetans and Chinese interact in Tibet?
- What are your hopes for the future?
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