



BEHIND THE BRIDGE

The Tibetan Diaspora in India

Fabienne Le Houérou



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1959-2017

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Foreword

It is a great pleasure for me to write the foreword to the book on Tibetan diaspora written by my dear friend Professor Fabienne Le Houerou, who has been in touch with the Tibetan refugees in India for over a decade now. She has been filming and photographing them all these years, which is of course part of her research methodology. After several visits to some key locations of the Tibetan refugees in India like Majnu ka Tilla in New Delhi and Mcleod Ganj in Dharamsala, she has written this book, which is divided into four chapters, excluding the introduction and conclusion. In the first chapter she discusses the history of Tibetans becoming refugees. The second chapter is on methodology. Dedicating an entire chapter to methodology is a bold step, but she has quite a few novel techniques of research to talk about in this chapter. In particular the use of techniques like ‘photovoice’, ‘self-picturing’ and ‘participant camera’ seems pretty interesting and relevant to the context of her study.

The third and fourth chapters deal with memories of the refugees in Majnu ka Tilla and Mcleod Ganj, respectively. She also deals with the perceptions of their neighbours in both the locations and makes a fair evaluation of those perceptions. Like her methodology, which is based on visual anthropology, her narratives evoke pictures of pain, suffering, frustration, and solidarity among the refugees. She appears to be both a trusted friend exuding empathy for the Tibetan cause and a dispassionate critique of the refugees. She also appears hopeful about their return to Tibet some day in future.

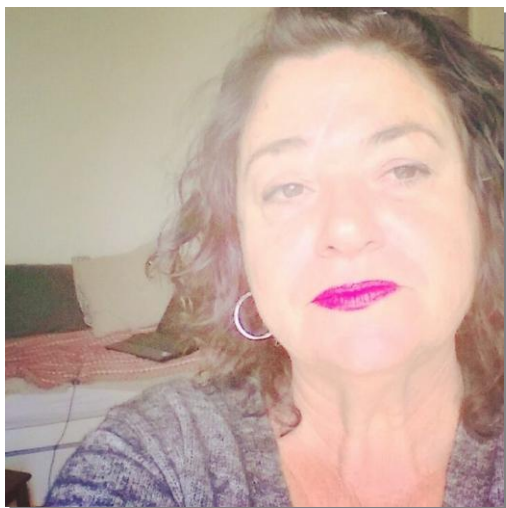
One of the greatest strengths of her book is the ethnography of Angu, a destitute Tibetan woman married to an African national who abused her until he was sent to prison for abusing her. She is both despised and supported by the members of her community. So much more is known about the Tibetan diaspora through the ethnography of her life, which is so well presented by the author of the book in the form of a short film.

I think it is a different kind of book on refugees that many scholars will find both useful and interesting. It is perhaps the first book that not only needs to be read but also, so to say, ‘viewed’ to fully appreciate what the author has written. With her prior experience of working on refugees in Africa (Darfur) the present book on Tibetan refugees comes alive with some of the most interesting issues hitherto unexplored by Tibetologists.

Dr. Tanka B. Subba, Professor of Anthropology
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Biography

Dr. Fabienne Le Houérou lives and works in Aix-en-Provence, Southern France. She is a Research Director at CNRS (French National Center For Research (CNRS), Institut de Recherches et d'Etudes sur les Mondes Arabes et Musulmans (IREMAM), and a professor for “History of Humanitarian Crises and International Relations”, which is a semester course taught in English, at the Institute of Political Science in Aix-en-Provence. Dr. Le Houérou also coordinates a methodological seminar, “Film Methodology in Social Science”, at Aix-Marseille University (AMU). Currently, Dr. Le Houérou edits “Science and Video”; a human sciences review, and also serves as the director of a publishing collection on Humanitarian Affairs, “Mondes en mouvement”, at L’Harmattan editions in Paris. Her current research focuses on “gender and diaspora”, and she is particularly interested in using film as a methodological tool.



Aknowledgements

My warmest thanks go to the Institut de Recherches et d'Etudes sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman, the current Director Richard Jacquemond, and Sabine Partouche and Bérengère Clément for their precious assistance. Based on visual methodology, this book is continuously referring to ethnographic films on the Tibetan diaspora in India, thus I recommend the reader to consult them on the links cited. For practical reasons the present work will also voluntarily not use any foot notes and end notes but rather mention the sources inside the text.

Preface

This publication is the product of years of experimental methodology using fixed and moving images with the Tibetan diaspora in India. The author is an academic and also a filmmaker focusing on film with ethnographic intention. This book is the result of field research where a myriad of different images were used. I did not limit my exploration on my own photos, but I also experimented with photovoice and autophotography made by the Tibetan refugees themselves. What the actors of the study have framed is the expression of their vision of self in the context of their exile in India.

This book is at the crossroad of different disciplines, such as visual anthropology, human geography, history and ethnography with the aim to explore memory in exile.

Migrations studies are very much indebted to social science multi-methods at large and the advocacy for a interdisciplinary approach is at the heart of this essay. I wish to thank warmly the Tibetan refugees for their creativity and their sharing philosophy. Without this precious collaboration and mutual trust and human qualities, this book could never have been written. I also want to thank my colleague, Dr. Tanka Subba, an Indian Anthropologist who studied the Tibetan diaspora in the nineties and was a major inspiration. His considerations related to the keys of Tibetan economic success in India, and gave me an orientation of what could be a **positive exile**, comparing it with other forced migrations in different regions of the world (Egypt and Sudan). The comparative dimension is then the backdrop of this study and has the ambitious project to push academic comparison in the field of Migrations Studies in order to think above and outside the box of classic geographic units, such as the continental *decoupage*, *dividing*, Asia, Europe, America, Africa, in a world that became global and tends to erase local distinctive characteristics.

Dr. Fabienne Le Houérou
Aix-en-Provence, France
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Abstract

After offering the reader the general context of Tibetan forced migration to India in a first chapter evoking Tibetan history, culture, I look closely at different methodologies using images. Classic ethnographic tools, such as film or relatively new methods, like photovoice or self-picturing will be compared. The study sits at the crossroads of social science disciplines, such as history, ethnography, and geography and is based on original field research conducted in India since 2008. Majnu Ka Tilla is the name of the Tibetan colony in New Delhi and the preferential location of my experimental study related to memory and the spatial features of memory. The bridge is an ethnic frontier and a memorial urban point of reference creating the spatial memory of Majnu Ka Tilla. I will explore the human geographies of the space in connection with old and new memories. Categories of memories, such as painful memory, blue memory, manipulated memory, invented memory, excess of memory will be analysed in connection with Majnu Ka Tilla original spatial dynamics. Memorialization strategies will be studied in connection with the Tibetan religious calendar and organization of holidays and will raise the question of a memory creating a collective identity. Lastly, I will stress another location in the Himalayas to study the Tibetan diaspora in Dharamsala, Mac Leod Ganj, with a gender perspective and compare this location as the political heart of the Tibetans refugees in India, where memories are constructed and invented to create a collective Tibetan identity. This publication is the result of years of experimental methodology using fixed and moving images with the Tibetan diaspora in India. The author is an academic and also a filmmaker focusing on different visual methodologies.

Introduction

Abstract:

This book is a contribution to migration and diasporic studies exploring the Tibetan diaspora in India in the field of visual anthropology, history and geography and remains an academic experience of multidisciplinary. This introductory chapter summarizes the main work. It focuses on the Tibetan diaspora in India in three urban locations emphasizing on spatial analysis in Majnu Ka Tilla (New Delhi). The human distribution of the diaspora will be studied in multiple sites connecting memory to identity. The subject contextualizes memorial strategies in order to examine different categories of memories, such as a painful, resplendent or manipulated memory as central layers of Tibetan identity. These memories will be studied through visual methodologies using images.

Keywords: Diaspora, refugees, India, Tibetan, Majnu Ka Tilla, New Delhi, Dharamsala, gender, memory, Visual Anthropology, participant camera, photovoice, identity, exile, ethnography, history, Buddhism, painful memory, re-invented memory, magnified memory, manipulated memory, sublimated memory.

This study aims to explore the Tibetan diaspora in India in three different sites. Comparing the plural locations of the Tibetan colony in India will open a door to analyze the spatial dynamics at work inside the community and layers of dimensions when occupying a given space. Rural settlements and city settings were important productive units in 1959, when the first Tibetan refugees came to India. Tibetan colonies in Indian cities or rural settlements have, more or less, the same economic activities. Nevertheless, I observed an increasing role in tourist business, specialized in spiritual tourism and pilgrimages, Buddhist holy places such as Bodgaya, Sarnath or Dharamsala.

Rural activities are declining regularly since the sixties and agrarian camps have become more or less economically comparable to the cities. I will focus on *Majnu Ka Tilla* in New Delhi as the centre of business, *Dharamsala* in Himalaya as the heart of holy touristic activities and spiritual capital of Tibetan Buddhism in exile, and lastly, I will study the community on the *Darjeeling* Hills, as the centre of a minor community of Muslim Tibetans. The last section is one of the lesser known Tibetan communities in exile in India. The majority of a Western audience is not

aware of the existence of Muslim Tibetans who originated from Tibet, and who recognized the leadership of the Dalai Lama.

This study is based on field research conducted in India since 2008 in three sites. I apply a particular methodology emphasizing *participant camera* and the use of images in social science. Two documentaries were shot in 2008 and 2011 in the Tibetan diaspora in India. These documentaries focused on gender issues and the place of women in the Tibetan community. I will also largely illustrate my purpose with a series of pictures made by the researcher and by the Tibetan refugees questioning the methodology of auto-photography and photovoice and discuss their heuristic value. The inquiry-driven methodology was mainly interested in the cultural dimension of the Tibetan identity and investigates the complex morphology and expressions of Tibetan memory in exile.

This **visual methodology** was the preferential tool to highlight Tibetan memories in exile in India. I will look closely at the different memorial strategies of the diaspora as gate keepers and bearing walls of identity and nationhood. In this perspective, I will analyze the resplendent, manipulated or painful memories expressed by the Tibetans in exile in India. I will question these categories through images produced by the refugees themselves discussing the heuristic dimensions of the documentaries that I shot in India in 2008 and 2013 with an ethnographic intention. They are available on line with a free access on Dailymotion (links http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xd94rf_les-sabots-roses-du-bouddha-webdoc_news and: <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2g236>).

Methodology is a main focus and I will compare the heuristic value of different visual research practices. More specifically I will insist on the “profilming attitude” in ethnographic filming. That is to say, the unnatural reactions in front of a camera and the consequences of introducing a camera on a field research. A camera can produce different artifacts, illusions and at the end fabricate a “new” self. I tried to limit the “profilming” position by practicing communication with the filmed subject based on total sincerity. Trustworthiness is the key notion at the heart of the relation between the filmed subjects and the researcher. This credibility can be obtained through a pact. The researcher will to share the point of view of the filmed person and the latter was offered the first role and be the chief attraction in front of the camera. The filmed soul is the

deciding mastermind. He or she has the last word concerning when to be filmed, how to be filmed, and in what circumstances. The informant becomes the main inspirational of the scenes. The principal actor turns into be a director as well. In this sense, I am never the singular author of a film, but instead share in the direction with the filmed souls. This co-organizing position is a key concept in my practice.

The filmed subject is in the position to decide what he, or she wants to say, to do, or to confess. The cited supervising “power” gives the informant a freer and more creative communication during the filming process. The informant creativity is beneficial for the researcher, because it allows for richer and deeper information in an *inquiry-driven scientific methodology* in social science. The investigation in the field will be of a better quality by reducing the impact of profiling attitude, transforming disturbance into a positive chosen approach. In the filming process, informants have to be trusted and given confidence in their own skills, capacities, and creativity. Freedom of talk is incomparable: it puts the researcher in a sharing status. It is epistemologically more interesting than the dominating position of an imposed interview with questions and answers. I can call it a sharing anthropology. An ethical attitude developed by the French Anthropologists following the example of Jean Rouch, who was sharing his films with his informants refusing to be a dominant organizer. The *anthropology of sharing* is particularly important for a researcher using film methodology as a tool of investigation with people at the “edge” or margins. The researchers avoid becoming a burden for the subjects, but the intent is to become a boon, a blessing. Women at the edge are crushed by their life, overwhelmed by material strain: the researcher should never be a burden for informants. The first duty was to put the filmed subject in a free and positive position. This might appear idealistic, but, as all ideals, the present approach was a goal to reach and not a fixed dogma.

Before exploring the narratives and symbolism of Tibetan memory related to Tibetan history, I will introduce in the **first chapter** the Tibetan political and religious history in order to understand the genealogy of Tibetan presence in India. An overview of Tibetan history will underline the importance of religion in the national process of Tibet and in creating a Tibetan identity. There are almost 100,000 Tibetan refugees in India. Why are they in India? How did they come? In which context? The first chapter will present the main features and conditions of

the flight and rehabilitation of refugees in India and recall the special position of Tibet as vulnerable facing a giant Chinese neighbor

After giving an overview of the Tibetan migration to India, the **second chapter** will focus on the methodology used in this study and the peculiar position of introducing a participant camera in the field. From traditional ethnographic film to photovoice methodology, I will rely on my experience to demonstrate that the position of classical ethnography is still a very performative and heuristic tool examine an alien culture and group in a given space. Images were offer information that no written archive could offer. This is especially true of rituals, social gatherings, festivals, and holidays of the diaspora in a given space. The messages of Tibetanness are given by cultural signs confirming their distinctive identity and their special ways of living, praying, eating, marrying and working.

The third chapter will take the reader deep down into the Tibetan memorial strategies for keeping their identity and diasporic coherence. From a painful to a magnificent memory I will study the multiple sides, dimensions, and contradictions of memories in connection with the locations and spatial dynamics of the diaspora. Memory is of course not to be confused with history and I will question the manipulation and excess of memory as annulations of the Tibetan history into memorial fictional narratives. Being Tibetan is always related to confirming selected distinctions in opposition to Chinese Han. In most memorial festivities the Tibetan message would reinforce Tibetanness through the major differences with the Chinese. In that perspective, the spiritual and religious dimension is at the heart of the expression of memories in exile. To be Tibetan is to be a Buddha follower before everything. This is contrary to the Chinese, who are defined by the refugees as without religion or deprived of any spirituality except for worshipping “money”. The caricatures in the expression of memories are closely related to confirming a distinctive identity. In all studied locations, the central role of Buddhism was to be observed. In every Tibetan colony in India, you would find a Buddhist temple at the centre of the settlement. In Darjeeling, the centre will be the Mosque and the religious justification will present analogies with the Buddhist discourse. Muslim Tibetans would also express their belief in Karma and present very distinctive aspects in following the Muslim rules.

*I will explore a **painful memory** related to the sufferings of a forced migration, a **manipulated memory** organized by the politicians of the colony and political leaders referring to the Tibetan uprising, as a **re-invented memory** and finally a **magnificent and sublimated memory** expressed by collective imagination. All these memories were rooted in spatial and geographical grounds. Memories are embedded inside spatial dynamics.*

The fourth chapter will focus on the Tibetan diaspora in Dharamsala from a gender perspective and focus on women's activities and key economic gender-oriented roles. The images of the Tibetan women in India deliver messages of intense business involvement and economic importance inside the community. Images of marginal women would also be fundamental to understand who is and is not Tibetan, according to marital status and community recognition. This chapter will be tightly connected with the two documentaries mentioned above on Tibetan women in India. I will insist on the case-study of a marginal woman in *Majnu Ka Tilla* to comprehend the boundaries of Tibetanhood.

Chapter I

Tibetan history at large.

Becoming refugees

Abstract: Some aspects of this chapter were partially presented in a previous text published at Bentham “Humanitarian Crises and international Relations 1959-2013” in 2014. This section is consequently available on: <http://www.eurekaselect.com/120914/chapter/the-1959-tibetan-crisis>. This chapter analyses the ancient and recent history of Tibet to provide the historical context of the influx of Tibetan refugees in India in 1960. Sino-Tibetan relations will be retraced and I will study the characteristics of Tibetan Buddhism. Religion is a key issue in the ways Tibetans perceive their reality. This chapter is mainly a historical introduction offering the keys to understand the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959 and to question if the mass killings in Tibet during this period constitute genocide, ethnocide or a communist organized food crisis?

Keywords: China, Dalai Lama, Chinese interests, food crisis, Great Leap Forward, China international relations, China military, Tibet, Tibetan History, Chinese’s history, Tang dynasty, Cold War, United Nations Security Council, sinization, Chinese colonization, Mao Zedong, 1948 Genocide Convention, Dharamsala, Korean War

In this first chapter, I will give a general overview of the Tibetan situation geographically, historically and politically in order to present the reasons why there is an important Tibetan diaspora in India. China’s newly established communist government sent troops to invade Tibet in 1949-50. A treaty was imposed on the Tibetan government in May of that year, acknowledging the sovereignty over Tibet, but recognizing the Tibetan government’s autonomy with respect to Tibet’s internal affairs. As the Chinese consolidated their control, they repeatedly violated the treaty and open resistance to their rule grew, leading to the National Uprising in 1959 and the flight of Tibet’s head of state and spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, to India.

Tibet often referred to as the “roof of the world”, is geographically situated at the crossroads of India and China. The high altitude of the Tibetan plateau makes the region a crucial river source for China and neighboring countries.

In recent history, the location proved a burden to the Tibetan people. The region is wedged between the massive expanse of the Himalayas and Mainland China. The People’s Republic of

China (PRC) invasion of 1959 led to the consolidation and attempts to integrate Tibet into China. The PRC government claims a historical connection to Tibetan territory, despite Tibetan calls for independence. Currently, the territory of the Tibetan Autonomous Region is one-third of its original size. The ancient Tibetan Empire spanned from Dunhuang or Khotan to Sichuan, the size of the land mass comparable to that of the Roman Empire under Julius Caesar. One king controlled 4 million km² during the Tibetan Empire. On the other hand, in 1965, the (PRC) carved out a significantly smaller autonomous region of 1.2 million km², which is the current size.

Crucially, the Chinese invasion of 1959 was neither labeled a “humanitarian crisis” nor designated ethnic cleansing or genocide. First, what is the historical relationship between China and Tibet prior to the 1959 invasion? Second, how should the conflict be categorized? Does it merit the label of genocide or ethnic cleansing? These questions are addressed in a reflection on the history of the Tibetan plateau to explain Tibetan nationalist claims.

Ancient History

Songzen Gampo, who ascended to the Tibetan throne at a tender age of 13, was credited with a key role in the development of a Tibetan identity. Gampo unified the Tibetan plateau and peripheral areas to establish the first empire in the 7th century A.D. The expansion of the empire crystallized a distinct Tibetan identity and emboldened their leaders.

The Tibetan Empire, along with surrounding nomadic monarchies, such as the Mongols, plundered Chinese cities and spurred the construction of the Great Wall. The wall demarcated the mainly sedentary lifestyle of the Tang dynasty from the nomadic monarchies throughout the continent. Meanwhile, the Tibetan Empire under Gampo became a cosmopolitan hub with significant trade and relations with inner Asian empires and India, but less so with China.

Tibet first encountered China in the era of Songzen Gampo’s father, around 600 A.D., however, China only began to take note of the Tibetan Empire during Songzen Gampo’s reign. This was, in part, due to the expansion of the empire beyond the plateau.

Even at this early stage of Sino-Tibetan relations, the aftermath of the battle remained one of the most decisive moments of the relations. Tibetan and Tang sources completely contradict each other.³ Historic records relate a 634 A.D. battle between China and Aza, a nomadic group, living between the Tibetan Empire and China. In the aftermath of the battle, a Tibetan delegation visited the Tang capital, Chang'an, to convey Songzen Gampo's request to wed a Chinese princess. Gampo's request was coupled with a veiled threat to the Chinese Empire; he relayed an ultimatum to either be granted the princess or would be forced to kidnap the princess with an army of 500,000 men. Taizong, the Tang emperor, refused the ultimatum. The Tibetan answer was quick to come and, in 638, Songzen Gampo conquered two tribes near the Chinese frontier. The narratives diverge at this point. The Chinese sources claimed that the Tibetan emperor paid a tribute to Tang's king, whereas Tibetan history conveys the contrary. The Tibetan sources noted Wencheng, a Chinese princess, arrived in Tibet in spring, 641. The Chinese sources characterized Songzen Gampo as a loyal vassal of the Tang leaders. Such sources pointed to the Potala Palace as allegiance to the Chinese Princess Wencheng (Laird, 2006).

For the Tibetan sources, the arrival of the princess ushered in a period of peace and good relations between the Chinese and Tibetan Empires. It was widely claimed that Songzen Gampo built the Jokhang Buddhist temple for her. Similarly, fragment remains of a Wencheng princess statue are found in the temple. Tibet maintained its own language and imported a script from India as a means to translate Buddhist texts by the seventh century.

The Tibetan Empire reached the apex of territorial expansion at the end of the eighth century, A.D. Not long after, in the 9th century, breakaway peripheral regions marked the slow crumbling of the empire. While most northern territories were lost, the provinces of U-Tsang, Amdo and Kham were retained within the 4 million km² territory.

At the beginning of the 18th century the Chinese provinces of Qinghai and Sichuan absorbed Amdo and Kham provinces. However, the establishment of the autonomous province in 1965 marked the erosion of historical Tibet to one-third of its original surface.

Modern Tibet

From the 1953 invasion till the present, an independent Tibet remains a cause for the people in exile. Intense Chinese colonization coupled with the systematic persecution of Buddhism for over 40 years emboldened the Tibetan people to demand independence. The Chinese aim to sinicize Tibet was promoted by a comprehensive demographic policy following the invasion.

The mass immigration of Han Chinese to Tibet drastically changed the demographics of the region, but did not alter Tibetan claims to independence or of a distinct identity. According to a recent census, Tibet now comprises six million Tibetans and seven million Han Chinese.

The demographic changes did not temper the Tibetan's efforts to exercise their distinct identity. On the contrary, the resistance took on new vigor under an increased repression. Mass Tibetan demonstrations for independence at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games showcased even stronger resistance for independence than in the early sixties. Indeed, Chinese repression only amplified the tenacity of advocacy efforts.

Buddhism lies at the core of the Tibetan collective identity. Despite – or perhaps because of – the Chinese state policy against religion, Tibetan piety and religion remained strong connections for most Tibetans. And while the persecution of Tibetan monks proliferated their Buddhist message calls for independence circulated around the globe with extensive outreach efforts.

Currently, the crisis in Tibet could be interpreted as a Chinese failure in international relations. The recalcitrant PRC claims of sovereignty over Tibet coupled with the overt efforts to shift the regional demographic character, undermining the credibility of Chinese territorial claims. The exiled Tibetan government established a refuge in Dharamsala, India, but found no official recognition. Many academics attribute the lack of recognition to the geopolitics of the Korean crisis at the same time. The fear was in the Chinese obstruction of negotiations between North and South Korea. The Tibetan government maintained a coherence in the aftermath of the 1959 invasion. An exiled Tibetan administration was formed with ministries, parliament, and specialized committees, similar to any national entity in India in Dharamsala. While the official recognition may not be forthcoming, the government in exile maintained legitimacy among the Tibetans and exemplifies Tibetan resilience of national aspirations.

To explain this crisis, I outlined the distinctive characteristics of the Tibetan culture and history. Secondly, I identified the Chinese interests in the maintenance of Tibet as part of the People's Republic of China. Thirdly, I discussed the notion of genocide in relation to Tibet. Could it be considered genocide in accordance with the 1948 convention? Finally, I will examine the role of the Chinese propaganda versus Tibetan propaganda.

Frontiers

Definitive Tibetan borders invariably proved difficult to delineate due to centuries of territorial expansion and consolidation. Geopolitical shifts between the 10th and 20th centuries drastically altered the borders and composition of historic peripheral Amdo and Kham provinces. Han Chinese penetration led to greater sinicized demographics and affected the Tibetan language.

Over time, the assertions of Chinese hegemony were met with strong cultural and political resistance, even outside the autonomous zone. The Resistance continued in historic Kham and Amdo provinces, located in modern day Quinghai, abutting the autonomous zone. The 2008 riots against the Beijing Olympic Games proved to be more expansive and violent than those found in the Chinese capital. Therefore, in spite of sinicization policies, resistance continued even outside what is deemed to be the autonomous region of Tibet.

Tibetan Buddhism

According to a legend, Tibetans believe themselves to be the offspring of a union between a demon and a monkey. This narrative was subsequently shaped by the proliferation of Buddhist traditions, most notably, the Bodhisatva. The Bodhisatva was a portmanteau for the terms “being” (Satva) and “the attained state of enlightenment” (Bodhi). Accordingly, Tibetan Buddhists vow to struggle for the complete enlightenment of all conscious life forms. Tibetan Buddhism, then, combined introspection of shamanism with the popular religiosity of the natural world. Early Buddhism, commonly referred to as Theravada, was born in the north of India and first expanded in what was then referred to as Ceylan and modern day Southeastern Asian countries of Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia. On the other hand, the variance

of Buddhism to take root in the Northern Asia – swaths of modern day China and Tibet – integrated a notion of compassion to every single living being. In Theravada, the meditation serves as a vehicle for compassion. Compassion served as a core precept in the belief of the transmutation of an impurity into purity according to Indian tantric schools.

Bodhisattva, the iconic figure of Buddhism, represents a conscious being that refused nirvana for the benefit of all. Those versed in this tradition refer to themselves as the “big vehicle” (Mahayana) and qualified the ancient Theravada Buddhism the “small vehicle” (Hinayana). Tibetan Buddhism emerged from the Mahayana tradition, yet incorporated other practices. The political and cultural consolidation and territorial expansion under Songtsen Gampo introduced and drove the proliferation of Tibetan Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhism drew from an existing spiritual doctrine, notably Tantrism. Tantrism combines yoga and the instructive relationship between guru and disciple to teach secret texts. In the 7th century, Emperor Trisong Detsen brought the renowned Tantric Yogi, Padmasambhava to Tibet.

Padmasambhava proved a significant influence on the Tibetan people, and he continues to be an object of worship. Crucially, Padmasambhava converted ancient divinities rather than eviscerating them. Tibetan Buddhism held such an approach in esteem. For example, negative thoughts were transformed into positive energy. Similarly, sexual desire was sublimated rather than eradicated. The Indian masters founded the first Buddhist monastery in Samye, a village on the central Tibetan plateau, where the Tibetan alphabet was heavily influenced by the translation of volumes of tantric texts in Sanskrit.

The growing influence of Buddhism was temporally interrupted in the ninth century. The assassination of King Relpatchen led to the ascension of his brother, Langdarma, to the throne. Langdarma persecuted Buddhists. In the eleventh century, however, the second wave of religious proliferation of Buddhism fanned out from India with the Indian master Atisha, who was referred to as the father of the Kadampa order. Marpa, another Buddhist master, was similarly initiated by Naropa, a prominent Indian guru, around in the 12th century, who then returned to Tibet to spread the Buddhist teachings. Marpa’s most prominent disciple was Milarepa, a prominent Tibetan poet, who would go on to become a spiritual master.

The prominent Kagyupa and Drogmi orders were subsequently integrated into the Sakyapa tradition, then called Nyngmapa. In the fifteenth century, the last school, Tsongkhapa, created the Gelugpa order, a school of virtue with an emphasis on philosophy and discipline. Nyang Nyima Oser conceived and drafted the Mani Kaboun, the most important text for Tibetan collective memory, within this discipline. This book alleged the bodhisattva of compassion, and Avalokiteshvara promised to take Tibet under his protection. The deity took the form of a monkey and married a demon, then subsequently gave birth to the Tibetan people. Tibetan Buddhism, referred to as Vajrayana, emerged from the convergence of the great vehicle with Indian tantrism. Furthermore, Tibetan Buddhism was also heavily influenced by the popular notions of the Tibetan identity as well as fetching from interactions among the Mongolia-Nepal-Bhutan-Sikkim and Ladakh.

The Central role of the Dalai Lama

In the 13th century, the prominent Tibetan poet, Sakya Pandita, was sent as an envoy to persuade the Mongol Prince Godan not to invade Tibet. During the visit, the Mongol emperor converted to Buddhism, and then selected a Tibetan monk, of the Skyapa tradition, as the political and spiritual head of Tibet, the role to later termed, the Dalai Lama. In the subsequent century, the power of the Dalai Lama declined as Tibet faced a barrage of new challenges. However, the political and religious turmoil of the 14th, 15th, and most of the 16th centuries revitalized the role of the Dalai Lama. In 1578, Sönam Gyatso, head of the monastery of Gelugpa of Drepung, went to visit Atlan Khan, an influential Mongol chief. The Mongol leader bestowed the title of the Dalai-Lama (Ocean of Wisdom) upon Gyatso and retroactively named two predecessors as incarnations of Sönam Gyatso.

The role of the Dalai Lama took on a new political responsibility in the 17th century. Whereas the Fourth Dalai Lama, Yonten Gyatso, was a Mongol, the Fifth, Ngawang Gyatso, became the administrator of Tibet in 1642. The ascendance of the Dalai Lama to the role of the head of State was a crucial turning point in Tibetan history. The Dalai Lama established Potala Palace as the seat of government and designated Lhasa as the capital. Ngawang Gyatso, the Fifth Dalai Lama, installed the head of the Gelugpa sect of the Tashilumpo Monastery as Panchen Lama, the second in command. Both roles were granted a high profile among Tibetans, however, the

function of the Dalai Lama became the primary reference point for Tibetan political life, and this trend largely continues to date. The 13th Dalai Lama, the predecessor to the current incarnation, Tenzin Gyatso, administered the territory under significant challenges. He fought off British invaders in 1904, yet was subjected to the Qing Chinese occupation in 1910. He actively engaged France and British for protection from invaders, however, the entreaties of the French were denied, whereas the British agreed to a security pact in 1914. Skirmishes continued with British support for Tibet, however, the Tibet and Qing regimes signed a peace accord in 1918. The Qing regime refused to ratify the agreement, and thus it became null and void. The Dalai Lama dedicated a significant effort and resources to the modernization of the then ill-equipped military to defend the territory. And while the consolidated Tibet fended off aggressors, the government collapsed with the 1959 People's Republic of China invasion.

Chinese interests in Tibet

Chinese interests in Tibet detain plural dimension such security, economy, policy, and internal stability. Crucially, the Himayalan range of Tibet serves as a significant physical buffer from the threat of overland invasion from the southwest, from nations such as India. The People's Republic of China undertook massive infrastructure projects to integrate Tibet into mainland China. The central government constructed the expansive Lhasa-Xingjian highway in 1954-1957 to the North and the 2,000 km long Lhasa-Sichuan highway from 1952-1964. The roads facilitated the transport of troops and migrants and led to a large exchange between the Han Chinese and Tibetans. The inauguration of the 2006 Beijing-Lhasa railway (author interview in Daramsala, 2008) was the most recent addition to the integration project. The quick and efficient train drove Han Chinese migration to the Tibetan Plateau. The 2008 Lhasa riots demonstrated the value of the railway to the central regime with the mass deportation of political prisoners. In 2010, a separate important project connected Tibet to Shigatsé with the final objective of a better integration with Nepal. The Tibetan Plateau soon became a strategic point of access to the Indian subcontinent.

Economic interests

Over 30 percent of the Chinese water supplies were drawn from the Tibetan Plateau. Tibet is the source of most Asian rivers. For example, the Yangtsé Kiang is a principal water route and commercial corridor for the circulation of goods. The control of the plateau is in accordance with the ancient Chinese truism: he who controls the upper side of the river also controls the downstream territories. Tibet is Asia's principal watershed and the source of its major rivers. A substantial proportion of river flows in the Tibet are stable or base flows coming from groundwater and glacial sources. This is in marked contrast to river flows in most neighbouring countries, which are determined by seasonal rainfall patterns. Ninety per cent of Tibet's river runoff flows down across its borders, internal use accounting for less than 1 percent of total river runoff. Today Tibet's rivers have developed extremely high sediment rates: The Machu (Huang Ho, or Yellow River), the Tsangpo (Brahmaputra), the Driчу (Yangtze), and the Senge Khabab (Indus) are among the five most heavily silted rivers in the world. The total area irrigated by these rivers, from the Machu basin in the east to the Senge Khabab in the west, covers 47 percent of the earth's human population. Tibet also has over 2,000 natural lakes – some of which are sacred or otherwise play a special role in the people's culture – with a combined area of more than 35,000 square kilometres. Steep slopes and abundant river flows give Tibet an exploitable hydropower potential of 250,000 megawatts, the highest of any country in the world. The "TAR" alone has a potential of 200,000 megawatts. Tibet possesses the world's highest solar energy potential per unit after the Sahara, an estimated annual average of 200 kilocalorie/cm, as well as the significant geothermal resources. Despite such abundant potential from the small, environmentally-benign sources, the Chinese have built huge dams, such as Longyang Xia and the hydro-power station at Yamdrok Yutso and will continue to do so. Many of these projects were designed to tap Tibet's hydro potential to provide power and other benefits to the Chinese population and industries both in Tibet and China. But the environmental, human and cultural toll of these hydroelectricity projects will be borne by the Tibetans. While the Tibetans are displaced from their homes and lands, tens of thousands of Chinese workers are brought up from China to construct and maintain these dams. These constructions have very little benefit for the local Tibetans who have no say over them. Take the case of Yamdrok Yutso hydro-power project. The Chinese claimed that this project would benefit the Tibetans. The Tibetan people in general, particularly the late Panchen Lama and Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, opposed and effectively

delayed its construction for several years. The Chinese, nevertheless, went ahead with the construction and today more than 1,500-strong PLA troops are guarding the construction area and no civilians are allowed near it.

No doubt the hydropower resource serves as an attractive feature, but Tibet also possesses a variety of other resources, namely rare earth minerals. The country is the most important source of lithium in the world, but gold, silver, petroleum, charcoal, chromite, uranium, and borax are also found on the Tibetan Plateau. In total, the mineral wealth of Tibet is estimated at \$78 million dollars. The environmental degradation is a significant threat to Tibet. Vast forests found in the region were viewed as an economic resource for the Chinese economy. Chinese exploitation devastated the second largest forest in Tibet. Furthermore, Qinghai, the province to border the autonomous region is the site of a military-nuclear-space centre, built in 1950. A military test site is also in Tibet. The atmospheric contamination, radioactive pollution, and nuclear waste all contributed to the destruction of the natural environment of the Tibet Plateau. To date, the Dalai Lama's efforts to bring an end to the nuclear projects were denied by the Chinese agenda.

The Han Chinese hegemonic dominance of the plateau serves a political purpose. Observers noted that the independence of Tibet could set a politically dangerous precedent for other Chinese minority groups to seek self-determination. Therefore, the threat to Chinese territorial integrity is a basic, yet significant concern in the light of the potential fracturing and dismantling of large swaths of Chinese territory. Therefore, greater Han demographic hegemony ensured the dominance of the Beijing regime. Importantly, China is a multiethnic nation with 55 minorities to represent roughly 8.5 percent of mainland China. Most minority groups are of Turkish descent in settlements along the Silk Road. These groups comprise the Zhuang, Uigur, Hui, Yi, Miao, Manchu, Mongol, Buyi and Korean. The potential for the Tibetan independence appears tied to both Chinese ambitions and the extent to which the minority groups are accepted in China.

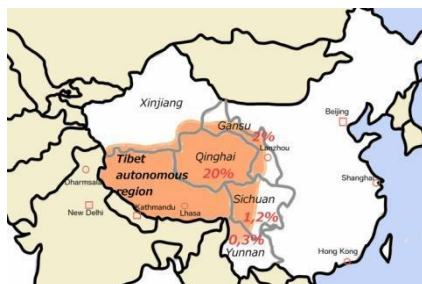


Figure 1 - Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and Chinese provinces inhabited by Tibetans

Classification of Tibetan crisis

Controversy enshrouds the classification of the crisis to stem from Chinese colonization of Tibet. The most salient reports to emerge in the aftermath were the 1959 International Commission of Jurist Report. Importantly, the researchers classified the People's Republic of China actions in three broad legal categories:

- 1) Systematic disregard for the obligations under the seventeen-point agreement of 1951.
- 2) Systematic violation of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people of Tibet.
- 3) Killing of Tibetans and other acts capable of leading to the extinction of the Tibetans as a national and religious group, to the extent that it became necessary to consider the question of genocide.

The Commission of Jurists identified evidence of genocide, but further verification and scrutiny were needed to confirm the serious charges. The most notable breach of the obligations outlined in the seventeen-point agreement was related to the respect for religion. The report stated on the religious ground that: *“The evidence that there has been a widespread killing of the Buddhist monks and lamas in Tibet is clear and explicit. One need only refer to the evidence in this category under Section A (II).”* If this evidence is to be believed, there has been a destruction by killing of a part of a religious group. The International Commission of Jurists believes that this evidence raises at the very least a case which requires thorough and careful investigation. Despite the Commission of Jurists' findings of clear signs of religious persecution, the United Nations was afforded minimal recourse, given inaction at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Importantly, UNSC seat afforded to China ensured any resolution on Tibet was certain

to be vetoed. Gridlock in the UNSC spurred action in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

The UN General Assembly passed three resolutions. Importantly, UNGA resolutions are non-binding, yet offer insight into the international sentiment on issues. The UNGA resolution 1353 of 1959 noted the “civil and religious liberty” of the Tibetan people and the “autonomy, which they have traditionally enjoyed”, however, does not explicitly condemn classifying the actions of the Chinese? On the other hand, veiled affirmation of the UN Charter principles – of which self-determination is included – is stated, but not explicitly called for. The UNGA resolution 1723 of 1961 went further and clarified the statements from the UNGA resolution 1353. While the UNGA resolution of 1723 did stop labeling China the belligerent of condemnation, the resolution explicitly stated that “the violation of the fundamental human rights of the Tibetan People” occurred as breaches to the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Furthermore, the resolution clarifies the violations of the UN Charter, specifically the principle of self-determination of peoples and nations. The third significant resolution, the UNGA resolution 2079, of 1965, expressed concern about the violations, and reaffirmed prior resolutions, but renewed calls for the end of violations and appealed to the states to contribute to their efforts. The lack of authoritative weight behind non-compulsory UNGA resolutions meant each resolution amounted to less or more than regret expressions of the fundamental human rights abuses by the government of the People’s Republic of China.

The Cold War and the Korean War were generally invoked to explain the UNSC inaction. China and Russia opposed the action proposed by the major Western European countries and the US. The American and European concessions on Tibet were meant to restrain Chinese approach to American interests in South Korea. As a result, Chinese opponents claimed 700,000 Tibetans died of starvation at the hands of a crucial famine from 1959 to 1963.

Is it right to define this horrible food crisis a genocide?

Could the 1959 situation in Tibet be attributed to the hunger crisis as a result of “The Great Leap Forward” policies? Of course, these policies led to widespread famine throughout China. On the

other hand, the Maoist aim to purify “class rank” began in 1949 and ended with his demise in 1976. According to a 1980 report by the Tiguaisuo Institute, Chairman Mao was responsible for around 40 to 80 million deaths. The absence of the substantial proof of either the intent or of the systematic liquidation of a specific race or ethnic population complicates the efforts to directly attribute blame. Therefore, the situation in Tibet falls short of the criteria to designate genocide outlined in the 1948 Convention on Genocide. While the Chinese Communist Party clearly did significant harm to Chinese minority populations, it remains unclear as to whether the crimes perpetrated by the regime were ethnically motivated. Furthermore, all religious groups were targeted, rather than merely one. During the Chinese “Cultural Revolution” (1966-1976), Red Guards sought to eliminate all ritual objects, manuscripts, thankas, Buddha paintings, portraits, or statues. All were destroyed to eviscerate any trace of the Tibetan past. Chinese authorities forced Tibetans to give their children Chinese names and forced them to wear stylish Han clothes. Similarly, long hair was forbidden and ponytails – historically associated with religious piety – were cut, given associations with the past.

The bloody campaigns of the sixties were mostly likened to an ethnocide, a concept I have also used to explain the crisis in Darfur (Le Houérou, 2012, 2014). I defined an ethnocide as attempts at the wholesale elimination of the cultural and historical artifacts of ethnic groups, but not the physical liquidation of the group. In essence, ethnocide could be explained as collective ethnic or political oppression of ethnic or indigenous practices. Ethnocide differs from ethnic cleansing in that the former does not entail the physical removal or liquidation of a population, but rather corresponds to the oppression. Crucially, ethnocide is bereft of legal specificity. Furthermore, the mass killing in ethnocide are not necessarily ethnic based, but rather could entail political rationale. Ethnocide appeared as an apt characterization of the situation in Tibet. Etymologically, genocide combines the prefix *genos* (from the Greek language “race”) to the latin suffix *cide*, elimination. Literally, genocide translates to “race-elimination”. While genocide is clearly underpinned by notions of racism, it is inspired by the Holocaust. Ethnocide is free from juridical precision or associations with war crimes. It follows that the absence of juridical definition prevents the political instrumentalization to justify military intervention.

For the Tibetans, the PRC did not have a clear racial discrimination policy, but an unabashed class and cultural discrimination policy. In China, the peasant class from 1958 to 1963 was forced to follow the Great Leap, a five-year economic program to drastically transform the country from an agrarian economy into an industrialized communist society. The process of agriculturalization, industrialization and collectivization led to rapid and significant political, social, and economic changes. Private farming was prohibited and became obsolete. Similarly, restrictions on rural people were enforced through public struggle, social pressure, and violence. Food rationing was introduced in some cases leaving Chinese with less than 250 grams of grain per day. Mao Zedong's industrialization efforts effectively consolidated the control of agriculture in the hands of the state. This monopoly on grain supply allowed the government to buy at low rates, and sell at much higher prices to raise the capital needed for the industrialization. The set of gradual reforms to define the Great Leap Forward occurred between 1949 and 1961. The amendments first established "mutual aid teams" of five to fifteen households, segued to "elementary agricultural cooperatives" of twenty to forty households in 1953, then finally to "higher cooperatives" of one hundred to three hundred families in 1956. Aside from the agricultural changes, the Communist Party implemented major social changes. Most notably the party banished all the religious, mystic institutions, or ceremonies. The Communist Party political meetings and propaganda replaced the spiritual artifacts or ceremonies. An array of reforms targeted rural populations, more specifically, to enhance the status of women, such as empowering women to initiate divorce. Further, child marriage and foot-binding practices were brought to an end. While rural education was expanded to new areas, the highest priority was given to the urban proletariat in a new welfare state system.

The first phase of collectivization met with the minimal success, however, the widespread famine of 1956 had a drastic impact on the population. The dire outcome of the initial five-year Soviet economic plan spurred doubts as to the viability of continued reforms in China. As a result, Chairman Mao Zedung began a divergent path from the USSR. According to Jonathan Mirsky, this revelation led to maximized taxation on the rural population to benefit the central regime. As stated, the Great Leap Forward terminated private ownership of parcels of farmland and ushered in changes in the economy. By the end of 1958, the government established 25,000 communes, oriented towards grain and steel production, the key pillars of Chairman Mao's

economic development scheme. He forecasted the Great Leap would propel China's steel production past that of the United Kingdom within 15 years. Backyard steel furnaces became a fixture in the rural areas, and the prioritization to burning leads to a significant depletion of forests to fuel furnaces.

The evolution means and the prioritization of certain types of production drove significant social changes. Traditional customs, such as funerals, weddings, local markets, and festivals were all deemed feudalistic. Furthermore, the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap altered the relationship between the private citizens and the government. The 40 to 80 million deaths were no doubt dreadful and led to further tragedies. For example, records indicated that the famine drove families to eat their children on sixty-three separate occasions in Fendyang. Chairman Mao, unlike Stalin, reported neither targeted specific individuals for assassination nor did he supervise any specific killings. Rather, Mao repressed segments of the society, named those deemed as "bad classes" and those who rivaled or challenged his power. Evidence suggested Mao and his ideology provided the pretext and an atmosphere conducive to murder with impunity, but more crucially, set in motion difficult processes to halt. Roderick MacFarquhar (1997) confirmed specific categories of the population were targeted and repressed, a trend to continue under the emergent PRC government. In recent years, the Chinese government selectively targeted intellectuals, such as Nobel Prize winners or members of minority groups, such as the Tibetans or Uighurs.

The Communist Party sought to eradicate all the ideological or spiritual threats, such as Buddhism. The Communist Party likened Buddhist spirituality and Confucianism to "opium" addictions, institutionalized systems to repress worship. Such a stance resonated with the fourteenth Dalai Lama's claims of a "cultural genocide" carried out by the PRC government.

Such declarations were corroborated by a Spanish judge who proffered the 2008 government crackdown in the Lhasa riots were crimes against humanity in the form of systematic cleansing of Tibetans. While discrimination, segregation, and persecution against religious actors were clear, the extent to which such actions could be labeled as genocide proves a challenge. In either case, oppression in the 1960s resonated with the legal framing of genocide, as expressed by the

International Jurists Report, however, oppression of the 1970s could be explained as a form of “cultural” genocide.

A 1953 census conducted by Chinese authorities counted up to 1.7 million Tibetans on the Tibetan Plateau, however, the Tibetan government in exile claims between 1959 and 1970, the Chinese invasion led to 1.2 million Tibetan deaths. In 2000, the Tibetan government in exile listed that the numbers of the Tibetans reached 5.4 million, including the Tibetan Plateau and the neighboring areas traditionally labeled as Kham and Amdo. A separate census indicated there were 200,000 Tibetans in exile in India, Nepal, Europe, and the US. The precise demographics of the Tibet remained the points of contention. Tom Grunfeld (1996), an expert on Tibet, contests the number of the victims advanced by the Tibet Government in Exile (TGE). Similarly, the TGE figures originated from the refugee testimonies, and thus should be granted more skepticism. French places Tibetan casualties at around 500,000, mainly due to the aggressive PRC policies in Tibet. Crucially, the French noted the absence of the credible figures in the sixties complicated the attempts to tabulate deaths from the famine. Michael Parenti (2007) claimed the commonly cited 1.2 million Tibetan deaths were not only improbable but vastly inflated. He noted the Tibetan Plateau would be a demographic desert if that was to be the case. The Chinese demographer Yan Hao (2000) also objects to the numbers of victims given by TGE. As such, perhaps a more suitable term for the famine as a “democide”, mass deaths on a large-scale process inclusive of all the populations, yet specifically targeted and politically directed towards “communist enemies”.

On the other hand, Barry Sautman (2006) rejected the notion of the physical elimination of Tibetans through famine in his article “Demographic Annihilation and Tibet”. Sautman challenges systematic deprivation of foodstuffs in the Central West and Northwestern U-Tsang regions of Tibet. Rather, he claimed an annual 2 percent growth in U-Tsang population during the Great Leap Forward timeframe. Postulating on demographic growth he suggested a separate narrative.

Contentious interpretations drove debate on the potential extinction of the Tibetan identity, language and key cultural traits in China. The Dalai Lama defended the notion of a cultural genocide imposed on the Tibetans. In a 1989 television show, he argued that within 15 years the Tibetans culture would disappear. And a variety of intellectuals echoed such allegations. Linguist Nicolas Tournadre (2005) asserted the Tibetan language will vanish in 50 years if no policies change. These claims sharply contrasted with the statements made by the German academic,

Ingo Nentwig (2008), who maintained that the Tibetan culture flourishes in China. The ethnographic film I am continuously referring to in this study (see: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xd94rf_les-sabots-roses-du-bouddha-webdoc_news) detailed TGE efforts to instill characteristics and traits to comprise the Tibetan identity through education programs in Dharamsala. In fact, the film highlights the artificial “Tibetan Bubble” cultivated through the TGE efforts and foreign aid programs in India. Traditional Tibetan arts were heavily promoted in the form of painting, dancing, medicine, and theater. All replicated and reinforced the distinct qualities of the Tibetan identity.

These characteristics were a key theme to this film shot in 2008. I detailed the trials and tribulations of a young Tibetan girl on her journey from Lhasa to Delhi in the wake of the 2008 Lhasa riots. Importantly, she demonstrated the effects of Chinese colonization. She declared Lhasa is located in China and appeared to accept the Chinese identity. Similarly, her lack of proficiency in the Tibetan spoke not only of the increased importance and necessity of fluency in Mandarin at the expense of the Tibetan but more importantly, in the wider sinicization of the population of the Tibetan Plateau. This woman embodied the “Les sabots roses du Buddha”, the emblematic symbol of the fruit of Chinese education. This is one of the fundamental reasons the Tibetan parents send their children, en masse, to Dharamsala to complete their Tibetan education. The free education remained provided by the international NGOs and TGE programs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Tibetan genocide should be explained as a type of the Cold War era, given the clear bipolar geopolitics and the paralysis of the UN Security Council. No nation responded in a substantive way to the Chinese invasion or the subsequent occupation of Tibet. Thousands died due to the PRC conquest, however majority of the victims indirectly perished from starvation and hunger. The Chinese made use of famine to eliminate dissent, stave resistance, and dominate the territory. Thus, the crisis could most aptly be characterized as an genocide. Genocide was waged in a variety of ways, other than direct violence or murder. Rather, indirect and subtle, yet the treacherous efforts and programs slowly eviscerated the resistance and forced submission to Han Chinese colonization. Genocide suggests a much more complex situation than explained by

the juridical definitions, such as genocide or ethnic cleansing. Hunger and famine killed more than 500,000 thousand in Tibet. Starvation served as a tool to impose order and hegemony on Tibet, a strategy adopted by the Marxist Ethiopian government towards the Eritrean rebellion in the North between 1987 and 1989.

Ethnocide by attrition, as in Tibet and Ethiopia, suggested a Marxist model with subtle undertones of racism without direct violence, but rather indirect, and nuanced deprivation of basic human needs, namely food, shelter, or security, as a way to exercise hegemony.

Chapter II-Methodology: “*imaging*” Tibetans in Majnu Ka Tilla

Abstract: An overview of the Tibetan influx to India will be detailed retracing the three main waves of Tibetan refugees to India in order to give the general context of the forced Tibetan migration. The chapter highlights the methodological approach and the use of images in field

research. Photographing a diaspora in an urban enclave will highlight the different research strategies. I will appreciate the heuristic values of different methods using images like photovoice, autophotography and the revolution of selfies and self picturing with the new technologies and social media. The author's ethnographic film "*Angu a Woman on the Edge*" (2014) will also be the object of study in order to compare classic filming ethnography with new approaches using social networks.

Keywords: Tibetan, Forced Migration, methodology, Marcel Mauss, profiling attitude, participant observation, symbolic interactions, anthropology of sharing, investigation cinema, disposal camera, auto-photography, photovoice, Participatory Action Research (PAR), framing, spatial edge, Punjabi, social capital, iron bridge, New Aruna Nagar Colony, Majnu Ka Tilla, beggar, solidarity, Angu.

Tibetans in India: overview

A survey from 2009 made by the same Central Tibetan Administration stated that of the total 127,935 registered Tibetans, 94,203 were in India, 13,514 were in Nepal, 1,298 were in Bhutan, and 18,920 were scattered throughout the rest of the world. The numbers appear very limited. The Dalai Lama himself asserted that there are up to 150,000 Tibetans in India alone from three waves of refugees to India during three decades: the fifties, the eighties and the late nineties.

As a result, the role of India for the Tibetan exiles is central and pivotal as India hosted the most Tibetan refugees in the world. The survival of the Tibetan culture, language and religion depends on India's generosity to host them and to allow them to administer their own schools in order to keep the Tibetan cultural memory alive. The majority of the refugees were dispatched in 52 settlements, comprising 26 agricultural, 17 agro-industrial and 11 handicraft units, spread throughout India, Nepal, and Bhutan.

Nearly all of the settlements had primary and secondary schools, basic health care centres, and cooperative societies, monasteries, nunneries, and temples. Tibetan culture and religion affairs were dealt with by a single ministry, Department of Religion and Culture. Culture is thus deeply rooted in the Buddhist religious tradition. The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) has

established its headquarters in Himachal Pradesh, 500 km north of New Delhi in Dharamsala at MacLeod Ganj hill station. This Administration was centred economically, politically and also culturally as I will see in this book. It gives the Tibetan diaspora coherence despite scattered geographic locations - to a certain extent and degree - all over India.

All of the Tibetans were registered as “foreigners” in India. Two national statutes govern the legal status and rights of the Tibetans in India: *The Foreigners Act of 1946* and the *Registration of Foreigners Act*. These juridical texts characterize Tibetans simply as “**foreigners**,” a broad legal rubric that refers to everyone except the Indian citizens. The Tibetans, as other foreigners, are subjected to a list of restrictions affecting property ownership, employment rights, freedom of movement and freedom of speech and assembly (Tibet Justice Center, 2016).

Presently Tibetans are eligible to obtain Indian passports. The Government of India decided to issue passports to Tibetans born in India in accordance with the Indian Citizenship Act. A memorandum from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has ordered that passport facilities be made available to all Tibetan refugees born in India between 26 January 1950 and 1 July 1987. The letter, dated 17 March 2017, was sent to all Passport Offices in India, as well as all Indian Missions and Posts abroad (see: <https://www.tibetsun.com/news/2017/03/29/tibetans-born-in-india-to-get-indian-passport>). Nevertheless, the Tibetans had (since their arrival in India) an official refugee group that the Indian government has recognized and legally permitted to reside in India. (see: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/global-nomads-emergence-tibetan-diaspora-part-i>)

Tibetan refugees have enjoyed preferential treatment by the Indian government that was not offered to other communities, such as refugees from Sri Lanka, in India. For example, India gives Tibetans relative autonomy over public education. In turn, Tibetans and their leaders continue to express gratitude for Indian hospitality. In 2012 when shooting my second ethnographic film in Dal Lake (near Macleod Ganj in Dharamsala district) on a huge poster the Tibetan refugees drafted “*Thank You India*” for sheltering them for more than 50 years. Different sources (UNHCR, Asia Pacific Human rights Network, US Committee for Refugees, Central Tibetan Administration) classify the Tibetan forced migration to India in three waves:

First wave

The first wave took place in 1959 during the Tibetan uprising following the Chinese invasion when the 14th Dalai Lama and his government escaped to India to seek asylum. From 1959 to 1960, about 80,000 Tibetans followed the Dalai Lama to India through the Himalaya Mountains. Permanent flights, estimated in the numbers of 1,000 to 2,500 a year, flew to India in the following years, increasing the population of refugees to an average of 100,000. This forced migration could be named an "exodus" referring to a massive transfer to India and collective *prima facie* migration with a diasporic like a model.

Second wave

The second wave of the Tibetan exodus was the consequence of increasing Chinese political repression during the 1980s and the consequence of the Chinese policy for opening Tibet to Chinese trade and tourism. During that period (1986-1996) almost 25,000 Tibetans joined the exiled community in India. This influx of refugees during this second wave is sometimes referred to as a "second exodus". As stated by a US message issued by *WikiLeaks*, from 1980 to November 2009, 87,096 Tibetans arrived in India and registered at the Dharamsala reception centre, whereas 46,620 returned to Tibet after a pilgrimage in India. This wave is a typical *education forced migration* by students (and their parents) wishing to offer a full Tibetan education in the boarding schools of Dharamsala. There are 73 Tibetan schools in India according to Central Tibetan Administration:

"The Department of Education currently oversees 73 Tibetan schools – excluding the pre-primary sections and private schools – in India and Nepal under different autonomous administrative bodies. There are around 24,000 students and 2,200 staff members in these schools. The autonomous school administrative bodies include: Central Tibetan Schools Administration (28 schools), Tibetan Children's Villages (18 schools), Tibetan Homes Foundation (3 schools), Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society (12 schools), and Snow Lion Foundation (12 schools)". (Department of Education.)

Third and ongoing wave

The third and current wave can be distinguished by a decline in the number of the visitors and exiles, with an important number of monks and nuns. Almost 2,200 Tibetans arrived in India in 1998. Most of them were monks or nuns seeking religious freedom and complete religious education. As stated by one of my interviewees in Dharamsala, religious culture is very superficial under the Chinese rule. The visible freedom of religion that China is wishing to give is thus viewed as a visible propaganda without depth. In addition, there was a rise of short-term visitors from Tibet. For example, up to 100,000 Tibetans from Tibet attended the Kalachakra ceremony in Sarnath in 1990. Most of these visitors journeyed in part on foot. The Tibetan refugees who came to India or were born in India before 1979 received Indian residence permits, which must be renewed each year. Residential permits are required to obtain work, rent an apartment, open a bank account, and obtain identity certificates, which are necessary for international travel.

Although the Tibetans were registered as foreigners and barred from owning land, the Indian government donated land for settlements and invited others to live in more remote Himalayan regions and former British Himalayan hill stations like Dharamsala, where the Dalai Lama ultimately settled in the mid-1960s. During this first wave of the Tibetan refugees, the Indian government offered Tibetans public works jobs for subsistence pay. These jobs included building roads in the high Himalayan regions, as well as positions in special military and paratrooper units of the Indian Army protecting the high-altitude Himalayan borders of India and China. Otherwise, Tibetans were excluded from holding public offices and owning property. India has been far less welcoming of this second wave and subsequent refugees. According to UNHCR, although the Indian government tolerates these "new arrivals," like earlier arrivals they were barred from engaging in any political activities. However, many of these more recent refugees were denied residence permits, and because existing Tibetan settlements were not allowed to expand, they became overcrowded.

The hospitality in India is related several factors. There is an obvious historical aspect, but there are also ideological and diplomatic components that should not be neglected. As I have seen in the first chapter Tibetan Buddhist monasticism traces its roots in the high period of Indian Buddhist monasticism between 300 and 1100 CE. The early founding masters of Tibetan

Buddhism were Indian. Bodhgayâ is located in Bihar State in India. It is the place where the Prince Siddharta Gautama found enlightenment and thus became Buddha.

India is central in the history of Buddhism and can be considered as the origin of the religion and in consequence, is viewed as sacred with a high spiritual value by Tibetan Buddhist imagination. Spiritual proximity likely impacted the Indian hospitality, but the main point relates to the geographic and strategic position of Tibet between India and China. The entire Himalayan region is under the influence of both countries and is at the centre of territorial rivalries between the two super Asian powers. For instance, Sikkim and Nepal are objects of a cultural and political competition. Sikkim has largely chosen to be under Indian influence and it is worth to read the Sikkimese analysis on this territorial question. Nepal, on the contrary, is much more related to Chinese influence.

Since the conflict between India and China in the sixties, the two countries have followed long efforts to strengthen their contacts specially regarding their commercial and trading relations. These diplomatic improvements were seen by the Tibetan diaspora as a major risk and Tibetans often organized demonstrations during diplomatic of Chinese officials to India. They would invite the Indian press to follow the events with a clear intention to reach the Indian public. Generally speaking, the Indian press holds a very positive position towards the Tibetan diaspora and all Dalai Lama foreign visits and comments are covered. It is fair to state that the Indian media is primarily favorable to the Tibetan community. The Indian society -in its large diversity- is very hospitable and the Tibetan diaspora enjoys special treatment. This cheerful empathy is also related to the Dalai Lama very respected holy personality in India. There is a significant difference between the respect shown toward Tibetans and other South Asian migrations in India. In many interviews, Indian nationals would focus on the Dalai Lama exception and a shared stereotype considering the “Tibetans, men and women, as hard workers”.

Travelling and migrating from Nepal

Tibetan movement is strictly controlled by China. To come to India they have to cross the Himalayan range and arrive in Dharamsala through Nepal. In many interviews, children have

told us the story of their migration through the mountains. Their parents send them to Dharamsala to get a Tibetan education. In China, children are obliged to follow a Chinese program and Tibetans are very willing to give their children a full Tibetan education and to learn their language. These children travel during the spring season and many sad stories refer to very difficult journeys during winter time. One child I interviewed had to have a foot amputated because he had severe frostbite when travelling with ultra-lightweight shoes in the middle of a snowy winter. Nepal is an essential transit point for Tibetan migration patterns. Escaping through Nepal is not an easy ride, but a hard and dangerous trip. This might be the reason why Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) is installed in Kathmandu. Nepal is a strategic location for migrations flows from Tibet to India. The Kathmandu Reception Centre (KRC) is a body associated to the UNHCR office in order to assist new Tibetan refugees on their way to Delhi and then on to Dharamsala to see the Dalai Lama.

The records of UNHCR and KRC indicate that approximately 2,000 Tibetan refugees each year cross the Nepalese border. Many return to Tibet while others remain in one of many educational, monastic, or settlement institutions serving the Tibetan exile community in Nepal.

Together, monks and students seeking education represent about 75 percent of Tibetans coming into exile. In the 1998 CTA census of South Asian Tibetans, the majority of the respondents claimed "displacement" as the primary reason they left Tibet, while education was the second reason stated.

I interviewed many nuns in Macleod Ganj. One informant explained that she was forced to have sexual intercourse with a monk in prison after being arrested. The Chinese police stared at her, made jokes, and frequently humiliated her and others. She confessed that "losing her purity" meant that she was obliged to abandon her religious life in order to become just a "secular girl". She expressed despair and her memory was very upsetting for her. Later on, one of my students, a nun claimed that religious life in Tibet under Chinese oppression was very artificial. She felt pushed to come to Mac Leod Ganj in order to fully live her religious life. (Dharamsala, 2011). In Macleod Ganj there is an important nunnery housing a few hundreds of nuns. Most of them escaped from Tibet through Nepal.

Tibetans in Majnu Ka Tilla (New Delhi)

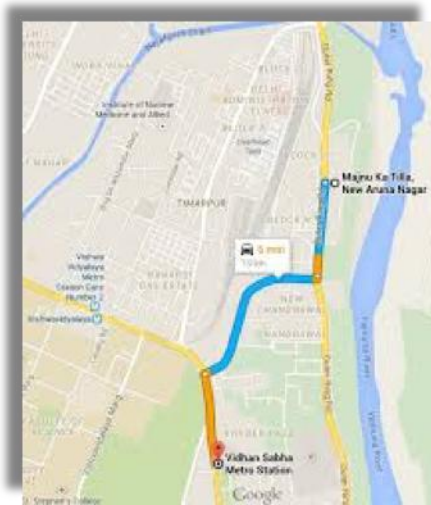


Figure 2 - Map of the Tibetan colony, Majnu Ka Tilla, New Delhi Google.

Methodology

Exploring the Tibetan community in New Delhi focuses on interstitial spaces in a neighborhood in North Delhi (India) between the Tibetan diaspora in *Majnu Ka Tilla* and the migrants from Punjab in *Punjabi Basti*. Visual anthropology is at the heart of my chosen methods. My research focused on filming interactions between the Tibetan refugees and Indian migrants from Punjab. I insist on the ethnic interactions and spaces of the intersection where the Tibetans and Punjabi, meet, coalesce, segregate or separate. The ethnographic film puts emphasis on the “pro-filming” stance. What I identified as “pro-filming” attitude is related to the multiple ways that filmed subjects compose and fabricate their own images in front of the camera. I will raise the question of the heuristic value of disposable cameras and photovoice methodology compared to classical ethnographic films.

“Image-ing” an enclave

Analyzing the images of a Tibetan *woman on the edge of India*, Angie (or Angu in Hindi) was the driver of the filming methodology regarding the study of the Tibetan diaspora in North India. This intended ethnographic film is available on Dailymotion <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BzMDmBLc5DAaAkhjNGI1dHILaUE/edit>. The visual anthropological work stands as the inspiration for my hypothesis and this chapter aims to question the Tibetan ethnic enclave (Portes, 1980) and to demonstrate the high ethnic concentration, characteristic of cultural identity and economic activity in a geographical space of *Majnu Ka Tilla* in New Delhi. My approach posits that *Majnu Ka Tilla* can be named an ethnic enclave according to this definition. I will analyze the sociological, cultural, and economic reality of this “niche” using the interactions between the Tibetans and Punjabi Indian, sharing the urban zone in North Delhi, above Kashmiri gate.



Figure 3 - Majnu Ka Tilla. Photo Credit : Fabienne Le Houérou, 2017.

In the pictures made by the Tibetans themselves, auto-photography serves as a tool to stress the frontiers drawn by the Tibetan diaspora versus the Punjabi diaspora stressing a constructed cohabitation. I review different anthropological techniques used in visual anthropology. Participant observation and the self-filming process are analyzed. Disposable cameras were offered to both sides to explore the geographical frontiers of the two migrant communities (internal and external). My methodological approach was inspired by other research giving the migrants and refugees the opportunity to frame their own lives and their spatial interstitial

spaces, their intersections, their shared spaces and their point of clear distinction and opposition. My field research focuses on the limits of photovoice methodology of self-fabricating images and its “*pro domo sua*” logic and limited self advocacy approach. I question this methodology as a complementary informative strategy of research and the capabilities of this pattern to be the core of an inquiry-driven process.

Participant observation

Filming interviews or participating in an observation study (participant observation) with a camera has been a singular and original epistemological approach (pertaining to epistemology, a branch of philosophy that investigates the origin, nature, methods, and limits of human knowledge).

The distribution and reliance upon data from participant filming is a method that the ethnographers have been using since 1920. The discipline used the new techniques of photography very early in the beginning of the twentieth century. Jean Rouch in the 1950-60 became in France the head of what is to be called *cinéma vérité* and I am very much indebted to this *Ecole de Pensée*.

I have used participant filming methods in different fields for years, especially in Egypt and Sudan studying forced migrations. I dropped methods based on interviews for a silent observation or a discussion, avoiding the position of a researcher having a dominating position as an interviewer. Field experience suggested that being quiet and observing was far more instructive than questioning and putting the subjects in a question/answer oral dynamic, more related to crime investigation than social science epistemology. With the documentary film “Nomads and Pharaohs”, shot in 2004 in Egypt and broadcasted by *TV5 Monde*, I found that giving a free space of expression to the people in a scene offered rich perspectives in terms of authenticity and collecting information. Dealing with silence is almost as complex as negotiating vocal testimonies. Filming an everyday task can be much more significant on the subject’s vision, priorities, and position than an interactive interview. Needless to say that interviewed people can hide behind a flux of words. The “*profilming attitude*” is very frequent and can be seen as an obstruction for the emergence of truth.

The notion of “profilmie” was introduced in France by Claudine de France analyzing how a subject could modify his attitude in front of the camera. The presence of a camera could completely change the presentation of oneself. The concept could be inherited by the Erving Goffman fundamental sociological approach of the social world understood as a theater. According to Goffman society can be compared to a theater where symbolic interactions occur. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* was published in 1959 and was Goffman’s first and most famous work, for which he received the American Sociological Association’s MacIver Award in 1961.

It was also the first book to treat face-to-face interactions as a subject to study in the sociological field. He believed that when an individual comes in contact with other people, that individual will attempt to control or guide the impression that others might make of him by changing or fixing his or her setting, appearance and manner. At the same time, the person, the individual is interacting with, is trying to form and obtain information about the individual. According to Goffman, all participants in social interactions, are engaged in certain practices to avoid being embarrassed or embarrassing others. Goffman compared the ordinary daily actions of people to their theatrical performances. In social interaction, like in theatrical performance, there is a front region where the “actors” (individuals) are on stage in front of the audiences. This is where the positive aspect of the idea of self and desired impressions is highlighted. There is a back region or a stage that can also be considered as a hidden or private place where individuals can be themselves and get rid of their role or identity in society. Goffman argued that secrecy underlies all social interactions. The dramaturgical approach of Goffman has strongly inspired the discipline of visual anthropology because symbolic interactions are the centre of filming dynamic. Filming is always registering face-to-face interactions with the most veracity possible.

The notion of profilmie could derive from Goffman’s innovative exploration on face-to-face interactions and self-presentation. This self-theatrical presentation is a natural way for the subject to control her image. When a subject knows that she will be filmed, she automatically changes her accoutrements to appear in the best light. Even Angu/Angie, a vulnerable woman I focused on the ethnographic film would don her best casual wear when she was filmed. The concept of *profilmie* has entered the discipline of anthropology with tension as a scientific approach when using a camera. The myriad ways a subject transforms her reality because of the filming process can be considered as a pollution of genuineness. The truth is being the ultimate goal of science. The “profilming attitude” is not a destiny in all anthropological filming. I tried to limit the “profilming” procedure by

communicating with the filmed subject based on total sincerity. Trustworthiness is at the heart of the relation between the filmed subjects and the researcher. This credibility can be obtained through a pact. As I stated in the first chapter I have to remind subjects that the researcher will have to share the point of views of the filmed person and offer to him or her the first role. The filmed subject becomes the chief attraction and possesses the celebrity role in front of the camera. The filmed informant is the mastermind. He or she has the last word of when to be filmed, how to be filmed, and in what circumstances. The informant becomes the main inspirational spirit of the scenes. That is to say that the principal actor turns to be a director as well. In this sense, I am never the director of a movie, but I am instead sharing the direction with the filmed subject. This co-organizing position is a key concept in my practice. Most of the documentaries have been fabricated according to this rule.

The filmed subject is in the posture of deciding what she wants to say, to do, or to confess. The cited supervising “power” gives the informant a freer and more creative communication during the filming process. The informant’s creativity is beneficial for the researcher, because it ends up with richer and deeper information in an inquiry-driven scientific methodology in social science. The investigation on the field will be of a better quality by reducing the impact of pro-filming attitude, transforming disturbance into a positive chosen approach. In a filming procedure, informants have to be trusted and given confidence in their own skills, capacities, and creativity. Freedom of talk is incomparable: it puts the researcher in a sharing position. It is epistemologically more interesting than the dominating position of an imposed interview with questions and answers. I can call it a sharing anthropology. An ethical attitude developed by the French anthropologists following the example of Jean Rouch, who shared his films with his informants, and therefore refusing to be a dominant organizer. The anthropology of sharing is particularly important for a researcher using film methodology as a tool of investigation with people at the “edge” stance, not to become a burden for them, but rather to become a boon, a blessing. Women at the edge are crushed by their life, overwhelmed by material strain: the researcher should never be a burden for his informants. The first duty was to put the filmed subject in a free and positive position. This might appear idealistic, but, as all ideals, the present approach is a goal to attend and not a fixed dogma.

The researcher has to adapt himself to the subject and not the contrary. It is the filmed subject who sets the agenda of action. The subject is the director of operations. It is an open space for a democratic relation. Filming women at the edge, in dire situations, gives the researcher a humble role. The researcher cannot impose another pressure on the woman's shoulders when filmed. The film process should be a good opportunity for the informant to have some kind of compensation. A symbolic or material reward. Offering on the subject the whole space to decide where to be interviewed and to be free to say what he (or she) desires to say is a symbolic boon or trophy that the subject can be granted for. The material reward is also highly recommended if not by money or grant it can be a job opportunity or any kind of positive "gift" that will be helpful to the filmed subject. In Sudan, for example, I worked with a woman who was in a vulnerable situation. When asked what she needed most, she confessed that it would be very useful for her to have a plastic cover on the muddy soil of her very small room where she lived with her son. Sleeping in the same bed with her teen son, was terribly shameful because it was not tolerated by her cultural traditions, her economic marginality was forcing her to lose her social dignity.

It is not recommended to deal with money in the visual anthropology field. The discipline (at least in Europe) is impecunious and does not have the necessary funds to pay the participants of a scientific film. These films are poorly produced, most of the time, television stations refuse them, because they are not popular enough and lack honesty or credibility. While highly valuable for science, they are unattractive commercially. Television has an industrial relation to the item "film". They sell images to the masses and do not give important values to the human relation and ethical context of the production of these images.

This method is a traditional inquiry-driven research, that is to say seeking knowledge, information, or truth through questioning. Before introducing a participant camera I have a series of questions exploring the subject through a social investigation. I could also call this cinema "*Investigation Cinema*" (Le Hou  rou, 2016), I proceed with a set of interrogations to solve a problem. For example, with the film "*Angu a woman on the edge*" the question was "how is it to be a marginalized woman in the Tibetan diaspora in New Delhi?" The investigation underlines the gender roles in the Tibetan enclave of Majnu Ka Tilla and illustrates the importance of wedding negotiations inside the Diaspora.

Following Marcel Mauss's theory of the gift

Marcel Mauss in his opus *The Gift* (first published in French in 1925) demonstrates the universal pattern of reciprocity in exchanging items. Sharing knowledge with a researcher should be rewarded with a bonus. In the social interaction between a researcher and informant stands the obligation to give back what you have received from your informant. I used to act as a volunteer offering time and "home-assistance" like painting the walls of the house, repairing the roof or the soil giving a real concrete hand to the interviewed subject.

In the Tibetan colony, I did exactly what I did in Sudan. I repaired houses giving some kind of personal effort not limited by a payment. This possesses a higher human value related to solidarity. Dealing with Angie/Angu, a woman at the edge of the Tibetan colony, I opted to paint her house. The house flooded during the monsoon and the carpet was completely ruined. It was decided to change this cover because Angie had a small baby, going on her knees, playing on the ground and the wet carpet could have negative consequences on the baby's health. Very often filmed subjects impart so much time, so much effort, so much truth, that the gift that you should give back, according to Marcel Mauss, has to be equal, equivalent or superior, but never less than what you've received from your informant. In a film process, most informants dedicate themselves to this idea. Their positive suggestions are immeasurable. The informant shares his/her private space, invites you for lunch, even if they are in an indigent economic situation. They offer to the filming-researcher the maximum that they can dispense. In exchange, you have to return what has been offered to you with the same generosity in order to circulate social value. The extension of the gift is thus important because it is a sign of respect. It is not limited to a material value, but it is highly spiritual. Respect is a key notion in this social exchange. Items are much more than objects, but highly symbolic. I can see it as a circulation of human dignity: the most precious socio-cultural and human value. This assumption can be scrutinized, because it can lead to militancy and a commitment endangering ethics of research. Once you admit the risk of empathy, it is surely creative to base a field research on mutual sympathy.

Disposable cameras

As mentioned in the introduction, it is important to repeat that disposable cameras were offered to both communities to explore the geographical frontiers of the two migrant communities (internal and external). My methodological approach was inspired by other research stressing the heuristic dimension of giving migrants and refugees the opportunity to frame their own lives and their spatial interstitial spaces, their intersections, their shared spaces, and their point of clear distinction and opposition. This methodology was adopted in many academic fields in the humanities, such as geography, sociology or political science. Auto-photography is largely used in human geography, but anthropology stands at the origins of the methodology during the nineteenth century. M.E Thomas recalls for instance, in his book in 2009, “Auto-photography”, published by the Ohio State University. It is also widely used in migration studies and numbers of academic works have been impacted by the use of visual methodology. It is quite important to interpret images when working with vulnerable groups and cultural taboos. It is an important auxiliary instrument assisting the researchers to go beyond the traditional and somehow rigid and frozen process of questions/answers for an interactive and more inclusive dynamic. The comments of the interviewed migrants about their own visual representation of their own life were named photovoice and this allowed the researchers to work with the migrants (not on the migrants) in a dialogue and face-to-face interaction. The method of photovoice was originally experienced by Caroline C. Wang and Mary Ann Burris, for a study entitled *Empowerment through Photo Novella: Portraits of Participation* conducted in 1994 among the women in a Chinese village. The informants had the opportunity to offer information about their daily life and environment through photography for an entire year.

The photovoice technique is part of the participatory action research (PAR), defined as “a method of collaborative research that involves the increased understanding of an issue of concern and efforts aimed at improving social conditions through the individual and group action (Wang, 1999: 6).” Wang et al. (1998) explain that “*photovoice is a participatory action research strategy by which people create and discuss photographs as a means of catalyzing personal and community change* (75).”

To summarize this approach, I could argue that photovoice is part of the empowerment strategy, giving voice (photovoice) to marginalized communities and minorities, and in this perspective, adapted to research among the refugees and exiles. The academic work of Fiona C. Thomas, for

example, reflects this tendency in her work related to coping mechanisms for displacement (London School of Economics, 2010).

For this academic research, the participants were given disposal cameras for seven days and the author insisted on the valuable dimension of a methodology that enables the marginalized groups to communicate and represent their everyday life. The research of Wang had a major impact on the young generation of researchers, such as the author mentioned above. In youth and education studies, the methods explored by Wang is meaningful and tends to be a reference in many academic works like the one held in Uganda with children. Photovoice is particularly adapted for research on delicate, vulnerable and moving communities in different fields, such as health (HIV subjects, for example, or Sex-Workers) and in Participatory Action Research (PAR).

Giving a voice to the silent subjects is one of the main virtues given by this method and it's a core argument given by the researchers using photovoice and auto-photography. This method provides a collective fondness and intellectual enthusiasm that could contribute to the fruit of a trend or mimicry. Mimetism exists in all human activities and academic research is not immune from this type of imitation. I have also, in another hand, to stress that the invasion of smartphones in the global market with performing cameras and video taking is also at the origin of this attraction. Almost everyone takes pictures all over the world. When working in Sudan among refugee populations in 2000, mobile phones had already invaded one of the poorest countries in the world. Likewise, I witnessed the deprived population in the Thar Desert (Rajasthan) using mobile phones in a similar capacity. In Majnu Ka Tilla in 2013 the researcher was the only one in the colony who did not possess a smartphone. This revolution of the connected devices led to the expansion of photography and participation in a global culture of consumption. Images are everywhere and at the heart of global communication and connectedness. The exchange of images was never so fast and immediate in the previous decades. I was able to follow the Tibetan colony on a daily basis just by monitoring a Facebook account or using other social networks. Being aware simultaneously of what was happening inside the colony just using social networks. Is this methodology of photovoice and self-picturing valid for migration studies? Rather than emphasizing the benefits of auto-filming and auto-photography, I focus on the limits of self-fabricating images and its "*pro domo sua*" logic. I

question this methodology as a complementary informative strategy of research with valuable potential for an inquiry-driven process.

Three cameras were given to Tibetans refugees in Majnu Ka Tilla. The orientation was to “*frame their life in Majnu Ka Tilla*”. All three of my informants were women. The study followed a gender perspective and concentrated on Tibetan women’s interviews. Women were at the centre of my academic interest.

One refugee was a particularly well-known and successful hairdresser in the Tibetan colony. She was in contact with different communities and lived at the edge of the ethnic enclave. That is to say that she was close to a major geographical point called the iron bridge. Another camera was given to a business woman, the manager of an important hotel in the heart of the colony. She was a very active woman continuously interacting with different Indian communities and foreigners as well.

The third device was offered to one of the poorest women of the colony living at the edge of poverty. She was rather ill and her condition was at the clear margin of the colony. Angu/Angie was living out of a marriage with an African partner and was largely the object of relative discrimination by the rest of the Tibetan colony. These three women had different ages from 48 to 30 and came from different regions of Tibet, but the three of them belonged to the second generation of refugees. They never went to Tibet (contrary to their parents) and were all born in India. They all spoke Hindi fluently and interacted daily with the Punjabi market out of the Tibetan colony after the most important point of intersection called the iron bridge. This bridge is considered as a spatial edge and limit tracing ethnic frontiers between the two communities. A boundary, and a link that the migrants and refugees crossed many times a day, according to their businesses or activities. The Punjabi Basti is a key economic point. Most of the Tibetan restaurants and hotels were dependent on the Punjabi Basti Market for basic goods. Most of the circulation occurred on a daily basis. During the night people did not cross the bridge. The Tibetans considered it dangerous to cross the bridge at night. The informants were selected according to this daily circulation between the Punjabi Basti and the Tibetan enclave. The three women were continuously crossing the line for their business activities, like most housewives of the Tibetan colony. They gave no importance to this bridge in their auto-photography and photovoice. Instead, they gave a lot of importance to exceptional moments like the Tibetan

festivals. They took pictures of themselves in beautiful traditional clothes stressing their Tibetanness. Silk dresses were at the centre of their self-representation and the Tibetan elegance the main point of interest.

At a certain moment, I re-oriented the inquiry of their everyday life and asked to frame their lives with their smartphone. The pictures taken with smartphones were similar to the photos shot with disposable cameras. The informants would wear their best clothes and go to the hairdresser and be as elegant as possible. Even Angu, who was economically at the bottom of the social pyramid would put her best dress and comb her hair before posing.



Figure 4 - Tibetan Women in Majnu Ka Tilla. Picture posted on Facebook, February 2017.

The second most important topic depicted in the photos were the animals of the colony. The business woman, P, was very religious and concerned about animals and fed all of the dogs of the colony, asserting that it “was good for her karma” to take care of the dogs.



Figure 5 - Rescuing wounded dogs. Posted on Facebook, December 2016.



Figure 6 - Dog hospital. Posted on Facebook, December 2016.

P shot many pictures of dogs: wounded dogs, sleeping dogs, eating dogs. Her everyday life focused on the injured or miserable dogs and their protection. She observed dogs everywhere, in every situation, the dogs were the shown as the centre of her interest. This anecdotal subject is deeper than it appears. She explained that her close attention for the poor animals indeed was part of her karmic destiny and she would religiously explain this focus on rescuing street dogs.



Figure 7 - Dog nursery. Posted on Facebook, December 2016.

The third most important frame was the urban environment showing how the streets of the colony were unclean. They would point and frame the dirty side of the Punjabi Basti (Basti in Hindi means “village”), which was the centre of criticism because things were thrown everywhere and garbage was left in the middle of the road. This was the main subject of difference between “us” Tibetans and “them” the Punjabi. The Tibetans saw themselves as clean and hardworking and expressed a desire for the colony to be neat. The Tibetan women on the main street would clean the road with a basket of water many times a day. The picture below demonstrates how important it is inside the colony to keep a clean environment. Here, an interviewed woman posted how she got rid of a great amount of leaves of trees burning them on the street nearby the bridge. The picture is interestingly framed stressing on the business (beauty salon) fire (as disinfection) and a traditional Indian broom (which is used by a political party as a symbol of the anti-corruption program). When asked why she posted this picture on Facebook, she insisted on the everyday life, keeping a healthy environment and insisting on what she did in the morning. Starting her everyday duty with hygienic actions. The message of a purification and detox is also a very clear message sent to the clients telling them that in her beauty parlour they will find a very healthy climate with a smooth and purified atmosphere.



Figure 8 - Purification of Public Space. Posted on Facebook, March 29, 2017.

The fourth subject shared by the three informants was a common interest in cuisine and food, suggesting the large impact and influence of the Indian cuisine on the diaspora. Tibetans cook a special cuisine, but would also be very fond of “dal” and the Indian spices would be commonly used and appreciated. Mixity and cross-cultural exchanges are very much highlighted by a shared cooking of borrowed receipts. It emphasizes the Indian context and the “impregnation” of Indian culture in the Tibetan diaspora everywhere in India.



Figure 9 - Indian dish. Posted on Facebook, March 2017.

None of the three women took pictures of the intersection and showed interest for the bridge.

The bridge was a point of reference, a spatial landmark. In their everyday relations, the Tibetans would locate a place, behind, before, after, above, beyond the bridge. In the posted pictures the refugees never considered the bridge as “interesting”. They took pictures of the family, the food, the temple, the festivities, but the market place and the bridge were not central. I concluded that there is a contradiction between the rational points of the junction, *the interstitial spaces* and the way people saw and represented their daily life. The bridge served as a spatial reference that was fundamental for any circulation, but very poorly depicted because it meant nothing on the emotional, affective, social and cultural aspects of life. It was neglected, because it was not estimated as important for the Tibetan identity, it was exterior of the Tibetanness, and it was the beginning of another world, not sufficiently significant to be mentioned. On the contrary, the three women emphasized a key notion. They picked up the concept of edges that they understood as plural. The concept of the edge was built when the ethnographer took the camera and interviewed the colony about the case study of Angie/Angu. I could argue that the actual smartphone capacities to frame everyday life are today far more interesting to give voice to a community and a social group than disposal cameras.

The pictures posted on Facebook or Whatsapp group were much more expressive and meaningful than camera photos, which in 2017 look particularly outdated. As mentioned when the film Angu was shot in 2013, the ethnographer was the only one in the colony who did not have a smartphone, but an old device incapable of internet connections. The new social networks, in that perspective, are revolutionary. There is no need for a researcher distributing disposal camera for an inquiry-driven ethnological process. Being connected with your field is simpler, more direct and has no interference due to the presence of the researcher. Most of the times interviewed people wish to please the researcher. It is possible to analyze visual posts with “pure” information with no interaction with the researcher. I could suggest that disposable cameras were useful at the beginning of the nineties and appeared as a “new” approach twenty-five years ago, inspired by Wang’s theoretical advocacy on minorities, but it is not the case anymore. People do not ask permission to the researcher to post and comment their lifestyle and interests. They would also comment on their cuisine and the way they prepare food and become the ambassadors of themselves without any voice speaking for them. This direct communication

is revolutionary and prompts many questions. Are the subjects clearly seeing what is important in their life? Are your everyday pictures capable of showing an objective hierarchy of your reality? These images can also demonstrate how blind one can be in daily routine, casual life and day-to-day exchanges. Your own post might be important in your own eyes, but remaining rationally insignificant at a scientific and rational level. In many ways I observed that the interviewed in Majnu Ka Tilla never stressed, highlighted or focused on the importance of the iron bridge which is crucial in spatial analysis and in any exchange between the Tibetan colony and the rest of the New Delhi city. These observations led me to re-consider the role of the ethnographer in the traditional anthropological field work.

The researcher as the only eye to construct the framed reality

The notion of the edge was a concept that Angu/Angie inspired when filming her lifestyle. It is the most marginal actor of the field research (Angie) who happened to be the most fundamental element to explain the limits of Tibetan-hood. The film is freely available on Dailymotion (see: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2g236p>). The documentary traces the ethnographic frontiers between Tibetan refugees and “others” and tell us who is Tibetan and who is not. Who can be considered as a member of the diaspora and who is excluded from the community? For Angie/Angu being at the margin of the diaspora was a way to personally incorporate the boundaries of the Tibetan identity in opposition to the Indian and Punjabi personality. When I began the field research about “women and vulnerability”, I did not interview Angie/Angu. The rest of the colony narrated her life story, and this prompted my interest in her case. The old women of the colony were concerned with her situation. Angie lived alone with her half-cast little girl called Peggy and had a lot of difficulties. These edges were limits, frontiers, but also interstitial spaces that the camera stressed as highly symbolic of the edges between the Tibetan enclave and the Punjabi market. As a filmmaker, from France, I filmed the intersection and the myriad of the boundaries. Filming was like mapping the diaspora in its geographical context, but it was also an operation piling up various dimensions. The economic, the social and psychological attributes were all part of successive layers of frontiers. Even the name Angie was

a point of intersection. The Indian community used to call her *Angu* (an Indian name), the Tibetan named her Pema (Lotus in the Tibetan language) or Angie (English designation). The multiple ways of being named illustrated her cross-cultural habits from going to the Tibetan enclave to the Punjabi zone. Angie was a paradigm of cultural hybridism from below. Born in India her first partner was an Indian from the Punjab zone who gave her two children. “Anju is the right Indian spelling and not Angu, as the latter will be pronounced as Angoo”. (Tanka Subba, 2017). Anju is a typical female name in India. Thus the sobriquet Angu was a hybrid appellation between Indian and Tibetan spelling. The way people named her was already a symbol of mixity and linguistic hybridity.



Figure 10 - Angu/Angie and her baby. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Houérou, Picture taken from the ethnographic film “Angu a woman on the edge”, available on Dailymotion: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2g236p>)

The little girl Peggy was the fruit of her second cohabitation with an African partner. The ethnographer was thus the eye that was drawing the lines, limits of the Tibetan enclave through a participant camera. In this, the method was a classical participant observation in the pure tradition of Bronislaw Malinowski with his fundamental work in 1922 with the “Argonauts of the Pacific”. An alien culture was to be observed from the inside by a researcher involved in the community for a long period of time in the ordinary life being tightly connected to this everyday interaction. The camera in this observation was introduced as a “*participant camera*”. The camera was thus a predominant tool to archive the culture of the diaspora and the social rules in the Tibetan enclave of Majnu Ka Tilla. In this view, Angu was what the earliest ethnographic field would name a “key informant”, voicing a marginal voice and tracing the different limits of the Tibetan diasporic identity. What was socially and culturally considered Tibetan and what

was not? Why was Angie noted as a marginal inside her own community? Understanding Angie's marginality was a way to apprehend the norms and rules of the Tibetan diaspora and the distinction between the Tibetan normality and eccentricity. Being the external eye, the ethnographer was empowered to frame the global picture and socio-cultural position of the diasporic enclave in New Delhi - drawing the plural frontiers of the Tibetan space. Economic, social, psychological and cultural spaces combined together at the end to perform the enclave.

Economic frontiers

Angie/Angu was a single mother struggling to feed a baby. Her husband was Kenyan and was in prison in New Delhi, 45 km away from her house. The baby was born when her father was already in the prison. He was jailed based on charges that he was frequently caught drinking and fighting. Angie was also the only case of intermarriage and trans-cultural association with an African in the Tibetan colony in Delhi. She was the only Tibetan woman living with a "black" man. Few Tibetans were married to foreigners. Marriages to Westerners occurred infrequently, but most of time those couples flew abroad after marriage. Angie was thus considered to have contracted a "poor union" with a man outside her community, but originally from a country considered disadvantaged economically and lacking positive opportunity. The community would then condemn the choice that she made.

Psychological edge

Angie was never left alone. Old women and young women were visiting her in different moments of the day. They were anxious, as one senior woman confessed, that Angie could harm her baby because of her epilepsy, social despair, and too much economic or psychological abandonment. Therefore, the aim of the visits had "controlling" ends. The baby was the centre of the collective attention. At first, I did not understand why people were visiting Angu all during the day, I understood it as a special human attitude of the Tibetan community. The reality was more pragmatic, the Tibetan women were protecting the baby and controlled Angus's attitude towards the child. This thoughtfulness was directed to the protection of the baby and motivated

by the religious belief on the invaluable prized of life. As a result, the baby was a focal point of collective attention and was in perfect health. Filming Angie/Angu on a long duration, successively during a few years, I could realize that she could - all of a sudden - become very nervous, agitated and drop the baby down or leave the baby alone on the ground, forgetting it for a while. Her attention was fragile, her mood and concentration very unstable. Though otherwise a very good mother and very gentle, her own personal instability could harm the baby indirectly. She objectively had to bear the scars of very poor_living conditions. Her teeth were broken by her husband when beating her. She physically showed the burden of a very hard life. Her clothes did not fit properly, and most of the time she wore old, but clean rugs. She gave signs of heavy handicap with her epilepsy. She could not speak English and her Tibetan was also basic as other informants stressed. The instability appeared more as a consequence of psychological unbalance than limited to the material and economic edge. The signs she gave was that of a tremendous “*laisser aller*” a carelessness, a lack of consideration for the future. Living the day, or maybe the hour, without thinking of the future. It seemed that Angie never realized the notion of “tomorrow”. Filming Angie made it obvious that the economic edge was superficial and that the profound instability was rather psychological and related to her epilepsy. So it was obvious that she was mentally fragile and could collapse in desperate helplessness. She could change her mind and turn absolutely sad and lost in a moment. That was the main reason why the community was frightened that she could harm the baby in an act of melancholy. She was inspected as if she was, herself, a little girl not completely grown up, in constant need of assistance. The way she was treated was very human and discrete. I could tell the profound links of solidarity within the Tibetan diaspora through those interactions. For example, the community apprehended that her husband might come back from prison and beat her up with the baby. So the men were in charge of her security while the women looked after the baby. Care was organized according to the masculine or feminine roles.

Security net

Around Angie the community organized a security net, like a human fence. It was a circular protection. The men were in charge of the exterior control of her house and the women assisted her inside the house. Interior inspection was the feminine task and exterior control was the men’s

mission. Space was separated according to gender territoriality. The tasks were divided according to gender identity. Western culture, but also African and Arabic culture have such distinct duties according to gender stereotypes and play the roles. The house was the centre of the feminine characteristics and the street was attributed to masculinity. Sexualizing the territory was a shared gender mechanism and related to an active solidarity. I could name it *a security net* creating a safe place. The protective task was *manly*, organized and included the whole male Tibetan colony. There was an attention and a self-regulation of violence. For example, some men were paid to act like security guards at night in order to protect the people from external violence. Aggressions and attacks occur sometimes at night when drinkers penetrate the community space, putting at risk the security of the women and children. In the act of *shielding* the Tibetan enclave provides a strong sense of communal support as a diaspora. A group of *foreigners/outsiders* willing to protect their originality, habits, culture, and religion. The colony also attracts a lot of tourists. Mostly people coming from Buddhist countries wishing to go to Dharamsala and to different religious spots in holy Buddhist places, like Sarnath. People from Asian countries also visited to meet the Dalai Lama, who became an international icon of global Buddhism. This religious tourist activity also created jobs and attracted capital and investments. A significant number of hotels and restaurants were built in the Tibetan neighborhood. Many real estate projects were engaged inside the colony, despite the threat from the Indian authorities to destroy the houses because it is on the side of the Yamuna River and could easily flood during a monsoon.

Security concerns go beyond the protection of a vulnerable single mother like Angie and meet economic ends that are crucial for the survival of the colony. But the case of Angie tells much more than her individual situation: it demonstrates the rules of a whole diasporic organization and the central role of the men on the duty of protection. There is a shared fear of what is outside and the anxiety connected to ethnic rivalry. For example, the neighboring Punjab market, in front of the Tibetan colony, possesses no tourist infrastructure, such as restaurants or hotels compared to the buildings in the Tibetan colony, provoking social envy and sometimes violence as a product of this economic success. *Why do Tibetans attract foreigners?* Asked a textile/saree trader in the Punjab Market in front of the Tibetan colony. This zone of New Delhi is far from the centre (after the Red Fort) and is not part of a rich area of the Indian capital, but rather a humble location. The Tibetan diaspora fears potential aggression from what is considered the

“outside” world, because they are well aware of their own distinct identity. They have the clear notion of belonging to a diaspora. They share the idea of forming a strong community with a common identity, a set of bonds such as families, religion and a shared memory related to the 1959 exodus from Tibet. A shared memory related to a catastrophe (like the Palestinians and the Nakba).

Persevering a sense of a Tibetan identity is considered to be a major “distinction” with a clear objective not to be diluted as a group in India and to keep a distinct identity. Frequently, Tibetans would complain that economic success could put them at risk. In 2006, a Tibetan wool market was set alight as a result of commercial competition between ethnic groups in the Himalaya. This need to preserve Tibetan identity and practices is very often mentioned by the men of the community. Not only in New Delhi, but also in Dharamsala tourists bring a significant amount of foreign currency. In Dharamsala, Kashmiri traders complained that tourists preferred Tibetan handicrafts and consequently used to print the mark “*Made in Tibet*” on shawls that were fully made in Kashmir.

Captivating the attention of the tourists is thus an object of economic competition and the community is very careful of eventual aggression from local traders. They are prudent to avoid any violence from rivals. Consequently, a private security militia was fixed just to avoid exterior aggressive acts. I also stress that Tibetan vision of life is highly influenced by non-violent philosophy and that the guarding mission is taken seriously as man’s role as a masculine duty. Men would feel very guilty when failing to protect, as in the case of the young girl raped on August 2013 inside the colony in New Delhi. The case was heavily commented on in different social networks by the Tibetan refugees. Security duty is not only a man’s business, it is also a feminine task, but as it was mentioned above, the woman’s role is to ensure protection inside the house. The gender roles here are very much comparable to other cultures, including the western culture where the man is supposed to be a “guard” of the public space and the woman the organizer of the house.

Social discrimination and social edge

Angie/Angu stands at the periphery of the colony geographically (with a room close to the river) and socially. Her uniqueness is a result of her cohabitation outside marriage with an element

considered as an outcast of the community. The whole community rejected her partner because he was stigmatized as the personification of evil. He was judged as a social danger, an economic danger, and at last a physical threat. He represents - in the eye of the community - an additional handicap that consequently turned Angie into an icon of social decline at the edge of the community and at the bottom of the social pyramid. Even though she was in such a position, she was never abandoned by the Tibetan colony. Prior to the Kenyan man, she was living with an Indian man from a low caste. She first mentioned that she had two children from the Indian man and that he unfortunately died. Lately, I learned that this ex-partner was alive and stayed in the Punjab Basti enclave, married with an Indian wife who belonged to his caste. In 2012, when I met Angie, she expressed her sorrow related to this loss, because she considered her first husband much better than the second one. The two boys were completely educated within the Tibetan system and were going to a boarding school free of charge thanks to community support. She said in 2012 that she had not seen these children for two years, though. In 2013, during field research, she forgot what she previously told and gave another version of her story. She had a third baby with a black African man, a little girl called Peggy.

Connecting economic profits to social capital is evidenced in a diasporic context. Even if isolated on a family level, the community security net offered to Angie was a social remittance. Because she was a Tibetan, Buddhist and lives in a group that would never let her down. Free education for her sons could be considered as a Tibetan cultural capital. Being Tibetan was thus a primary affiliation opening a door for community profits and ethnic solidarity. Angie lost her country, her parents, her first Indian partner denied his first children, and she finally lost her second African partner in prison. At the end, her younger child Peggy was taken to an orphanage in April 2013 by the Tibetan Welfare Association. This series of losses isolated and marginalized her position as a single mother.

It is difficult to consider what was the most salient and determinant border in the community. Is it the family deprivation that provokes psychological instability or it is the contrary? As stated previously, her permanent anxiety and restlessness is the product of family isolation. Does absence of protection, lack of “household”, produce social segregation? Contrary to the definition of absolute poverty given above, Angie got improvement from the social welfare and

services. It can be named *a social capital* in the sense given by Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1979). In her case, these social mechanisms were fundamental for her to sit upright and stay on her feet. Social solidarity is therefore, the main explanation for not falling into absolute poverty. Social gifts, collective gifts, the one made by the community social care system, but the private offers of her neighbors and friends are keys to understanding her courage to face the situation. The resilience in exile is thus a social product, and not an individual miracle. This resilience just could not occur without a deep assistance and the notion of compassion transmitted by the Buddhist religion and its various social connections in terms of links and networks.

Conclusion

The methods used to apprehend a marginal case and the rational explanation of this marginality was a classic ethnographic move to place the researcher as the “framing architect-director” of the research and at the centre of the dynamic. The filmmaker, as an outsider, explores the cultural world of a society with an external insight. Her eye expresses the sight of an alien. Maybe it is because the researcher-filmmaker is extraneous to a society that she can describe what she observed with a long cultural distance. Extrinsic posture might offer the researcher pertinent observation. Using disposal cameras did not help to understand the interactions between the Tibetan colony and their Punjabi neighbors. Pictures framed by the Tibetan refugees stressed Tibetan practices by framing folkloric scenes with traditional festivities. Most of the Tibetans belong to the second generation and are born in India. It’s quite a challenge to remain Tibetan. It’s a cultural effort, the pictures the Tibetan women made clearly illustrated that this energy was not to be dissolved into the Indian society. The goal was to persevere to remain “Tibetan”. Food, clothes, and religion were topics of major concern, but little attention was granted to the ethnic boundaries. The interest of using disposal cameras was the relation of the Tibetan diaspora to their surroundings. Stressing the ways the Tibetans cleaned the road was interpreted by an informant as a real frontier. An ethnic boundary based on ritual defilement. There was no *untouchable* Tibetan. The idea of human contamination does not exist in the Tibetan experience. Buddhism does not have a view associated with clean or unclean humanity. Ironically, Angie was perceived by the Tibetans themselves as unclean, showing in this matter, how the Indian sense of filthiness has influenced the Tibetan perspective of what is pure or corrupted. The hotel

owner, as mentioned above, asked Angie not to sit on the sofa because he feared she was soiled. Cohabitation has influenced each community's vision of what is clean and unclean.

Punjabi migrants have a stronger sense of what is a "dirty" person and soul. This sense of impurity is an essential boundary: an ethnic and religious distinction. The bridge is thus a frontier for the Tibetan enclave separating and linking the Tibetans with the old Punjab colony. The first immigrants of the Punjab colony facing the Tibetan colony, *behind the bridge*, were first inhabited by the Punjab refugees coming from Pakistan during the partition of India in the late forties. Nowadays all of these first inhabitants have passed away and Punjab Basti is populated by various groups, including people from Rajasthan and the descendants of the first Punjab immigrants. Thus, this zone of North Delhi is a suburb inhabited by internally and externally displaced. I could consider that geographically the Tibetans are the most visible groups. They are recognizable with the prayer flags that are clear markers and urban signals telling that the buildings belong to Tibetans. The bridge is also enveloped - as I have shown - in pictures of such religious flags. Tibetan tradition states that when the wind blows in the flags, slowly moving with the flow, all of the wishes of the one who attached the flags will be fulfilled. In ten years, I always witnessed the flags moving with the wind marking the territory humanly and religiously. This Tibetan tradition is like an identity outcry or telling the whole world "we are Tibetans".

It is using a classical anthropological method that I could seize the moment in which a Tibetan loses his identity and melts into the Indian society by filming the streets interactions and the processes of becoming an Indian. When a Tibetan refugee starts to live outside the ethnic enclave, he or she was threatened by a loss of identity. Many Tibetans who cannot afford the rising rents in the Tibetan enclave (due to hotels and tourist activities) are forced to live in the Punjabi Basti, where renting an apartment is half the price and sometimes three times less expensive. Living in Punjabi zone, however, is seen as an economic and social decline, influencing a cultural and identity loss. Melting with the Punjabi is perceived as a threat to "losing yourself"; an informant declared that he "was afraid to live in the Punjabi zone and becoming dirty, throwing garbage on the roads and losing his Tibetan behavior."

These frontiers are mental, social, and religious and cannot be recognized with self-photography. Most of the time, the acculturation process is transparent through participant observation. As

shown, participant observation is a very old ethnographic technique adopted at the early age of the discipline.

This traditional methodological tool was essential to comprehend the limits of Tibetanhood and the piling dimensions of this identity as successive layers. It is through a classical ethnographic filming methodology that I picked up the plural edges and the crucial social Tibetan rules of solidarity. Filming one single marginal woman was much more heuristic than interviewing many other members of the diaspora. The ways she was rejected by others was much more significant about what was truly Tibetan than the pictures of folkloric scenery that they auto-produced.

Social responsibilities, religious bonds, and economic links formed a tautology. A tautology usually repeats the same idea in different terms. This key norm in the Tibetan culture was *solidarity*. The religious actors would name this solidarity “compassion in action” related to the “edge” concept. The notion can be an object of moral, spiritual, or social deterioration.

Dividing different sides of the edge concept turns to be un-heuristic. The elements of Angie’s life appear interconnected. As a whole, it is difficult to separate any of the dimensions cited above and it remains tenuous to establish a single factor at the expense of others. It is like a chain of events. One event is tightly linked to the other one. A series of misfortunes mutually reliant upon each other. As mentioned previously the colony is facing the “Punjabi Basti” the neighborhood beyond the iron bridge. There is a continuous exchange of goods and items of all sorts between the two zones. In Punjabi Basti different Indian shops provide the Tibetan restaurants with food and the two places are complementary. Many Indian tailors work for the Tibetan colony and get specialized in making traditional Tibetan clothes like the *Chupa* dress and *Onju* shirt. This demonstrates that a commercial interaction is alive.

The neighborhood is popular among foreign and domestic tourists as well as among Delhi University students. In the ethnographic film “Angu, a woman on the edge”, the Kenyan partner of Angu, was previously a student of Delhi University and the film told the story of a mixed union between a foreign African student in India and a Tibetan refugee in Majnu Ka Tilla.

Chapter III Memories in exile in Majnu Ka Tilla (New Delhi)

Abstract: Majnu Ka Tilla is the name of the colony and the location of the experimental study related the spatial features of memory. This chapter explores the fabric of memories. I go through the interactions between Tibetan refugees and their Indian neighbors in the Punjabi Basti, using a set of photographs to stress the pivotal importance of the iron bridge. The bridge is a key landmark in exploring the Tibetan spatial diasporic identity. The bridge is thus an ethnic frontier and a memorial urban point of reference creating the spatial memory of Majnu Ka Tilla. I look at the human geographies of the space in connection with old and new memories. Of interest are categories of memories, such as painful memory, blue memory, manipulated memory, invented memory, and excess of memory. Each is examined in connection with the original spatial dynamics in Majnu Ka Tilla. Memorial political strategies are studied in connection with the Tibetan religious calendar, the organization of holidays, and in the question of a memory creating a collective identity.

Keywords: Diaspora, spatial memory, painful memory, resplendent memory, blue memory, turquoise, manipulated memory, invented memory, excess of memory, abusive memory, self-immolation, Tibetan identity, imagined community, Tibetan holidays, Tsetar, Losar, Dalai Lama birthday,

The Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru granted asylum to Tibetan refugees when they came to India in 1959. They were rehabilitated in different Refugee Camps across the country. Those who were not settled into these locations were given the plot of “Samyeling” New Aruna Nagar in New Delhi called Majnu Ka Tilla. The Tibetan colony of Majnu Ka Tilla developed on the banks of river Yamuna, North of Delhi on National Highway 9, covering an area of about 64,627 m².



**Figure 12 - The entrance of the Tibetan colony in New Delhi, Majnu Ka Tilla.
Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Hou rou, 2008.**

The Majnu Ka Tilla area has three main residential settlements with a total of almost 350 families. Aruna Nagar, New Aruna Nagar and Old Chandrawal village, were established in the early 1900s, when the British government settled the labourers involved in the construction of the Central Secretariat buildings in the construction of New Delhi. The next round of settlement was in the post-independence era (1958-1959), when Aruna Nagar was developed by the Land and the Development wing of the Urban Development Ministry. The ministry distributed 925 plots of 40 yards² to the people resettled from various parts of North Delhi. The Tibetan refugee camp, later named New Aruna Nagar was created after 1960, and two large *jhuggi jhopari* (hutment) clusters were developed on the periphery in more recent years.

The legal status of Majnu Ka Tilla has previously come into dispute. In 1995, residents were "given a formal assurance from the Centre" that they would be allowed to remain at the site until the international dispute over Tibet was settled. In June 2006, the colony was served a court-issued notice indicating that the area would be demolished in connection with Delhi government's road expansion and Yamuna River beautification plan. At least two buildings were demolished in connection with this order. In 2012, however, a court order shielded eviction of residents, and regularized the status of the colony. The colony, officially known as New Aruna Nagar Colony, remains unauthorized though in March 2013, the Government of Delhi included New Aruna Nagar (Tibetan refugee camp) on its list of 895 "to-be-regularized colonies". The refugee colony experienced widespread flooding in the 2010 rainy season, as a result of which

many of the residents took reinforcement measures in their buildings. On June 20, 2013, during the North India floods, the Yamuna River breached its banks and inundated numerous houses in the low-lying area. They remained partially submerged for several days, and people shifted to upper floors or to relief camps. The floods also lead to power outages and water shortages, raising the concerns of health hazards. Majnu Ka Tilla hosts many hotels, guest houses and restaurants and is very active economically as a tourist zone. Home rentals have become (since 2008) a very attractive business. A large population is cramped in closely built houses, several floors high and approachable through narrow bylanes. In addition, there is a market of retail stalls, including bookshops, curio shops, metal smiths, and many beauty parlors, internet cafes, and travel agencies. The most historic restaurant was created in the seventies and in the mid-eighties, the Dolma House was built and is considered as one of the oldest diners of the colony. Students of Delhi University frequent the area for lunch or dinner, as it is not far from the site of the university in Kamala Nagar.



Figure 13 - Dolma House one of the most historic restaurant in Majnu Ka Tilla. A famous diner among Delhi students. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Hou  rou, March 2017.



Figure 14 - Tibetan market in Majnu Ka Tilla selling portraits of the Dalai Lama and rosaries in New Delhi. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Houérou, March 2017.

As mentioned previously the colony faces the “Punjabi Basti” neighborhood beyond the iron bridge. There is a continuous exchange of goods, businesses, and merchandises of all sorts between the two zones. In Punjabi Basti different Indian shops provide the Tibetan restaurants with food and the two places are complementary. Many Indian tailors work for the Tibetan colony and gain specialized skills in making traditional Tibetan clothes, like the Chupa dress and Onju shirt, demonstrating that a commercial interaction is alive.



Figure 15 - The traditional Tibetan Chupa made by an Indian tailor in Punjabi Basti. Photo Credit: Fabienne le Houérou, March 2017.



Idem

Figure 16 - Indian Tailor specialized in Tibetan Clothes in Punjabi Basti. Photo Credit: Fabienne le Houérou, March 2017.

The neighborhood is popular among foreign and domestic tourists as well as among Delhi University students. In the ethnographic film “Angu, a woman on the edge” the Kenyan partner of Angu, was previously a student of Delhi University and the film tells the story of a mixed union between a foreign African student in India and a Tibetan refugee in Majnu Ka Tilla.



Figure 17 - Tourists in Majnu Ka Tilla. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Houérou, March 28, 2017.

The bridge



Figure 18 - Majnu Ka Tilla, Iron Bridge. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Houérou, picture from the ethnographic film “Angu a woman on the edge”, 2013. (Freely available: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2g236p>)

Tibetans would relate to the space as “before”, “after”, “behind” the bridge. As such, the bridge serves as an important spatial marker. To locate a place within the neighborhood, one needed to identify it in reference to the bridge. For the methods, the images taken by the informants also related this urban building as a central spatial, commercial, and cultural point of reference. The bridge both demarcated the boundaries of culture, business and ethnicity. The Tibetans would refer to the world *above* the bridge as insecure compared to the Tibetan enclave which represented safety. The Tibetans in India, as it was mentioned by an interviewee “love to live together, to be together” and meet the definition of the diaspora with the social, ethnic and cultural desire to be together sustained by a political project and shared memories. There were conscious and unconscious facets of this desire for communal bond. There was a conscious project to be united in keeping together a strong identity in exile. It appears as a political challenge in exile to keep a collective Tibetan agenda and a Tibetan identity. India - as a very large and generous hosting country - threatens to dissolve the Tibetan community as a diasporic entity.

I also focus on the unconscious dimension. The Tibetans felt secure with other Tibetans. The bridge in this sense, was a geographical reference, but also a point of self-identification, what Frederick Barth referred to as an “ethnic frontier”, a psychological border line. While the bridge was merely a large iron piece of infrastructure, it represented much more to this community. Most Tibetans would

consider never crossing the bridge at night, because the bridge linked the Tibetan colony, an economically prosperous tourist zone, to a poorer neighborhood where many beggars and a population of borderline people were present. The Tibetans of the colony have their own security agents to prevent any interference or attack as far as robbery. A private team controlled the entrance to the colony of potential thieves from the outsiders. The outside world is considered to be intruders from the bridge and perceived as a permanent danger. There was a continuous suspicion from the outside and a constitutive vulnerability related to the fact that they were Tibetans and not Indians and could be attacked. This was a permanent acknowledgement of not having the same rights as *outsiders*. They expressed collectively the will to live in harmony and never to harm or to do “any wrong” to their Indian neighbors and also expressed the fear to be under the attack of the marginalized populations, nomads and robbers.

No Tibetan is begging inside the Colony

The Tibetan refugees proudly insisted that you cannot find any “beggar” in the Tibetan colony. This spoke to their control of the economy and welfare organization that distributed goods and support to poor Tibetans. The leader of the administration in the colony explained, when interviewed, that “nobody is starving in the colony” because of a very efficient social power and an active network of solidarity. When shooting the ethnographic film “*Angu, a woman on the edge*”, a documentary on one of the most unfortunate Tibetan women of the colony, I had to admit that there were almost no beggars and that the lower class Tibetans received special grants, food packages, free education, free medicines and benefited from a very sophisticated system of sponsorship, offering them a way to survive. It was the case of Angu, who was helped by the Tibetan welfare system. Her sons were freely educated in a Tibetan boarding school and her baby was taken to an orphanage in Dharamsala, because she was not able to take care of her. Angu was totally assisted by the Tibetan Woman Association (TWA) of Majnu Ka Tilla. She was cured and fed through collective efforts. The community way of living and the diasporic bonds were evident in the interconnections. Being a diaspora is also concerned with the idea that “no body is left alone or abandoned”. The philosophy of compassion is deeply rooted in the idea that you *cannot eat well if your Tibetan neighbor next door is starving*. There is a religious and spiritual dimension of this solidarity in exile. This was expressed in materialistic terms, but was based on a spiritual dimension of compassion in action. Compassion is one of the favorite subjects of the Dalai Lama. The market inside the colony sold

various speeches of his holiness on items, such as CD or DVD. His voice saturated the public spaces and gave a spiritual base for political action. Being Tibetan is thus a moral attitude in life and the core value of all the codes is compassion.

“Being together”- A diasporic fiction and *reality-memory*

As the Encyclopedia of diaspora stresses, the concept of diaspora (from Greek *διασπορά*, "dispersion") refers to a scattered population and the movement of a given population from its original homeland. Diaspora is related to the historical mass dispersions of an involuntary migration, such as the expulsion of Jews from Judea or the flight of the Palestinians during the Nakba. What is the difference between a diasporic and a migrant community? The most important dimension of a diasporic reality is a collective myth and a shared memory of the homeland and history (Le Houerou, 2002). A magnified memory of what Tibet was is at the core of the Tibetan imagination in the Tibetan colony in New Delhi. Most refugees were born in India and shared myths with their ancestors and the first migrants who came to the colony in the early sixties with the Dalai Lama. The early refugees still alive numbered less than thirty in 2016. The end of their lives brought about the loss of their living memories. Souvenirs were vanishing with the extinction of the voices of the past. In many aspects, the Tibetan community shares similar experience with the Jewish, Armenian, or Palestinian diasporas. In different field research, I emphasized the irrational dimension of the ties and bonds of labor migrants desiring to remain together (Sudanese in Egypt, see Le Houérou, 2004, 2005, 2006). The desire of constructing a community with common goals and interests is also very significant and the frontier between a community of migrants and a diaspora is not rigid, but should be contextualized stressing the “imagination” (in the sense of Benedict Anderson). The fiction of being a homogenized group could be so strong that it becomes a reality. Tibetans are divided into different Buddhist schools and they are much less homogenous than the image they want to give to the outside world. Unity is a political tool for the community to be recognized, following the *adagio* that “together they are stronger”, politically, ethnically, and socially. In many ways, the will to constitute a diaspora is also political. It imbues the project with a political weight. In the Tibetan case, being diaspora is multiple and complex. What was observed in my many years in the field research is the irrational dimension with the imaginary and fiction of being “Tibetan”. This fictional narration

shapes the political project. The spiritual orientation is a foundation of “Tibetanhood” and in the direct heritage of Tibetan politics, as, for many centuries, the head of the nation and government was a monk and a God called “Dalai Lama”. The compassionate basis is not limited to the religious sphere. Compassion is a political goal and program at the heart of the spiritual and political sphere. Spirituality and politics are intimately connected and in constant interaction.

The Tibetan government in exile could not have legitimacy if it was not based on a series of common values and a shared imagination with collective myths connected with the compassion and shared memories with multiple dimensions. The complexity of Tibetan memories was a salient element observed in that these memories were plural, yet interconnected.

*I identified a **painful memory** related to the sufferings of a forced migration, a **manipulated memory** organized by the politicians of the colony and political leaders referring to the Tibetan uprising, as a **re-invented memory**, and finally a **magnificent and sublimated memory** expressed by collective imagination. All these memories were based on the spatial basis and geographical pillars. Memories are embedded inside spatial dynamics.*

Spatial memory in Majnu Ka Tilla

For historical reasons, only the Tibetans are permitted to buy houses and properties inside the Tibetan colony in Majnu Ka Tilla. Plots were distributed to the initial Tibetans refugees, such as Angu’s mother, upon arrival with the first influx of refugees with the Dalai Lama in 1959. The long-standing refugees remembered this period of time. The Tibetan colony is a narrow space with limited real estate market, which results in rising property prices. The colony is divided into two parts: the “Old Colony” and “New Colony”. What is identified as the old colony is closed to the iron bridge and it refers to the first houses built by the first arrivals in 1959. Since 1980, the colony has expanded and palaces grew higher and higher, every year, to gain space. Most of these edifices are hotels. Over 10 years I observed the proliferation of these buildings and the progress in housing and modern facilities like wifi and global comfort. When I started the field research in 2008 there were few hotels: most were not particularly clean and electricity was often cut, internet and hot water were not available. Since 2013, wifi was available everywhere in the colony and the hotels were becoming luxurious, which intensified competition in the tourism

industry. Most hotels were constructed in the new colony and the old colony is still a place with peaceful little houses along the Yamuna River, but this will change as new hotels are increasingly built in the old colony. Owners of houses are transforming their residence when they are resettled abroad as refugees. Many hotel owners live outside India like the owner of the Wongden House one of the oldest guest house of the colony.



Figure 19 - The old camp, Majnu Ka Tilla. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Hou rou, March 2017.



Figure 20 - Tibetan open market, New camp, is the newest part of the Tibetan enclave, and is the business centre of the colony. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Houérou, March 2017.



Figure 21 - One of the oldest houses of the old camp, Angu's house, inherited from her mother. This humble house was one of the first habitations of the refugees when they first arrived in India. Destroyed in June 2018, this house no longer exists. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Houérou, 2013.

Memories and signs of the past immigration to India were anchored in the old part of the colony, where families are rooted since the late fifties. But the space is continuously changing. The old colony remains residential, whereas the new colony is more or less the heart of the “business” and commercial and trading activities. From 2008 to 2017, when writing this book, I witnessed

an increasing emergence of real estate speculation based on new constructions of buildings. Small original private houses of the first wave of refugees are progressively transformed into guest houses. When I first started this field research, they were no hotels situated in the old colony, which remained primarily residential. In 2017, the old colony had been invaded by guest houses which were proliferating everywhere as it was clearly the most profitable business. The prices are fairly affordable and Tibetan bed and breakfasts were particularly secure and comfortable and appreciated by middle class people, who cannot afford high standard 5 star inns like the hotels in the centre of Delhi. The history of Angu's house, particularly illustrated this speculation due to the scarcity of space. The Tibetan colony cannot be expanded and is limited by a territory defined in the sixties with the first wave of refugees. As a result, the small original residences grew taller for space and to accommodate more rental income. In 2013, when I shot the film with Angu, there was a small house neighboring her house. When I came back in 2015, a huge palace was constructed next to her small house, provoking a loss of balance and architectural disequilibrium. The weight of the new edifice produced large cracks in the fragile house of Angu which could not bear the very high construction. There was a fear that it would collapse. I warned the head of the Tibetan colony that it was not a good idea to destroy the house of one of the poorest souls of the colony. Angu could not defend herself and was helpless: her neighbor's greed and speculation could potentially transform her into a homeless person. It is fair to consider that the business ambitions of the rich Tibetans can imperil the most vulnerable residents of the colony. Such a position was acknowledged, but rarely translated into action. In many cases, as far as profits were concerned, I witnessed the limits of the Buddhist notion of compassion.

Painful memory/resplendent memory: blue memory

There is a paradox in the expression of a souvenir. Tibetan refugees - interviewed over the years - expressed a combination of a painful memory versus gorgeous remembrances and relics. The Tibetan geographical sacred sites, such as rivers, lakes, or mountains, are objects of magical memories that also led to sadness. The beauty of Tibet is a lost idealized beauty in their memory, yet it also engenders bitter and pained memories.

Painful memories are all connected with the loss of independence of Tibet with the armed Chinese invasion. The oldest refugees still alive arrived in 1959 and were given houses freely by the Indian government of the time. The Indian welcoming was a concrete help poured on installing the refugees. More than 50 camps were created and the location of MacLeod Ganj in the Himalaya was also granted for the Dalai Lama and his government. As a result, Dharamsala was a capital in exile of Tibet. All Tibetan institutions, ministries, parliament and the palace of the Dalai Lama are at the centre of MacLeod Ganj. As the heart of the Tibetan representation and centre of decision for the diaspora, MacLeod Ganj presented various differences compared to Majnu Ka Tilla, the colony in Delhi. MacLeod Ganj gave the image of traditions. Most Tibetan women wear Tibetan traditional clothes. In comparison to other Tibetan population centres, Tibetans only wear their traditional clothes only on special occasions. MacLeod Ganj, in this regard, can be understood as the icon of tradition and Tibetan culture and the emblematic of Tibetan control on its image and messages given to the rest of the world. MacLeod Ganj is also a religious place visited by foreigners for a Buddhist pilgrimage. The residence and temple of the Dalai Lama is a major attraction among foreigners. Monasteries organize meditation workshops for foreigners. In contrast Majnu Ka Tilla is perceived by the Tibetan community as the heart of Tibetan commercial activity. The two present locations are the different faces of the Tibetan exile experience and various manifestations of the collective memory. Political memory and strategy for conservative endings is more present in Dharamsala. Majnu Ka Tilla is less politicized and more open to business and perhaps closer to the Indian economy.

The pillars of the Tibetan memory were embodied by the most ancient refugees. They are *portavoce*, mouthpiece, of the painful exile. They left their houses and properties in Tibet in order to follow the Dalai Lama on foot to cross the Himalayas with donkeys and horses.

“The old Tibetans remember the ‘majestic snow covered mountains’, the ‘valleys and pastures’, ‘clean air and clear waters’, and the ‘cool’ weather. Further, they also invested in these physical features with sacred meanings. The water of the rivers as ‘sacred’ and ‘pure’,

Similarly, the geography of places such as Purung was considered holy, as the Tibetan places of pilgrimage were there. The weather was considered cool and unpolluted, and the respondents noted that food did not rot there, as it does in India. Thus, the land of Tibet itself is reconstructed as being pure, both in religious and environmental terms.

The old generation reminisces the houses where they had once lived, the food of tsampa and yak meat that they used to eat, the clothes they wore, their occupations, prayers, and the festivals they celebrated. For the Tibetans, the yak is an integral part of the household economy, and the sheep for nomads and pastoralists. Of the old generation, only two respondents that belonged to the rich families were found, which means, they owned many yaks, and a big house. The rest of them muse that in Tibet, they had to stitch their own clothes out of animal skin and fur, take the animals for grazing and cultivated the land where it was suitable for agriculture. Life was not easy back in Tibet, they note, but still, they miss Tibet all the time. For those respondents who had left behind siblings or close relatives, the yearning to see them is found palpable. However, many of the respondents now have few close relations still alive, and it is mostly the children of their relatives who are now still in Tibet. Very few have managed to connect back to their relatives in Tibet through telephone. There are some who write and receive letters, but again, these instances are not frequent either. In other words, most of them have not been able to get in touch with their families and relatives back in Tibet. How does the old generation think of Tibet now? The uniform answer is that Tibet is no longer the same. The respondents explained that through news received from radio and by talking to newly arrived monks, they had come to know that Tibet had changed. The houses they lived in once have been destroyed, and the surroundings changed. Not only houses, but even the monasteries are no longer there. This is a highly emotional issue, since the Tibetans place great importance on the 'gonpas' as places of prayer and reverence. The most often discussed topic among this generation is whether they would be able to return to Tibet during their lifetime or not. They noted that as they are ageing they are worried whether they still would be able to set their eyes on Tibet before they die. Half the respondents (6) feel that since the younger generation has been born and brought up in India, they may not have the same intensity of feelings for the Tibetan cause. They also feel that the youths do not have to struggle as hard as they did and that instead of focusing on working for the Tibetan cause, individual priorities have become important. However, the remaining half expressed the confidence that the younger generation would realize its responsibility and carry on the struggle. (Tunga Tarodi, 2011: 5)

The author Tunga Tarodi observed what was already noted in 2008. Memory is a mixed composition of the magnified spaces and delusions of purity and painful traces of deprivation and damage. Memories stress the devastated beauty of Tibet. Tibet is idealized as the essence of geographical beauty. A sacred land of magnificent mountains, rivers, and forests. The historic time is viewed as an icon of transparency and cleanliness. Refugees insist on water as a strong symbol of purity. As Tibet is giving birth to major Asian rivers such as Brahmaputra, Mekong, Indus, Lhasa, and Yangtze rivers. In many interviews with old Tibetans, the remembrance of landscapes is vivid and objects of admiration, because it is also impacted by holy and sacred dimension. It remains a religious sacred scape and sacred space as well related to Buddhism. The older generation transmitted this vision of the natural beauty of Tibet to the younger generation, and when asked what is Tibet, most of my informants would mention a blue lake as emblematic of the Tibetan beauty. One of my informants born in India confessed:

“I want to see Tibet before I die (Interview, March 2017).”

“Blue, the color of my soul”

Many important lakes are sacred in Tibet. Lake Namtso is one of the highest salt lakes in the world. Basum Lake is located west of the Kongpo Gymdo County in Nyingchi Prefecture, and is the sacred lake of Nyingma (one of the Tibetan Buddhism schools).

Yamdruk Lake might be the most important symbolic lake in Tibetan identity and cultural reference. The turquoise color of the water has a magical attraction. Yamdruk Lake is considered to possess the most splendid water in the world. Tibetans see Yamdruk as a ‘green jade lake in the pasture’. It is regarded as the turquoise earring that a goddess scattered before the eyes of the Tibetans. One informant in Majnu Ka Tilla, when interviewed about Tibetan memories evoked many times the Turquoise Lake like a kind a sacred beauty she had to visit before passing away (Interview, March 2016). A visit to the lake would be a way to honor her dead parents. For Tibetans, lakes are holy places and the diaspora, especially the Tibetans born in India, have an idealized picture of these geographic features. Splendid projections are the fruit of a memorial worship. The memories will insist on the blue lake as the most salient landscapes (Yamdruk Tso) to the extent that it is a symbol of Tibetan identity and probably the most important icon in the Tibetan’s imaginary nationhood. A well-known song is also very popular among the diasporic Tibetans. The refrain follows:

“Blue Lake”

Honored by the people
Pride of motherland,
Protector of People,
Happiness of the people (...)

Poet Dondrub Gyal’s is perceived as the champion of the Tibetan identity and the Blue Lake in this poem refers to the entire Tibet. (Anna Stirr, 2008: 306). The turquoise is also a very desirable gem in the Tibetan society and the most prized jewelry is made with turquoise. Informants associated the turquoise blue color with Tibet. Tibet is felt, sensed, and displayed through such jewelry. The precious color of the stone is similar to the famous lake for its magnificent color and emblematic of the Tibetan beauty and identity. Most items sold in the street of Majnu Ka Tilla, in the open market, are made with turquoise stones. They are used for earrings, necklaces, amulets, hair accessories, and are representing the heart of Tibetan art and handicraft.



Figure 22 - Woman’s bag made with turquoises, Majnu Ka Tilla. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Houérou, March 31, 2017.

Turquoise is believed to excite the soul of the owner. According to legend, it is not advisable to get rid of a turquoise necklace, because the consequence could be harmful pushing your soul out of your body. Shops selling gems are scattered along the main street in the centre of the colony on the way to the temple and at the heart of the colony of Majnu Ka Tilla.



Figure 23 - Turquoise stones sold in the open market of Majnu Ka Tilla. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Houérou, March 31, 2017.

The nomadic Tibetans (males and females both) wear a turquoise stone in their hair as a main beauty accessory. In the rural Tibet not showing any turquoise in the hair is regarded as a real incomplete clothing style. But the use of turquoise is not limited to the garments and beauty accessories alone; it is also widely used in objects such as teapots, praying rosaries and Buddhist sacred items, like mini-sized religious sculptures. Turquoise colors are used in a variety of decorative ways in different arrangements and are the essence of Tibetan perception of loveliness and grace. A beauty is always connected to the soul and never de-sacralized. In many angles of sight, one should see turquoise as the mirror of the Tibetan soul. Men or women have preferences for wearing turquoise as a durable symbol of luck.



Figure 24 - Turquoise stones sold in the open market of Majnu Ka Tilla. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Houérou, March 31, 2017.

Symbolism of blue color: Turquoise and Lapis Lazuli:

The importance of Turquoise in the Tibetan diaspora is as an element of the past and a present memory that embodies Tibet. Academic research on turquoise in Tibetan is called *Yu (g.yu)*. In the “Zhang Zhung Dictionary” the Zhang Zhung word for turquoise is *ting* or *ting-Zhi*. The term is directly connected to water or idiosyncrasy of water. Turquoise is also called *tshoro (mtsho-ro)*, a Tibetan concept meaning ‘essence/residue of the lake’. The notion is supposed to have Zhang Zhung origins. The history of wearing turquoise can be dated back to the ancient times. It is believed that turquoise was first used as tributes on the altars, presents for lamas of respectable position, and on the royal crown of Nyatri Tsanpo, the first king of ancient Tibet in the 2nd century B.C. (see: <http://www.tibetarchaeology.com/august-2013/>). The Tibetologist Professor Samten G. Karmay’s work underscores the importance of Tibetan turquoise. Turquoise is thoroughly embedded in the Tibetan culture in a myriad of ways. The word appears as part of the appellation of various ancient gods and goddesses. It is also an attribute of many deities, encompassing the color of their bodies, clothes, and implements. Chu-lcam rgyal-mo, the Bön queen of existence, is described as turquoise blue in color, as is Kuchi Mangke (Ku-byi mang-ske), a chief god of Zhang Zhung. The cosmogonic grandmother Namchi Gunggyal (Gnam-phyi gung-gyal) and the famous mountain God Nyenchen Thanglha (Gnyan-chen thang- lha), among other great spirits, are said to have turquoise eyebrows. Deities and primal heroes such as Sripa Sangpo Bumtri (Srid-pa sangs-po ’bum-khri, the father of the gods) and Yangel (Ya-ngal, the priest of the first Tibetan king) have turquoise braids or locks. (see: <http://www.tibetarchaeology.com/august-2013/>)

Turquoise is a metaphor for the leafy and greenery of topographic features. Looking at a Tibetan map, one would find the turquoise mountain and the turquoise valley. As previously mentioned, the most popular form is the turquoise lake (*yumtsho, g.yu-mtsho*). The mention of the color turquoise - in shortcut expression- refers to a lake itself. Many lakes in Upper Tibet carry *yumtsho* as an integral part of their names. The shining rays of the blue color of the sky are linguistically embedded by the word turquoise.



Figure 25 - Variety of turquoises, open market Majnu Ka Tilla. Photo Credit : Fabienne Le Houérou, March 31, 2017

This entanglement of geographic points, spiritual ideas connected to the soul, and Tibetan collective memory are inscribed in the idea of Tibet. No physical entity is felt as non-sacred, the essence of every physical point is connected with the Tibetan spirituality and the Diaspora in Majnu Ka Tilla, which is always related to the religious symbols of Tibetanness. A holistic approach of what is a memory will connect us to multiple dimensions. The gorgeousness of the Tibetan's *scape* is thus physical and spiritual. Spirituality is everywhere. Expressing the souvenirs of a magnified Tibet is then totally connected to worshipping a sacred Buddhist land, violated by outsiders, especially the Chinese who are not -in the Tibetan mentality- aware of the spiritual dimension of the *scape*, but only obsessed by the financial, commercial, and materialistic elements of the land. The intensive Chinese development of Tibet and over exploitation of the resources is then also seen as a violation of a sacred land. Deforestation, over speculation in the cities, and over utilization of the hydroelectric power are common in recent years. Tibetan's subject of critical views among the diaspora is based in Delhi. Tibetans blogs and News Letters (like Free Tibet: <https://freetibet.org/about/environment>) insist that Chinese projects deface Tibetan nature.

For China's government, the Tibet's water is another resource to be exploited, for hydroelectric power, diverting it to supply people elsewhere in China, bottling as a consumer product, and even as a source of strategic influence over the downstream countries who rely on water from Tibet's rivers. Damming has taken place or will soon take place on every major river in Tibet. These dams change water flow, create new lakes, disturb local ecosystems and have significant effects downstream, including stopping the flow of silt which makes agricultural land fertile. Dams and infrastructure

such as new roads can force Tibetans from their land. In a massive engineering project, China even plans to divert water from Tibet to feed 300 million of its own citizens (Free Tibet).

In this perspective, the Chinese presence is a sin toward a holy, pure, and sacred nature and in that sense memory is also the fruit of a *manipulated process*. The process of idealization observed in Majnu Ka Tilla related to the clarity of a blue land, mirror of the Tibetan soul, is also expressed and stimulated politically by the Tibetan authorities, who encourage the expression of a magnified land raped by an invasion.

Manipulated memories or invented memories?

Most Tibetan expressions are oriented against the Chinese invasion. The Tibetan memories would systematically emphasize that Tibet was an autonomous country before 1959. It is obvious that Tibet was a full ancient nation and that China's invasion is nothing more than a colonial project of a wide and powerful neighbor. Many works have been published with historical insights on the situation, and Tibetan writers are continuously asserting that the Tibetan identity, fully religiously based, has little in common with the Han Chinese identity. The Tibetan Government in Exile (TGE) is largely and widely nourishing the debate and most of its strategy is keeping the Tibetans together as a unique and unitary diaspora for a political purpose. Tibetans expressed that their unity is the essence of their existence as actors in the international scene. The TGE in this context is clearly aware of leading a fragile community in exile with the danger to melt in the host society and India as a whole. As a result, the TGE adopted a widespread memorial strategy. They would first use the birthdays, anniversaries of the nation and key Buddhist holidays, organizing large festivities and celebrations. They would also be connected with the temples and the lama always underpinning the religious dimension of the memory. Then they also continuously insist on anti-Chinese propaganda in order to stress the Chinese interests in Tibet. Recalling the Chinese project of domination of the Tibetan Plateau in all occasions is meant to stimulate the diaspora's national identity and to keep Tibetan unity alive. The Indianization and acculturation processes are appreciated as a real political, social and cultural risk by the TGE. In the film I shot in 2008, a documentary on the women of the diaspora, one young Tibetan girl mentioned Lhasa as a

Chinese city. The scene was shot in a restaurant of Majnu Ka Tilla. A mature man, listening to our interview, reacted with vigor against this ignorance and corrected the girl saying that Lhasa was Tibetan. He clearly showed annoyance and irritation in front of such ignorance. (see: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xd94rf_les-sabots-roses-du-bouddha-webdoc_news)

The anti-Chinese aspect of the memorial strategy would never accuse Chinese people or China as a nation, but would blame the Chinese government. Most writings related to Chinese praying would specify the “Chinese government” like in the film, I mentioned above “Les sabots roses du Buddha” (see: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xd94rf_les-sabots-roses-du-bouddha-webdoc_news). Surprisingly, this manipulation used a caricature set of “Tibetanness” in opposition and contrast with the Chinese identity. This interpretation was a shared view among the Diaspora. Anti-Chinese discourse is positively received by diasporic Tibetans, who are evidently accepting the game of a “manipulated memory”. In this strategy, most Tibetans interviewed over the years would list the interests of the Chinese government in Tibet and present themselves as victims of the Chinese giant appetite and greed over their land. These interests are objective I will list them in order to appreciate the manipulated dimension of the expression of that memory.

Excess of memory, manipulated memory

As mentioned in the first chapter Chinese interests in Tibet range from security to economic, political, and internal stability. All of the aspects mentioned in “The Humanitarian Crises and International Relations” (Le Houérou, 2014) are the objectives of the Chinese arguments to keep Tibet under its domination. What could be considered as an “abusive memory” or as “too much memory” and excess of memory” is the repetitive manners used by the government to instrumentalise Tibetan anger and bitterness against the Chinese government. The distinction between the Chinese Government and the Chinese people is an orientation given by the TGE. The Dalai Lama regularly repeats that the Chinese are *good* people who deserve a better government. The message is clearly political. Tibetan diaspora’s anger against the Chinese government is very alive and common in all Tibetan settlements. In this regard, Majnu Ka Tilla, or other places in India, express the same very intense anti-Chinese resentment. I collected no

positive appraisal of the Chinese politics in Tibet among the diaspora in India. Critical views of Chinese predation are a common and shared belief. This view relies on the objectives of the Chinese economic activities in Tibet, but is also expressed in obsessive manners with a certain infatuation. Critical views of the Chinese government actions serve as a transformative event that produced and reinforce memories of pain, loss, and collective injury. There is a museum of the Chinese invasion in Dharamsala, I used some images from these visual archives in the film I shot in 2008 (see: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xd94rf_les-sabots-roses-du-bouddha-webdoc_news). All of these visual archives stress the wounds, sufferings, devastation, and death. How the Tibetan people have lost everything: land, honor, pride, and identity.

These images are real and nothing is false, the manipulation is based on a morbid delight of remembering the Chinese crimes, be they war crimes, religious crimes, or memory crimes (*memoricide*). It is in the abusive process of repetition that the manipulation could be interpreted. As an intoxication of anti-Chinese souvenirs, during festivities and these repeated remembrances of painful memories related to Chinese stealing a free and holy Tibet also leads to a simplification, jumble, and amalgam. Like the theme of a “Chinese Evil... a recurring issue over-saturating the cultural world of the diaspora in Delhi. In Majnu Ka Tilla, the anti-Chinese discourse is represented everywhere, even on the walls fully representing political posters of Tibetan important events.

With the proliferation of burnt martyrs since 2009, the diaspora continuously celebrates the elements who set themselves alight as a protest against China. Unfortunately, I witnessed the event when Jamphel Yeshe set himself on fire with a bottle of fuel. One hundred and forty-five Tibetans have *self-immolated* in Tibet and China since February 27, 2009. An exhaustive list is available indicating the age and curricula martyrs of the Tibetan cause (International Campaign for Tibet). These self-immolations are expressing the protest against Chinese policy.



Figure 26 - Picture of Jamphel Yeshe posted on Social Media.

It would be senseless not to take stock of the importance of these resistance strategies and to acknowledge the ways these tragedies echo among the diaspora. The memory of Jamphel Yeshe is still very painful in Majnu Ka Tilla and regularly ceremonies are organized to pray for the martyrs. This tells us that the struggle for independence is desperate: it is a deep injury for the Tibetans and hurts the collective body of the diaspora. I witnessed and filmed numerous ceremonies related to the self immolation in Majnu Ka Tilla's temple. During these memorial ceremonies the temple was decorated with huge portraits of the Tibetan martyrs. Anniversaries were fully followed by the diaspora and have special holy dates. The whole colony would gather, pray together, and light candles at night. During these moments of intense emotion, many Tibetans confessed that they were worried because most of the martyrs were young and successful and they also expressed deep worries related to the rise of the women's self-immolations. In Tibet, most of the martyrs were young monks, but since 2012 the number of nuns increased, and this was viewed as a new and disturbing development by the informants.

These events are highly significant and should not be neglected, given their significance to the overall memorial strategies of the TGE. I could defend the hypothesis that too much memory stresses collective wounds nourishes the anti-Chinese *mania* that hurts the diaspora. These developments drive the most sensitive elements to tragically suicides which are terribly hurting the diaspora driving refugees in what Ricoeur identified as a "*deficit critique*" (*critical deficiency*) (Ricoeur, 2000: 96) connected to a traumatic memory. The instrumentality of such dreadful events is also a strategy for keeping the diaspora in a unified position of injustice. Keeping a state of anger that could endanger the Tibetan religious identity. Suicides are not religiously acknowledged and violence is also condemned by the Buddhist vision of life. Self

violence is still considered as violence and threatening the non-violent Tibetan philosophy, creating a new *aggressive ideology*. In my view, these suicides express a more politicized struggle and could transform from a non-violent struggle into an enraged form of a struggle putting at risk the preservation of the cultural and religious traditions.

In that perspective, memory is not disconnected from reality and the past is always in interaction with the present. Recalling memories and forgetting others are part of what could be called a *manipulated memory* (Ricoeur, 2000: 82). For instance, the good and positive actions of the Chinese people (not government) are very rarely mentioned. The fact that the Tibetan economy and incomes have increased exponentially and the Chinese effort to offer a profitable development is never mentioned, thus retaining the memory of the bad and neglecting the positive side.

Tibetan identity is a challenge for memorial strategy

Identity is closely linked to memory. Identity is the “guardian” of memory. Individual memories could be defined as the foundation for a collective identity. Anniversaries, public Tibetan holidays, religious key festivals are all related to identity and memory. Tibetans are reminded that their traditions are pillars of the Tibetan identity. This identity is the product of a “manipulated memory”, because one was forced to admit the existence of a political memorial dramatization, a selection of souvenirs and *mise en scène* (staging). From this perspective, all collective dates, when heavily oriented, become a manifestation of this manipulation.

To my view, recalling the anti-Chinese memories only in the opposition of the Tibetan memories before 1959 was a political and efficient strategy. The whole colony would adopt and share this date as a key date to remember the loss of their beloved land. In this way, 1959 was the turning point in the memory, history, and identity of Tibet. The Tibetan government (TGE) strategy was very efficient to create a united Tibet. Before 1959, the country was divided and the provinces of Tibet had a hierarchy of importance politically.

The collections of important dates are called “memorable days” by the diaspora. At a 2016 conference in Delhi, Meenakshi Thapan stressed that behind the economic success of the Tibetans in India was a wide collective sense of despair related to the loss of the nation. Another date was also related to this politically conscious reminder of the 2008 uprising in Lhasa. The

political leaders of the community dramatized this historical moment by organizing monthly demonstrations in Majnu Ka Tilla. Each takes place in front of the temple at the centre of the Tibetan colony. On the 5th of March, 2016, the whole colony participated in a silent walk along the colony to honor the memory of a very young boy who immolated himself two days before in Tibet. A young Tibetan monk died the same week after setting himself on fire in the Sichuan Province to protest against China. The monk, Kalsang Wangdu, 18, set himself on fire on Monday the 3rd of March, according to Free Tibet, a group based in London. On the same day, a 16-year-old Tibetan student, Dorjee Tsering, committed the same act in Dehradun, in a refugee camp in India, while shouting “Free Tibet”. He survived and was in a hospital in New Delhi. During the ceremony, different refugees explained that it was important to be visible and that the Indian media would notice the event and mention it. There was a desperate desire to be visible and that was the reason they walked with candles during the night in the colony and through the Indian neighborhood of Punjabi Basti. This prompted people to ask what had happened, and to draw attention to the event. There is a real fear not to be noticed and to be neglected as a community with a political project to return to their country. “Free Tibet” is the main slogan used during these protests. What is important to stress is that most demonstrations organized by the TGE are fully followed and I did not find any refugee contradicting or criticizing this kind of action. On the contrary, as I mentioned above, refugees would assure the importance of being seen. This what illustrates the “manipulated memory” in that it emphasizes Tibetan suffering for the sake of independence, and amplifies the desperate act related to Tibetan freedom.

The imagined community and idealized memory

A manipulated memory is connected with an idealized Tibet and the myth of a unitary Tibet. Before 1959, Tibetan society was highly hierarchical and “feudal”. Traditional chiefs were given political and social power. These Tibetan leaders were in regional competition and when the Tibetan exile took place in India, these leaders acted as a catalyst that minimized the distinctions among different communities (Julien Claret-Marel, 2012: 252). As stated in Claret-Marel’s PhD dissertation, in the stage of exile, at the beginning of the Tibetan arrival to India, these tribal leaders were useful in following the Dalai Lama orientations and gathering the Tibetan refugees together. In exile, the TGE strove to avoid the marginalization of the people

from the Amdo province, who were 5 percent of the refugees and from the Kham province (25%) trying to assimilate the three Buddhist schools of Sakya, Nyingma and Kagyu and not forgetting the Bön religion. In exile, local and religious rivalries could provoke the fragmentation of the Tibetan community. As a result, the TGE followed a memorial strategy in creating a unitary Tibetan identity to overstep the divisions. According to Claret-Marel this strategy is set up by the Dalai Lama himself. Most of the Tibetans who followed the Dalai Lama in 1959 came from the Lhasa province in Tibet (65 to 70% of the refugees were originally from Lhasa). The Tibetans who belonged to the Lhasa region had a sense of superiority that I observed during the field research, especially in front of the Tibetans from Khampa or Amdo, who were considered as “backward” peasants. City dwellers from Lhasa considered themselves as highly civilized compared to people from Amdo and nomads. The Dalai Lama was aware of these risks to the community in exile and, thus, concentrated on unifying the refugees with democratic elections in Bodhgaya in February 1960. The Dalai Lama felt the necessity to organize elections in each refugee camp. There are 13 main camps and one institutional gathering called *Tsokpa* (*Tsokpa* means 13 and *Chosum* is an association) that lead the camps. Each camp has a chief. Claret-Marel explains in his research that the *Tsokpa Chosum* continuously criticized the strategy of cohesion and homogeneity of assimilating regional difference into a centralized institution denying plural Tibetan traditions. In that perspective, the idea of a united Tibet is a *political fabric* and a calculated organization to create an ethnic cohesion that did not systematically exist before.

The TGE stageplay of holidays

Tibetan holidays are organized by the TGE. The major celebration is Losar during the first month of the lunar calendar. The celebration of Losar predates Buddhism in Tibet and can be traced back to the pre-Buddhist Bön period. In this early Bön tradition, every winter, a spiritual ceremony was held, in which people offered large quantities of incense to the local spirits, deities and protectors' (Tibetan: *chos skyong*; Sanskrit: *dharmapalas*). This religious festival originated during the reign of Pude Gungyal, the ninth emperor of Tibet.

Losar (Tibetan *lo-gsar*) is the Tibetan word for "new year". *Lo* refers to "year, age" and *gsar* is related to "new, fresh". The Losar is an important holiday in Bhutan and Nepal also. Losar is celebrated for 15 days, with the main celebrations in the first three days. On the first day of Losar, a beverage called *changkol* is made from *chhaang* (Tibetan beer). The second day of Losar is known as King's Losar (*gyalpo losar*). Losar is traditionally preceded by the five-day practice of Vajrakilaya. Losar occurs near or on the same day as the Chinese New Year and the Mongolian New Year, but the traditions of Losar are unique to Tibet, and predate both Indian and Chinese influences. Originally, ancient celebrations of Losar occurred solely on the winter solstice, and were only moved to coincide with the Chinese and Mongolian New Year by a leader of the Gelug school of Buddhism.

The anniversary of the Nobel Peace Prize that was granted to the Dalai Lama has also become a very important date. It is classified like the second most crucial moment after Losar in Majnu Ka Tilla. The Dalai Lama, the exiled religious and the political leader of Tibet, was named the 1989 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his nonviolent campaign after nearly 40 years to end China's domination of his homeland. The Norwegian Nobel Committee reckoned that the 54-year-old Tibetan Buddhist leader, who fled to India in 1959 after an abortive uprising against Chinese rule in which thousands of people were killed, was being recognized because he "consistently has opposed the use of violence" in his campaign. (*Rule, 6 Oct 1989*).

The third date in the list is also related to the Dalai Lama and it concerns the **Dalai Lama's birthday** which falls on 6th July. The following pictures were taken in 2011 by one of my students who became a photographer for the TGE. His pictures were very interesting, because they were taken from the inside as a Tibetan-appointed photographer of the Dalai Lama. For his anniversary a very huge gathering is organized every year and free meals are distributed to all Tibetans. I was invited to Dharamsala for such an event and it was evident that this date was a crucial gathering for the Tibetans to express their religious beliefs and the essence of their identity and originality being all together behind the figure of the Dalai Lama.

The principal dates of the birth and death of Buddha, the fourth month, referred to as Sakadawa are also very important holidays to the community. It is said to be the most important holiday, according to my informants in Majnu Ka Tilla.



Figure 27 - Dalai Lama's birthday in Dharamsala, 6th of July 2011. Photo Credit: Nyma.



Figure 28 - Dalai Lama's birthday in Dharamsala. Photo Credit: Nyma.



Figure 29- Dalai Lama's birthday in Dharamsala. Photo Credit: Nyma.

The pictures, taken by Nyma, show an extreme sense of unity in the crowd seated together around the spiritual leader. This solidarity and sense of collective belonging is fundamental to understand how memories can constitute a group's identity and the myriad of interconnections between an organized agenda and a fabricated memory.

Tsethar (Life release) is a traditional Buddhist practice of saving the lives of beings that were destined for slaughter. This ritual is performed by all schools of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana. "Tsethar" is another very remarkable moment. Tibetan refugees gather for special prayers (they use the Indian word, *Puja*) inside the temple of the colony - a central point and relevant religious spot. They eat only vegetables and practice what is referred to as *Daan* (alms-giving), saving animals from death. In Majnu Ka Tilla, refugees collectively buy hundreds of chicken or fish to save their life. I observed this ceremony, accompanying the refugees to the market in order to free animals. In Tibet, yak, sheeps, goats, and chickens are saved from slaughter. In Majnu Ka Tilla, informants argued that

there was not enough space in New Delhi urban settings to buy and keep big animals, so they mainly release fish they buy on the banks of Yamuna River or birds.

The reasons that one may release animals in ceremony are varied. By releasing animals, one can prevent rebirth under unfavorable conditions, prolong life, increase wealth, prevent unfavorable astrological conditions or protect a revered lama. Animals can also be set free out of gratitude for their services.



Figure 30 - Picture taken on first April 2017 in Majnu Ka Tilla. The butcher refused to be in the picture demonstrating that there is still a notion of sin related to the trade of meat.

Photo Credit: Fabienne le Houérou.

Respect for all aspects of life is fundamental to interpret this ritual. There is a religious taboo related to meat consumption. In most Tibetan settlements, butcher shops are hidden in narrow alleys and small discrete places. The daily religious conflict between eating meat and the ideal of non-violence is solved for the Tibetan in Dharamsala by leaving the slaughtering to the Muslim butchers, contrary to Majnu Ka Tilla where Tibetans directly sell meat. The rise of hotels, restaurants, and the influx of tourists to the colony have consequently changed the paradoxical relation and meat taboo. Eating meat is considered as a sin by interviewed nuns and monks, but I witnessed many moments when they would hide themselves to buy and eat meat in 2008. The

buffalo meat was prepared in different dishes and the Indians from Punjabi Basti would also be fond of buffalo meat and discreetly come to the Tibetan colony to buy it, with a sense of guilt.

Tsethar is thus connected to the religious compassion for all living creatures. Owners of a *Tsethar* animal are considered pious people and enjoy a good reputation. *Tsethar* is possible at any time, but it is more appreciated during Losar. To practice *Tsethar* during special days (in the Buddhist calendar) will increase the positive karmic effect. In Tibet, animals are chosen for their physical attributes according to precise lists. Robust health or striking beauty increases the chance for an animal to be saved. In India, especially in Majnu Ka Tilla, Tibetan refugees save small animals, because the urban setting in New Delhi does not allow sufficient space to keep large animals, according to an informant (Interview in December 2017, through social networks). Should the “wrong” animal be chosen, in the worst case scenario an angry god may withdraw his favor from the benefactor. According to Amy Heller, *tsethar* is a thorn in the side of modern planners of the Tibetan nomadic economy. About 8-10 percent of the herd actually consists of ritually-free animals that graze on the sparse pastures and have no economic value (Dvadaid, 2016).

There is a tight connection between memory, religious identity, and Tibetanness. To be a Tibetan is to adhere the Tibetan calendar. Even Indian shops inside *Majnu Ka Tilla* respect the Tibetan holy days or special days like the anniversary of the date when the Dalai Lama received the Nobel Prize. Indian shops inside the colony close during the days that are considered off by the TGE. It suggests that the Tibetan memory is tightly driven, oriented, and controlled by the government in exile. It gives the diaspora a unique sense of unity, etiquette, and presence. The consequences of respecting the same calendar ensure a consistent temporal rhythm that is purely Tibetan keeping the communal bonds across different geographic locations. On many occasions, I was invited to collective holy days, and the high level of organization was apparent. The distribution of food or drinks was provided by the controlling committee and organizational group representing the TGE. It was always impressive to observe how these events were followed and the high level of collective participation.

One of my hypotheses was that this high level of unity was a major factor that explained the success of the Tibetans in India. Economic prosperity, but also social achievement. After

studying many exiled communities in Egypt and Sudan, comparing the Tibetan diaspora to other communities (Eritreans, Ethiopians, Sudanese) on which I made many ethnographic films, I could observe a deep integration in India as a very good economic and social assimilation. One of the main elements of this situation stands in the meticulous and extremely methodical organization of the government in exile, which has no comparable body in other parts of the world. In Dharamsala, the TGE has its own buildings and administration, organizing the whole life of the Tibetans in India. The way the elections were organized in every corner of every Tibetan settlement in 2011 was a model of participatory democracy in this governance. It is clearly a form of empowerment for the Tibetan diaspora with clearly democratically-designed leaders who are in direct dialogue with Indian authorities. In that way, the political body of the diaspora also acts in coherence with a protective self-governance. This essential characteristic is very unique compared to other African diaspora communities observed across the world. The others proved much more disorderly and submitted to the decisions of the host country in the absence of a high political leader to advocate on their behalf. This is to highlight -at the end- the very important role and influence of the Dalai Lama and worldly aura and respect of this spiritual figure.

Chapter IV Memories in Dharamsala

Macleod Ganj-from a gender perspective

Abstract: This chapter is based on field research and ethnographic filming in the Macleod Ganj neighborhood of Dharamsala in 2008. Tibetan refugees settled in Macleod Ganj when they arrived in India with the Dalai Lama. Macleod Ganj hosts the principal Tibetan institutions in exile and thus the spatial dynamic of the site offers a useful comparison with Maju Ka Tilla. The area appears as an icon of global Buddhism and serves as a kind of open-air museum of Tibetan cultural traditions. After stressing the commercial dynamic of Tibetan women and competition with the Indian merchants I stress the persecutions of the Tibetan political refugees in China and the ways the Buddhist clergy continues to be targeted. I also foreground gender dynamics in this chapter. This aspect will also be discussed through an ethnographic film on a Tibetan nun in Dharamsala directed by the author in 2008. The educational political strategy related to Tibetan education will be explored as the main goal of the Dalai Lama in reaction to what he considers to be a Chinese cultural genocide in Tibet. I conclude with a discussion of the cultural differences between Dharamsala and Majnu Ka Tilla.

Keywords: Dharamasala, Macleod Ganj, Himalaya, Made in Tibet, Les sabots roses du Bouddha, Tibetan culture, refugee business, racism, nuns, clergy, gender roles, Chinese police, meditation, Dalai Lama and empowerment of women, cultural capital of Tibetan refugees in India.

The Macleod Ganj neighborhood, now an epicenter of Buddhism in India was named after Sir Donald Friell McLeod, a British Lieutenant Governor of Punjab. *Ganj* is a common Hindi-Urdu suffix for "neighborhood". McLeod Ganj is a suburb of Dharamsala in the district of Kangra in Himachal Pradesh. It stands in the Himalayan Range at an average elevation of 2,082 meters. Tibetan refugees name it *Little Lhasa* or *Dhasa*, short for Dharamsala. The Tibetan government in exile is headquartered in McLeod Ganj.

The location was annexed by the British after the Second Anglo-Sikh War and became a special place for the troops stationed at Kangra. During the colonization in India, the town was a hill station where the British spent hot summers. Dharamsala became the administrative capital of Kangra district in 1852. By 1855 it had two important places of civilian settlement, McLeod Ganj and Forsyth Ganj, named after a Divisional Commissioner. In 1860, the 66th Gurkha Light Infantry, later renamed the historic 1st Gurkha Rifles, moved to Dharamsala. Gurkha paltan villages were established nearby and the Gurkhas patronized the ancient Shiva temple of Bhagsunath.

Lord Elgin, the British Viceroy of India (1862–63), selected the place for being the summer capital of India. He died in Dharamsala on 20 November 1863 and was buried in St. John, in the Wilderness at Forsyth Ganj, just below McLeod Ganj.

Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama escaped Chinese occupation and fled to India in 1959. The Indian Government offered him refuge in Dharamsala, where he set up the Government of Tibet in exile in 1960. McLeod Ganj became the official residence of the 14th Dalai Lama and hosted many Buddhist monasteries and thousands of Tibetan refugees. McLeod Ganj became an important tourist and pilgrimage destination over the years. The population has grown since the sixties. In 2008, there were no liquor houses when I first arrived. In 2011, I counted 11 wine bars. Tourists and pilgrims are mixed in a very cosmopolitan way with the wish to meet the Dalai Lama. McLeod Ganj is a symbol of diversity and a globalized version of Buddhism. The Dalai Lama is the most important icon of this globalized Buddhism. He is an icon of compassion and non-violence that any passenger or visitor in McLeod Ganj dreams to meet or to pass by.

According to my interviews in 2008, the Tibetan authorities estimated that the Tibetan refugees numbered around 6,000 in McLeod Ganj and that among them the nuns and monks were approximately 20 percent of the exiled population. When I directed the ethnographic film “Les sabots roses du Bouddha”, there were almost 2,000 monks and nuns. An important wave of refugees came after the Lhasa uprising. The Chinese police targeted the Buddhist religious clergy. I conducted research in Dharamsala with the Tibetan prisoners’ association named Gu Shu Sum and taught as a volunteer with this NGO in October 2008.



Figure 31 - General view of McLeod Ganj: residence of the Dalai Lama where 6,000 Tibetan refugees in exile are living. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Houérou, 2008.

This first field research was motivated by a long-standing research program in Egypt and Sudan that led to the production of the film “Voices from Darfur” in 2006. The conditions of the Darfur refugees in Egypt was so desperate (refugees were killed in Cairo in the centre of the capital in front of UNHCR office in 2005) that I intended to explore places in the world where refugees were welcomed and treated well. Before coming to India, my academic question was: “*where were refugees welcomed and treated well?*” The answer was India. Tanka Subba’s work on Tibetan refugees in India suggests that they are the most successful refugees in the world economically and socially. Traditionally, forced migration studies stressed the miserable conditions of the migrants in host countries. I tried to understand the reason why Tibetan refugees in India were considered, by forced migrations scholars and aid workers, the “happiest refugees in the world”.

It was important to seize the keys to the success when reaching McLeod Ganj in 2008. Since the arrival of the Dalai Lama in the late fifties, the place became a key site for international Buddhism and could be considered as one of the most important locations for a globalized Buddhism. In 2008, when I first came and later on in 2011 and 2013, the place was highly concentrated with hippies from the West and the New Age tourists seeking a spiritual leader and voice in a non-violence philosophy. In McLeod Ganj, you could cross European monks dressed in red like Tibetan monks, adventurers, Himalayan lovers of mountains and trekkers, people searching for inner peace like Israeli ex-soldiers on holidays and overwhelmed by their wars with Palestine. The diversity is social evidence that contributes to the globalized charm of the Himalayan station. A very amazing crowd coexists and meets in special yoga, kitchen, massages

or dancing classes where tourists from the whole world meet and discuss how genius and enlightened is his holiness the “Dalai Lama”.

Coexisting worlds of tourists from different continents share some Buddhist values, like non-violence and compassion towards all sentient creatures. Interstitial spaces of coexistence, shared living, and dialogue with each other and with Tibetan values and Tibetan culture, such as the religious arts (music and paintings).



Figure 32 - The new generation born in India, Dharamsala 2008. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Hou  rou.

Mcleod Ganj is a large Tibetan market and business place of handicrafts and artistic products. Every item is signed with a national emblematic stamp of “Made in Tibet”. Tourists visit to support the Tibetan struggle and would rather buy objects made in Tibet as a clear customer support for a pro-Tibetan attitude. Evidently, the refugees make a singular profit from this attitude. Sometimes a kind of conflict from commercial rivalry between traders, especially Kashmiri Traders, occurs from the sale of specialized woolen handcraft like shawls. Kashmiri traders explained in different interviews that they would put the stamp, “Made in Tibet”, even if the shawl was made in Kashmir, because the Tibetan mark was a positive commercial value. In a 2008 interview for “*Les sabots roses du Bouddha*”, Mrs. Tsering, the leader of the Tibetan Women Association, explained that Tibetans were the object of social and commercial jealousy

by local traders. While she was buying a shawl, she asked in detail in a shop what she wanted to buy and the shop keeper “went mad” and told her “You copied our talent and our Indian experience and now you want to give us lessons!”



Figure 33 - Table 33- Welcoming the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Hou rou, 2008.

Mcleod Ganj could be regarded as an icon of Tibetan culture or Tibetan museum. Tibetan religious objects (mandala, prayer wheels, and thankas) and other ordinary products like wool knitwear (jumpers, pullovers, sweaters) are prominently displayed in shops and worn by all residents. Tibetans became the specialist of knitwear in a few decades in India. Streets in Mcleod Ganj were fully exposed to such articles and different necklaces made of turquoise or Buddhist rosaries. The route between the centre of Macleod Ganj to the Dalai Lama palace and temple is a string of street sellers and a real market was genuinely created along the main road.



Figure 34 - Temple Road, Macleod Ganj. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Hou rou, 2008.

In the 2008 film, I insisted on focusing on the commercial side of a refugee business that claimed to be 100 percent Tibetan. I recognized the significance of such label, and considered it as much a political and religious stamp as much as it was for economic benefit.

The originality of the Tibetan business strategy was to use their refugee status for commercial success. Contrary to other exiled communities in the world, their identity as refugees was positively used for business purposes. I observed that refugees were most of the time victims of their identity as “beggars” in such places as Egypt. Refugees are cast as parasites in host countries or are viewed with skepticism and ire (Le Houérou, 2004, 2005, 2006). The situation for Tibetan refugees in India contrasted sharply to that found in the Middle East. In India, Tibetan refugees were able to transform their handicap into a source of income and capital that traded on their marginality as a resource.

The street sellers included a number of isolated mothers, like Yenshi and Tushi, both of whom interviewed in 2008. They arrived in Dharamsala from Tibet in 2004. Tushi’s husband was killed and tortured by Chinese police. Women in the community were clearly a large demographic that contributed to the economic and social well-being of their families. I found Tibetan women entrepreneurs opening a business everywhere in India. Even in Shillong, the most important shopping centre, Tibetan women played an important role as sellers, shop owners, and restaurant owners. Tibetan women were present in all tourist sites; there was even a Tibetan restaurant in the Thar Desert in Rajasthan. I was surprised by the commercial boldness, audacity, and entrepreneurial spirit of the women of the diaspora. The 2008 film focused on the gender roles with special consideration for women among the Tibetan diaspora. They stressed how dynamic and autonomous they were compared to Indian women. Tibetan women organized social organizations and women’s associations all around India. I noticed the importance of these organizations when filming “*Angu a woman on the Edge*” (2011). In New Delhi, the elected director explained how the whole colony took care of Angu’s child, because she was considered a sick, miserable, and abusive mother. However, the women’s association eventually decided to take the baby away from Angu and put the little girl in an orphanage house in Dharamsala (See “*Angu a woman on the edge*”). The association also decided to ask the Indian police to take Osmond, the African partner of Angu, to jail, because he beat her very violently. In observing the different association’s tasks and activities, I could grasp their dominance and reputation among the diaspora. No Tibetan male leader would oppose their actions directly. They are widely respected, and it was apparent that Angu held them in

high regard during a meeting in which all of the women gathered to discuss what to do with Angu and Osmond. The couple fought and the women discussed different solutions to stop the violence.

The women cited the racism they faced in India. India is heaven for the Tibetan refugees, but it is not devoid of racism. Discrimination is very often related to commercial jealousy and the great benefits Tibetans are making all over India. For instance, the press tends to stress conflicts between Indian shop keepers and the Tibetans in Dharamsala.

In 2014, the *Tibet Telegraph* stressed that Tibetans were overwhelmed by racial discrimination:

We are tired of the racial hatred, envy and jealousy of the local Gaddis. We are sick of being insulted, humiliated, molested, assaulted, and bullied by Gaddi mobs everyday in restaurants, stores, schools, workplace, hospitals, streets, buses, cabs and homes simply because we are stateless. We are sick of CTA's silence on this. We are sick of being silenced on this ethnic persecution that is violating our basic human rights. We don't want to be told to act timidly and submissively simply because we are "Refugees" or Buddhists or Tibetans. We are human beings first! We don't want to be reminded of the loss of our country – a perfect excuse for the Gaddis to trample upon us in any way they want any time anywhere. Independence comes and goes, but humanity, under all circumstances, must remain. Humble and peaceful we are, arrogant and violent we are not. We have no communal clashes with the Brahmins, Jats, Sikhs and Rajput communities in Dharamsala. In any case, if the same persecution regardless of whether the nature is political or racial continues in any place in exile, we have no choice but to leave for a better, safer place to live in peace, a place where we can be stateless and yet enjoy basic human dignity.

The Central position of the nuns among the diaspora

As mentioned the above, religious actors were targeted by Chinese police, because they were cast as agents of resistance to the government's culture, policy and philosophical approach. Too much Buddhist fervor is not tolerated in Tibet. In interviews, nuns confessed during that they had no choice but to escape to Dharamsala to fully live their spiritual destiny and accomplish their long-term religious schooling and training. Choekey, one such nun I interviewed, admitted that after 10 years of training in philosophy, she still was not excellent philosopher (Le Houérou, 2008).

Unlike the Western Philosophy since the Enlightenment, there is no rigid separation between religion and philosophy in Tibetan thought. In the ethnographic film “Les sabots roses du Bouddha” I showed philosophy training of monks in a temple. The distinctive form of Tibetan debate (*rtsod pa*) plays an important part of philosophical investigation in the Tibetan intellectual communities. It is central in the Gelug sect, in particular those earning their *kenpo* (mkhan po) degrees, though it is also practiced in other sects to varying degrees. The practice involves a seated defender (*dam bca' ba*) and a standing challenger (*rigs lam pa*). The roles are quite different; the defender must assert a thesis and attempts to defend its truth. The challenger, however, asks questions in an attempt to get the defender to accept statements that are contradictory (for example, both “all colors are white” and “there is a color that is red”) or absurd (for example, “the color of a white religious conch shell is red”). The challenger is not held responsible for the truth content of the questions; like someone raising an objection at a lecture, the challenger does not have to assert any thesis, but only aims to show that the defender is mistaken (Tibetan Philosophy).”

This exercise is almost impossible to practice in Tibet under China. Thus, the religious actors have expressed a real attachment to the (*rtsod pa*) “debate”. In 2008, according to the Tibetan authorities, they were 6,000 Tibetan refugees in Dharamsala. Before 2008, almost 3,000 refugees came to Dharamsala each year. Since 2008, the number of refugees slowed down, because the Lhasa uprising led to strict control of the frontiers by Chinese authorities.

I interviewed many nuns who were students in Dharamsala. Many were tortured after the 2008 uprising. Several admitted that being a nun was not as socially honorable as being a monk or a

lama. Women's spirituality is less dignified than a man's religiosity. One informant confessed that being a nun and praying so much was probably the best way to be reincarnated in a man in her next life (Le Houérou, 2008). I observed that there was no equality in the spiritual and religious hierarchy between males and females. Important religious actors, great reincarnated tulkus are always men. The very important spiritual women are always related to the Dalai Lama's family (there is worship with the Dalai Lama's mother). Nuns are viewed as running away from feminine tasks and labor in the family; there is an assumption of escaping feminine responsibilities to find an easier road in life as a nun. They were not as respected as their male colleagues and were never invited to act publicly in great religious festivals like Sakya or Gelup. Females would remain in the shadow of the male domination and each nunnery was administered by a monk.



Figure 35 - In Mcleod Ganj, many isolated nuns were interviewed. Isolated and aged women were also almost begging (which is very badly judged by the Tibetans) I also observed the social contempt and disdain for them. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Houérou, 2008.

During volunteer classes in Mcleod Ganj in 2008, I met Tsering Choekey, who became the main character of one of my films.



Figure 36 - Tsering Choekey. During the shooting of the ethnographic film. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Hou rou, 2008.

On the roof of the NGO, Gu Shu Sum was one of my English students. She had a black eye and when I interviewed her, the first thing she mentioned was: “Did you see what the Chinese police had done to me?” Then she laughed and added: “I am kidding you. The black eye is the consequence of cooking with a big spoon that went into my eye!”

Tsering narrated her life story for ten days and told me the hard times for the Buddhist clergy under Chinese rule. Destruction of monasteries and insults of the religious actors were daily occurrences in Tibet. Like most of the students in my class, she was jailed in 2008 after the Lhasa uprising. My class started just after the Lhasa uprising. As a result, most of the interviewed subjects escaped persecution.



Figure 37 - Yenshen, Dharamsala, 2008, *Les sabots roses du Bouddha*

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xd94rf_les-sabots-roses-du-bouddha-webdoc_news

Gu Shu Sum students confessed that in jail or they became “impure” by the treatment they had in prison. When Yenshen arrived in McLeod Ganj, she started to change. She would let her hair grow freely and stop to shave her head. She also started to wear fashion sweaters, but always choose the garnet religious Tibetan color. Sexual torture in prison was difficult to mention and several students in Gu Shu Sum admitted that they were in shock for many months after Lhasa events. In McLeod Ganj, interviews in 2008 were almost post-traumatic experiences PST. Classes ended very frequently by bursting into tears. Past field research in the exiled communities of Sudanese refugees in Egypt became very useful for serving as a confidante for such painful stories. In my class, one young Tibetan joined the group to tell us that “in order to forget Chinese police, he needs to be the father of ten children, 5 warriors to fight the Chinese out of Tibet and five others to pray for the Chinese to be out of Tibet.” He earned the nickname “Ten Children”. Three years later he became the photographer of the Dalai Lama (2011) and offered the pictures of the Dalai Lama’s birthday in 2011 (see chapter III). Nyma was jailed in 2008, because he demonstrated in the streets of Lhasa and shouted, “long life to the Dalai Lama”.

“The Chinese police forbade us to love the Dalai Lama, but we will always love him!”

I was surprised by the emotional intelligence of the students in Gu Shu Sum. They laughed, they cried, and they offered a window into their feelings without any restrictions. Fully accepting the pain and using a humoristic way to tell the worst experiences. I was also very impressed by the love they all expressed for the Dalai Lama. They would cry when talking about him, knowing that his health was vulnerable and that he was just operated on in Delhi. In October 2008, in Dharamsala the whole population waited for him to return from the hospital in Delhi and expressed their concern. They started to cry just mentioning his name. Tibetan refugees and Western tourists expressed the same level of compassion for the Dalai Lama. He came to embody Tibet itself. He is a God, a leader and represents their struggle. When he is sick, the whole diaspora feels sad. This compassion was the common bond shared by the refugees and the tourists in McLeod Ganj. Students rely upon this idea for strength to persevere and the teachings in Gu Shu Sum are named “Compassion in Action”. It could be applied as a Buddhist philosophical concept. I often felt perplexed by the intense emotion connected to the Dalai Lama.

For example, students repaired the main road leading to his palace in order to honor him in McLeod Ganj. Similarly, they spent hours drawing a welcome mandala. It's an impermanent tool of meditation to help concentration through visualization.



Figure 38 - Mandala on the roof of the Tibetan archives, Dharamsala. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Houérou, 2008.

“Killing animals is a sin, even the smallest. To meditate is to share, with the rest of the world, respect for any kind of life.”

In McLeod Ganj, dogs, monkeys are the lords of the universe fed for free and respected. The day after, the conversation focused on meditation. All students meditated for nearly one hour a day. Choeky confirmed that it was positive “for blood circulation”. Yenshen nodded in agreement, then explained that the Tibetan medicine was based on the virtue of meditation for benefiting mental serenity and solace. She continued in detail about all the positive aspects of meditation for the human body and soul. Body and environment are connected in pacifying mental insecurity through mediation. Meditation has some positive effects on the body. She explained: “In prison, it was essential to meditate in order not to collapse”. Ten Children approved and added: “meditating is resisting to China”. In this view, meditating is a political and religious act in front of the Chinese atheism and oppression. This conversation about the virtues of meditation was confirmed by a woman doctor in McLeod Ganj directing a private clinic. Dr. Lobsang

explained: “*Meditation is fundamental for healing and curing it turns a black, negative energy into a white fresh and positive energy* (Dharamsala, 2008).”

Dr. Lobsang’s assistant pointed out that there was a tradition of very important female doctors in Tibetan medicine. The mother of Dr. Lobsang was also a very well-known doctor. She came to India in exile 1959 and founded a private clinic in McLeod Ganj. Tibetan traditional plant pills of all colors that cure many diseases were kept in a glass box. Certain jobs and occupations were very honorable for women, such as nurse, teacher, or doctor while others were less respected and tolerated like street-sellers.



Figure 39 - Dr. Dolma, Dharamsala, 2008. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Houérou.

Nuns, artists, and politicians were viewed as less valuable positions for women among the diaspora. They were less respected by the men. Among the diaspora there was a clear view of what was suitable or not for a woman. Social roles were expressed during the interviews. Political and religious commitment was not considered well connected to feminine skills. Healing and curing were perceived as more feminine roles. I focused on gender identification and professional identity in the “Sabots roses du Buddha”, but also in a second film explored the notion of “hybridity” , intermixing and the rejection of Angu, a marginal woman object of disdain, because she lived with an African partner out of marriage. One of my informants

explained that no Tibetan man could ever take Angu as a partner after she had been with an African man.

In exile, Tibetan women changed traditional roles according to the Director of the women's association in Dharamsala. Dr. Tsering stressed the impact of the Dalai Lama on gender issues. The Dalai Lama chose a female doctor and she considered that this was a fundamental move in recognizing women's skills and social importance. Dr. Tsering also cited with a touch of humour that the Dalai Lama said in Milan in 2006: his successor could be a woman provoking a whole "revolution" among the clergy and the diaspora in general (See : *Les sabots roses du Bouddha*). She underlined that in the religious texts, nothing forbade a woman from becoming the Dalai-Lama. She also explained that the Dalai Lama was an icon of tradition and a very important agent of change in the same time. A very interesting mixture of wisdom of the ages and modernity. A unique character in Tibetan history. During her interview in Dharamsala in 2008, Dr. Tsering cried when speaking about his "holiness". During this field research I often faced emotional outbursts when the Dalai Lama was mentioned. Western tourists were in the same state of mind. There seemed to be a real competition among foreigners to demonstrate their love in order to share a meeting in his secretary's office. Visits were considered by his reception desk, however, some have the chance to meet him, whereas others would never in doing so. It depended on the visitor's fame. A rich American business man always had more of chance to approach him than a simple worker with no social significance. An actor, a banker, or a politician was very much appreciated for the cause. Well-known journalists are also welcomed, but an impecunious tourist with no significant role will be neglected as unworthy. I happened to approach him during his birthday on the 6th of July and during one occasion in McLeod Ganj in 2011 and in 2008 when he made the annual speech for the Tibetan youth. There was a real fervor among the diaspora when the Tibetan leader spoke. Participant observation, in many aspects, convinced me to think of the body of the Dalai Lama as a kind "personified" Tibet. He embodied Tibet. The Dalai Lama is a *Holy* leader and a political mind with a very ambiguous and unique personality. He is very conscious to be the last Dalai Lama with both the political and spiritual hats.

He declared in 2011 that he no longer wished to be a political leader. He argued that exile forced a real democratization of the Tibetan traditional leadership, and therefore the political helm of

the community was no longer for him. He also commented on the Arab Spring as a moment that called for “power sharing”.

During his participation in cultural and religious festivals, the space was saturated with cameras. Numerous Western and Indian journalists were always present and the media had a significant role in the communication strategy of the TGE. The Tibetan Government in Exile controlled its own press and media. There was also an array of libraries with edited proceedings.



Figure 40 - Speech given by the Dalai Lama at the children’s village on 25/10/08. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Hou  rou.

The diaspora primarily watched Tibetan television in Dharamsala, and also appreciated Bollywood Indian films. During the two memorable times I approached the Dalai Lama, I noticed that he was surrounded by a kind of royal court. He repeated in many interviews that he was a simple monk, but his personal stature was much more than a religious leader. He appeared to us as a kind of king, rather than as a simple man. He was encircled and enveloped by courtesans and bodyguards. His arrival and departures were dramatized like a king. People were “hysterical” around him, and even sought to merely touch him. His escort men were also very imposing and constructed a human fence between him and the crowd. Nothing seemed simple for the Dalai Lama. There was a contradiction in the way he saw himself and how the people felt about him. His majesty exhibited a simple attitude. He spoke to the children as if he was a child himself in simple words, but he was also the most complex personality I ever encountered.



Figure 41 - Dal Lake, 2008. Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Houérou.

The future of Tibetan youth was his main concern, and this was demonstrated through the principal educational program. Tibetan identity was completely dependent on the Tibetanness and the identity of the next generations. That was why McLeod Ganj resembled a giant boarding school. It was the most important strategic political place and the centre of Tibetan identity. Compared to Majnu Ka Tilla, the Tibetans of Dharamsala were more conscious about the contours of Tibetan culture. The office of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Parliament were there. Most Tibetans wore their traditional clothes and women dressed in the *Chupa* every day, especially by those in governmental positions. Whereas in Majnu Ka Tilla, Tibetans rarely donned Tibetan traditional clothes. They did so only on specific occasions, such as special festivals with memorials. The CTA had a key role in keeping memory together, giving spatial signals of Tibetanness everywhere, and saturating the walls with news of the diaspora. The CTA also played a fundamental role in redistributive strategies. But the poor remained indigent and pitiful. This did not have enough to make a living, meanwhile the political leaders drove expensive cars and sent their children abroad to study. The Tibetan elite kept the best education programs for themselves. The elite controlled the settlements and few were concerned with the humble likes of Angu or other marginal woman I filmed in 2012 and 2013. Even though she was one of the most isolated mothers of the colony, she could rely on Tibetan solidarity to educate her three children and received food packages and free education for her children, but the most profitable sponsorships and western programs were for the well-off Tibetans.



**Figure 42 - First wave of Tibetan Refugees in India, Tibetan Museum Dharamsala, 2008.
Photo Credit: Fabienne Le Hou  rou.**

CONCLUSION

Abstract: This concluding chapter shows how different categories of memory impacts exiled Tibetans in India. Complex memories were appeared throughout the field work across various locations. I compare Majnu Ka Tilla to Dharamsala to analyze the connections between a given space and the memories embedded in the original urban settings. I underscore how memories are a politicized utility instrumentalized to promote collective identity. The chapter also challenges reductive identities by drawing upon ongoing field work with the Tibetan Muslims that remain *terra ignota* in Darjeeling Hills, India. I suggest that further research into that community could sharpen some of the analysis from this text. The chapter concludes with an invitation for the reader to follow the author on her next study in order to deepen the distinctive Tibetan identities in exile in India.

Keywords: self picturing, painful memory, magnified memory, manipulated memory, successful refugees, foreigners, cultural genocide, Tibetan culture, Tibetan Muslims, Khache Yul, Darjeeling, Kashmir, TGE, Mina Drombo, religious based territory, distinctive tibetanness.

This study of Tibetan diaspora has used a variety of methods to show different sides of the community in different sites. I drew upon moving images in ethnographic films from 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013, as well as photos. The photos included those I took in 2008 as well as those taken by the refugees with disposal cameras and, for the last years of this research, pictures that were posted on social networks, Facebook, Whatsapp, and Wechat. This transformation of data reflects a wider revolution in self picturing and auto-photography. It became evident that the use of disposal cameras was - as far as methods was concerned - outdated. Smartphones completely changed the representation of self and communication among the refugee communities like everywhere else in the world. The types of images included a variety of media not limited to images, but also to short movies or videos. This long-term observation was based on the interpretation of images through reflections related to the Tibetan memories. These memories were a combination of painful, magnified, or manipulated. The memories were embedded in

different territories (refugee camps, colonies all over the country in South or North India) created a homogeneous identity anchored in a variety of spaces and times. I hope the reader grasps the connections between, the images, memory, and space as my intention was to highlight the problematic entanglement of each. The Tibetan identity is based on the convergent memories performed throughout their lives in exiled territories, despite the divergent lived experiences across different spaces. The political side of this situation is exercised through a very strong central administration. The TGE is the gatekeeper of homogeneity, protecting and promoting the Tibetan culture on the Indian subcontinent. This creates a degree of Tibetanness in the shared and common fear to disappear completely by being absorbed into different areas of India. Cross marriages can be seen as a threat, but I suggest the main threat to the Tibetan identity is to progressively dissolve and melt into the Indian culture.

Tibet is temporarily lost, but the diaspora is alive. The social and political organizations that create connections across the communities continue to organize the lives of Tibetans refugees. They were successful in most Indian cities remain very active commercially. Even though they could be construed as successful, they are still foreigners who cannot own property under the law. They are foreigners born in India, and some even speak flawless Hindi, like Angu. A lot of young people speak Hindi better than older Tibetans. The younger generation has a mixed identity and tend to be well rooted in the Indian society with varying degrees of assimilation. As a diaspora, they are accepted by Indian society, such as the Punjabi Basti near Majnu Ka Tilla. They enjoy peaceful cohabitation and insist on harmonious relationship between neighborhoods. In Punjabi Basti, most Punjabi migrants work with Tibetans. There is a whole street occupied by Punjabi tailors collaborating with Tibetan refugees to create Tibetan dresses. I interviewed these tailors who did not know much about building a saree or of the various styles of male Indian clothes, because they mostly worked with the Tibetan diaspora. This relationship was complementary social and economic, but did not avoid rivalries and business conflicts. Most conflicts were connected to the business gains or prosperity. The genius of the Tibetan approach was to change a handicap into a capital. Being a refugee was turned into a gift, a proud mark, and a winning stamp. Being small offers a distinct chance, like one of the Dalai Lama's most popular sayings: "If you feel you are too small to change anything, then sleep with a mosquito".

The Tibetan diaspora is far from uniform. Tibetans are plural. The sites of Majnu Ka Tilla, Dharamsala, or Clement Town are each distinctive. In McLeod Ganj, the centre of Tibetan power in Exile, the community strives to keep their culture and traditions alive. Tibetan women are more inclined to dress in traditional Tibetan clothes, like the Chupa. In McLeod Ganj, the number of women dressing traditionally Tibetan is much more significant than in Majnu Ka Tilla. Dharamsala appears like a capital and a temporary Tibet in waiting. It is the place where an imaginary Tibet is rooted in exile. All symbols of Tibetan identity are kept alive and in many ways, McLeod Ganj, serves as a kind of open-air museum for Tibetan memories of the cultural genocide. Dressing Tibetan, eating Tibetan, listening to Tibetan music, and praying at Tibetan Buddhist temples are each forms of resistance through the cultural strategy of the CTA. Tourists descend upon the space in search of exoticism and the Tibetan folklore that is difficult to find in occupied Tibet.

The refugee camp at Clement Town, 12 km away from Dehradun, is a small colony with an admirable Buddha park and garden that became a special site for Indian tourists. The elegant little Tibetan houses with gardens speak to the potential of a refugee camp after nearly sixty years in exile. At the beginning, Clement Town was a rural complex and an agricultural settlement. It became - as other settlements in the country - a business crossroad and a trading location where one could find the most elegant fashion shops.

Today in Tibet, the Han Chinese are more numerous than Tibetans. As a result, Tibetan cultural identity is slowly vanishing. Dharamsala has become the centre of Tibetan education for the Tibetans inside Tibet who decide to give a Tibetan education for their children. That is why the site is a key repository for Tibetan culture. Memories are then politicized and are reinvented with a sense of imagination for the future. The fact that Dharamsala sits in the Himalayan Mountains offers the tourist a re-invented and glorified Tibet. Dharamsala is thus an exiled Lhasa and everything is suggesting that it served as a recreated fictional Tibet. McLeod Ganj makes one feel that they have traveled to an exiled Tibet removed from India. It gives the sense of a homogenous group bound together through a strong identity. This identity is kept alive through practices and memory, despite the location on the Indian continent. From this perspective, memory serves as the key cement for the diaspora. The dreams of an idealized Tibet are built with a clear sense of strategy by the TGE. Festivals celebrate and memorialize this shared past by linking Tibetan refugees together. These events will be shared by all of the colonies in India

following the same calendar. Despite diverse locations, the shared memorable dates I mentioned are landmarks unifying a dispersed community. The cultural unification is also shared by other communities, like the Tibetan Muslims.

The Tibetan Muslims in the Himalaya represent a diverse ethnic group neglected by the Tibetologists and specialists of Tibet. Focusing on a religious minority also highlights the diversity among Tibetan forms of identity beyond the Buddhist connections in the Dalai Lama. This diversity in the Tibetan community in Darjeeling prompts further research for comparison between these communities that will be explored in a subsequent publication.

The earliest Muslim settlers in Tibet were from Kashmir and Ladakh, and they came as merchants around the 12th century. Tibetan Muslims traced their origins to the immigrants from the four main regions: China, Kashmir, Ladakh and Nepal. Islamic influence in Tibet also arrived from Persia and Turkestan. The Muslims in Tibet are named *Khache*, a term directly connected with Kashmir through the name, *Khache Yul*, in Tibetan language. The general name *Kha-Che* is related to three distinct communities. The *Za-Idah* (born in Tibet), the *Lada-Kha-Che* (from Ladakh), and the *Siring-Pa* (Muslims with Indian origins). Each of these are under the leadership of the *Kache-Go-Pa* (Gaborieau, 1973:21).

This distinctive identity was been kept alive in the face of adversity. Many of these migrant-traders settled in Tibet and married Tibetan women, who later converted to the religion of their husbands. In *The Preaching of Islam*, Thomas Arnold acknowledged that gradually, marriages and social interactions progressively gave birth to a real community near Lhasa, Tibet's capital. Today the Tibetan Muslims in India live mostly in Srinagar and Darjeeling, interestingly. These communities remained very close to the Dalai Lama and follow the Tibetan calendar. These Muslim Tibetans in Srinagar, Darjeeling, and Nepal are but a minority inside the Tibetan diaspora. There are a few Tibetan Muslim families in Sikkim as well.

The total population of Tibetan Muslims outside Tibet is around 2,000. There are 20 to 25 families in Nepal as well as 20 in the Gulf countries and Turkey. Fifty families reside in Darjeeling-Kalimpong areas bordering Tibet in eastern India. Tibetan Muslims in Darjeeling,

Kalimpong, and Nepal have a joint Tibetan Muslim Association. During the Dalai Lama's visit to Darjeeling in April 1993, Tibetan Muslims dressed in their traditional garments, giving outward signs of Tibetanness and cultural traits of Tibetan culture. Women wore traditional dress with strong cultural signs are also common.

There are also around 1,200 Tibetans Muslims in the new settlement in Srinagar consisting of 210 families. The Tibetan Government in Exile (TGE) does not neglect them. The Dalai Lama sends friendly signs and considers them as full Tibetans. They formerly had privileges in the past centuries (during the fifth Dalai Lama), and the 14th Dalai Lama is keen to keep this tradition alive. My main source on these communities was a document written in Urdu by a Kashmiri merchant in 1882-1883, and translated to French by Marc Gaborieau (*Récit d'un voyageur musulman au Tibet*, publié par Marc Gaborieau, Librairie C. Klincksieck, Paris, 1973, 165p.). There were one hundred to three hundred families of Kashmiri merchants in Lhasa during the 18th century, according to a missionary (Marc Gaborieau, 1973: 20). Muslims primarily lived nearby the Mosques that they constructed. In Lhasa, there are four Mosques, two in Shigatse and one in Tsethang. In recent years, one mosque in Lhasa has been renovated by the Muslim Tibetans from India.

Tibetan Muslims possessed special privileges in Tibet during the period of the fifth Dalai Lama (1642-1682) and were absolutely free to follow their rituals peacefully. They were allowed to independently apply *sharia* law to their community. They also had a body of representatives of 5 men called PONJ, who acted as ambassadors of the community defending their interests. It was an elected body with a leader called Mia and Kbachhe Gopa. They were exempted from taxation and managed their own businesses. They used goat wool to fabricate shawls (Gaborieau, 1973: 20). There were little colonies of Kashmiri merchants all along the Nepal Road. One well-known caravan was sent from the maharaja of Kashmir each year to Lhasa, and was called Lop-Chak (Gaborieau, 1973:20). They were very useful “agents of change”.

This group was also permitted to consume meat when the rest of the Buddhist communities in Tibet were forbidden from doing so due to religious beliefs. With the special invitation called *Mina Dronbo* status, this minority community was invited to commemorate the assumption of

spiritual and temporal authority by the fifth Dalai Lama. Muslims were not obliged to take off their hats in front of lamas during special religious events as fully part of these privileges. They arrived in India with the first wave of refugees in the sixties and settled in Darjeeling and they have been living in India for the last 50 years. “Like other Tibetans, our community, too has faced tough times and undergone great mental and physical stress (India Times, 4 May 2008).”

Mr. Yussuf Naik, interviewed on the 15th of April 2017, worked with the TGE for more than 20 years and shared his memories in a very enlightening interview. His father was a leader of the Muslim community in Lhasa and was taken into custody for seventeen years by the Chinese government. His mother died in Mecca and he was educated as an orphan by his uncles. Exactly like other Tibetans, they experience painful loss throughout their lives. The history of this community is a tale of an elitist minority of traders and citizens in Lhasa (no Tibetan Muslim was a peasant or involved in agriculture in Tibet prior to the Chinese invasion) who remained an economically wealthy community in exile in Darjeeling. The greatest respect toward the Dalai Lama is deeply rooted in the Tibetan history, regardless of religion. I interviewed a trader from Kashmir, an owner of one of the oldest shops selling Tibetan arts and antiques in Darjeeling. As a leader of the Muslim community, Mr. Rashid explained that when the Tibetan refugees arrived in the sixties they were helpless and poor, but now the Muslim community is prosperous and well-off. He explains: “*They were beggars when they first came; in 2017 they are no more beggars in this community*” (Interview, Darjeeling, 8th April 2017). This gentleman insisted that regardless of whether Buddhist or Muslim, Tibetans as a whole have a culture of perseverance and incredible commercial skills. He portrayed everyone in the community as a “courageous and hard worker”. “We have to learn a lot from them”, Mr. Rashid added to emphasize “Tibetanness”. He explained that the entrepreneurial attitude might come from the harsh living standards of the mountainous population traditionally living in harsh climates and unforgiving terrain. Whether this geographical explanation is convincing or not, the way that this community is perceived is completely in harmony with what witnesses confessed about the Tibetans portrayed as “Hercules” and Stakanovian heroes: very strong and tireless workers who ignored fatigue. Mr. Rashid would add “*especially the women that are so strong.*”

There are 500 hundred Muslims in Darjeeling, according to another informant and 40 Tibetan Muslims families. Most of them are hotel and restaurant holders, like in the other parts of India. Their commercial activities were comparable to those living in Delhi, Dharamsala, Dehradun, Shillong, Gangtok and even in Jaisalmer (Rajasthan) or Rishikesh. Perhaps this is why one can find Tibetan restaurants in the most frequented tourist places. Whenever there is a place for business, one would find a Tibetan shop in India. Based on travels to many Indian states since 2008, I would suggest that there is no difference between the Muslim Tibetans and other Tibetan Buddhist communities. In the Muslim Tibetan's main hotel in Darjeeling there was a giant picture of Lhasa. The nostalgia for the loss of Tibet was the same as for other Tibetans. One would find the same posters of the magnificent Lhasa Potala Palace in Tibetan guest houses in any guest house in Majnu Ka Till or in any settlement across India. The Muslim identification is - in this perspective – does not affect the shared cultural connections for the Tibetan community. The Dalai Lama himself does not make any difference between Muslim and Buddhist Tibetans. Like other refugees, they rejected Chinese rule in Tibet and fled Chinese colonial occupation of Tibet. There is thus a common view on the main political subject related to the relations with the Chinese “dragon”.

Restaurant and hotel activities are a common structure of the Tibetan business and trade all over India. I was also informed that the owner of the most important hotel in Darjeeling was only renting a space that was a charity for Muslim property. The big hotel run by the Tibetan manager was held in a Waqf (religion-based ownership). Interestingly the Waqf was behind the main Mosque in Bachari Basti, the location where all the Muslims of Darjeeling gathered. There was a religious dispersion in the city. I could consider the Tibetans in Darjeeling as comprising an enclave. It was a religious enclave with historical roots much in the same way that sociologist Alejandro Portes worked on the Cuban diaspora in Miami in the eighties. The Muslim community was also very locally based around the Lhasa Mosque prior the flight to India in 1959. Tibetan Muslims in Darjeeling tend to gather near the mosque. This continuity is interesting enough to show the importance of the religious, territorial identity, and identification. For example, the Tibetan prayer flags found in mainly Buddhist locations were not present in Darjeeling. And contrary to coverage of the Indian or Tibetan press, they were very strict Muslims who did not accept worship of saints or any intermediaries between God and them.

Much like religious practice in Saudi Arabia, Tibetan Muslims reject the Sufi adoration of Sheikhs, contrary to other Muslims in Darjeeling. They also have a clear link to Islam and they recognized the Dalai Lama as a political leader. They were proud of his international status, but did not recognize him as a living holy Buddha. Summarizing my informant's statements they are culturally Tibetan, but purely Muslim in terms of religion.

Exploring this distinctive Tibetanness will be the purpose of the further investigation and inquiry-driven field work in the future.

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