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# POSTCARDS FROM SHANGRI-LA: TOURISM, TIBETAN REFUGEES, AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION

by

**ERIC A. McGUCKIN**

VOLUME I

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1997

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Abstract

POSTCARDS FROM SHANGRI-LA: TOURISM, TIBETAN REFUGEES, AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION

by

Eric A. McGuckin

Advisor: Professor Jane Schneider

This dissertation analyzes the social, cultural, and political impacts of tourism and the reconstruction of Tibetan refugee culture in Dharamsala, India. Dharamsala, in the foothills of the Himalayas, is host to the Dalai Lama, the Central Tibetan Administration, and a Tibetan refugee community of some 5,000. It attracts growing numbers of Western seekers, volunteers, social scientists, and tourists. Tibetan refugee cultural production is analyzed as an interactive process, shaped not only by exile and indigenous history and values, but by new touristic, religious, charitable, and academic consumers who themselves become producers of a commoditized "Tibetan" culture. Consumption is thus considered a form of production.

This thesis integrates a detailed account of the "host" population -- the ethnic Other who is the usual focus of anthropological monographs -- with an equally detailed and differentiated account of the "guests," the travelers who are too often stereotyped in both popular and academic literature. This dissertation will also describe artistic change as well as the lives and practices of Tibetan and Indian artisans and merchants. These groups have been relatively neglected in prior research on Tibetan refugees, which has

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tended to emphasize the transmission of identity or Buddhist philosophy and practice.

While this dissertation focuses most closely on the production, exchange, and consumption of Tibetan crafts and commoditized ritual objects, it links this description to a broader analysis of tourism, cultural politics, and class, ethnic, and gender relations. Unfortunately, the increasingly popular Cultural Studies approach has tended to dematerialize this dimension, just as international tourism is expanding and integrating indigenous and refugee communities further into an asymmetric transnational market of goods and meanings.

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I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, JoAnn Vrilakas, my fellow field worker, my mental health counselor, my best critic and best friend.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME I

ABSTRACT ..... iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ..... vi

CHAPTERS

I. INTRODUCTION ..... 1

II. ANTHROPOLOGY AND TOURISM ..... 22

III. BEYOND THE PEAKS: THE TIBETAN NATION IN THE WORLD AND THE IMAGINATION ..... 53

IV. THANGKAS: THE SACRED COMMODITY ..... 88

V. TIBETAN CARPETS: FROM FOLK ART TO MASS PRODUCTION ..... 135

VI. TINKERS, TAILORS, AND TIBETAN CRAFTS ..... 187

VII. EXCHANGES I: TIBETAN MERCHANTS ..... 237

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VIII. EXCHANGES II: INDIANS AND THE ETHNIC DIVISION OF LABOR ..... 268

VOLUME II

IX. MARKETING LIBERATION? TIBETAN REFUGEE WOMEN AND TOURISM ..... 313

X. WESTERN CONSUMERS: TOURISTS, SEEKERS, RESEARCHERS, FREAKS ..... 355

XI. ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND OTHER TOURISTS ..... 411

XII. CONSUMING GOODS AND PEOPLE ..... 453

XIII. CONCLUDING REMARKS ..... 504

REFERENCES ..... 511

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# CHAPTER ONE
# INTRODUCTION

## Tourism and the Politics of Cultural Production

Holidays are serious business. Tourism is fast becoming one of the world's most important economic activities, employing over 200 million people globally (Sloan, 1995). In the context of Third World poverty, underemployment, and debt, many "peripheral" communities are turning to the production of goods and services for the still growing tourism market, in the process transforming their arts, religion, and lifeways into commodities eagerly sought by increasing numbers of First World travelers. Tourism is finally being taken seriously and studied by a growing number of social scientists. Their work is easily overlooked as a flood of travel writing, recounting personal adventures in the remaining exotic hinterlands of an increasingly transnational planet, overflows the shelves of bookstore everywhere. Despite the enormous cultural and economic significance of tourism, there remains a need for full-length ethnographies of specific tourism industries and locales (Crick, 1989).

This dissertation describes the social, political, and cultural impacts of tourism in Dharamsala, India, examining the strategic and contested re-construction of Tibetan refugee culture. This thesis analyzes Tibetan cultural production as an interactive process, shaped not only by exile and indigenous history and values, but by new touristic, religious, charitable, and academic consumers who themselves become producers of a reified "Tibetan" culture. Consumption is thus considered a form of production.

Dharamsala, in the foothills of the Himalayas, is host to the Dalai Lama, the Central Tibetan Administration, and a Tibetan refugee

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community of some 5,000. The Tibetan diaspora largely relies on cultural industries both for economic support and to advertise its political cause. Tibetans in Dharamsala engage in co-operative and private enterprises including hotel and restaurant services, petty trade, and cultural industries such as handicraft production and religious teaching. Dharamsala is now on the international tourist map as a mini-Kathmandu, attracting growing numbers of seekers, social scientists, and tourists. These new foreign consumers appropriate Tibetan culture for their own projects of recreation, spirituality, entrepreneurship, and academic career building. Dharamsala is a unique transnational crossroads where thick flows of goods, people, scholarship, and imagination interact, conflict, and transform one another.

Because no ethnography can fully explore the range of phenomena associated with tourism, this dissertation focuses most closely on the production, exchange, and consumption of Tibetan crafts and commoditized ritual objects. It will link this productive sphere to a broader description of tourism and politics in Dharamsala. One of the newer contributions this thesis attempts to offer is the integration of an account of the "host" population -- the ethnic "Other" who is the usual focus of anthropological monographs -- with an equally detailed and differentiated account of the "guests," the travelers who are too often stereotyped in both popular and academic literature. It will describe the practices of Western travelers, seekers, aid workers, and academics, linking these practices to the re-construction of Tibetan culture in exile, and treating them with a measure of the specificity and seriousness they warrant as much as any subjects of anthropological inquiry. This dissertation will also describe artistic and technical change as well as the

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lives and practices of Tibetan and Indian artisans and merchants. These groups have been relatively neglected in prior research on Tibetan refugees, which has tended to emphasize the transmission of identity or Buddhist philosophy and practice.

Before the Chinese occupation, Tibetan elites attempted to keep foreign influences out of Tibet, and few Westerners were allowed to set foot in the capital city of Lhasa. Today, the exile administration aims to maintain a distinct Tibetan identity, hoping to keep Tibetans in compact settlements and discourage interethnic marriages, assimilation, and citizenship in host nations. Autonomy is limited, however, because the refugees are dependent on the hospitality of India and Nepal and on international aid and foreign consumers. Tibetan refugees have relied more on cultural resistance than direct action against the Chinese occupation, generating financial support and sympathy for their cause through the display and promotion of art and ritual.

While the refugees and their supporters advertise an urgent need for the "preservation of traditional Tibetan culture," craft production, artistic forms, and even religious teachings have been radically altered for the tourist and export markets. A growing interest in Buddhism in the West has led several Tibetan monastic sects to establish businesses and teaching centers, helping these institutions regain some of their past strength. However, some monks in Dharamsala seem to spend as much time serving pizza as praying. Many enterprises are initiated by foreign sympathizers and entrepreneurs, and a few "Tibetan" souvenirs are actually designed and manufactured by non-Tibetans. Fortunately for entrepreneurs, ethnic crafts need have little actual continuity with any actual artistic traditions to function as signifiers of identity on market. As we will see, Tibetan goods,

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motifs, and teachings are often completely detached from their indigenous referents, circulating transnationally as free floating signifiers and exchange values.

However, the impacts of commoditization are not wholly negative or destructive of "authenticity." Like Vincenne Adams' (1996) analysis of Sherpa identity as increasingly constructed through mirroring the desires of others, I assume that Tibetan refugee cultural productions are partially shaped by the demands and fantasies of foreign consumers. Many of these new consumers demand authentic Tibetan traditions, but the nature of the "authentic original" is open to debate, and was never precisely what it has been claimed to have been. Ironically, the very aim of preserving authentic Tibetan culture reifies and transforms it into an essentialized, exchangeable, and researchable commodity. Tibetans are both agents and subjects of this process. Because culture is "always already" interactive, contested, shifting, and increasingly hybridized in unstoppable transnational flows, I assume that authenticity is not to be found in the exact re-production of static goods, motifs, or practices, but in dynamic conditions of cultural production, exchange, and consumption that allow for autonomous individual and community self-development (see also: Miller, 1987; Tomlinson, 1991). Authenticity thus becomes a political question, rather than a target of endless and socially irrelevant discursive deconstruction.

Tourism is both destructive and re-constructive, often leading simultaneously to artistic "degeneration" and efflorescence. The impacts of tourism are complex and contradictory and must be specified not only for each locale, but for each type of cultural production. The case of Tibetan handicrafts demonstrates the inadequacy of unilineal theories of capitalist

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development and unitary models of the world economic system (Cook and Binford, 1986; Nash, 1981, 1984, 1993). In craft industries, non-capitalist relations of production often exist alongside capitalist relations, even when linked to an overall capitalist market (Tice, 1995). In Dharamsala, private and co-operative production centers, ancient and innovative motifs and techniques, and internal and external markets co-exist.

While broad generalizations regarding cultural and economic commoditization, alienation, and victimization are misleading, touristic production and discourse are always intertwined with political interests and discourse, and the problems and opportunities that tourism provides are unequal along interpenetrating axes of gender, ethnicity, class, and nation. It is this political dimension of cultural production that should be a primary focus of social science research. Unfortunately, the increasingly popular Cultural Studies approach has tended to dematerialize this dimension, just as international tourism is expanding and integrating indigenous and refugee communities further into an asymmetric transnational market of goods and meanings.

**Introducing Dharamsala**

Dharamsala, the administrative seat of the Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh, is a series of distinct urban clusters that climb steeply from the Kangra valley at 1250 meters (4125 feet) above sea level up the hills to some 2000 meters (6600 feet) above sea level. Above, the jagged peaks of the Dhauladhar range reach a height of 5,200 meters (just over 17,000 feet).

There are approximately 17,000 residents of lower Dharamsala, almost all of them Indian. On a hill above the valley is Kotwalli bazaar,

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Dharamsala's central market, where a few Tibetan guesthouses and shops are found amid the Indian produce stands, chai stalls and shops. Up a very steep road is Gangchen Kyishong, a flat area hosting the office complex of the Central Tibetan Administration, the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Delik Hospital, and the traditional Tibetan Medical and Astro Institute. At the top of another steep climb, about 20 minutes by foot, is McLeod Ganj, an old British hill station stretching along a ridge some 500 meters above lower Dharamsala. About 6000 Tibetans live here. The market in McLeod Ganj, along two muddy parallel roads, is lined with Tibetan crafts shops, hotels, and restaurants. Here and there are several Indian banks, two video halls, a post office branch, a carpet factory, and several clinics run by physicians of Tibetan medicine. In the high season -- April through early July -- the streets are clogged with an influx of Western travelers who add to the population of foreign artists, volunteer aid workers, spiritual seekers, and scholars who take up longer residence. On any one day before the arrival of the monsoon flushes most of them out, perhaps 1000 Westerners are staying in and around Dharamsala. A bit below the Tibetan market is the main temple, or Tsuglakhang, Namgyal monastery, and the residence of the Dalai Lama.

Several kilometers north of McLeod Ganj is the small Indian village of Bhagsunath, built around a sacred spring. It is favored by Westerners desiring a quieter, more Indian scene, and perhaps a bit of hashish to smoke. A short distance from the village is a waterfall, its charm marred by the slate mines that surround it. Just west of McLeod Ganj is Forsyth Ganj, an Indian village surrounding an army cantonment. Above the cantonment is Upper Tibetan Children's Village (TCV), a residential school with some 2000 refugee students near the very small and muddy Dal

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"lake." Up a steep track from the bus stand at the West end of McLeod Ganj is Tushita, a Buddhist retreat center for Westerners. Above Tushita is the Indian village of Dharamkot, from which one may hike several hours to Triund, a high ridge offering panoramic views of the valley below and the peaks above.

Wheat, rice, fruit, and some tea is grown in the Kangra valley, which affords irrigated agriculture to an extent rare in Himachal Pradesh (Baker, 1996). The Gaddis, a "scheduled tribe" of agro-pastoralists, still herd sheep and goats in the high pastures above Dharamsala. In the villages around McLeod Ganj, subsistence crops of barley and maize are grown. In the hopes of slowing deforestation, the Forest Department has theoretically restricted grazing for decades. The steep ridges and ravines around Dharamsala, covered by pine and rhododendron trees with clipped branches, are eroding. Gaddi men are increasingly moving into wage labor. Some are selling or converting their farms into businesses servicing the growing tourist market. Gaddi women remain responsible for domestic work, tend the cows, and collect the increasingly scarce fodder. A few also do laundry or other services for foreigners. Many Gaddi women can still be seen bedecked with necklaces, bracelets, anklets, nose and toe-rings, but in booming villages like Bhagsunath, homespun clothes are losing ground to the ready-made goods of the bazaar.

I spoke with Mr. Nowrojee, the Parsee merchant largely responsible for bringing the Tibetans to McLeod Ganj, to learn of the area's history. He is the fifth in his family's line to run the Nowrojee general store. Before the arrival of the British in the mid-19th century, Mr. Nowrojee told me, the area was a scantily populated forest called Bhagsu, which means "running water." There are various legends accounting for the

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spring at Bhagsunath. One has it that during a drought in Rajasthan, the king dreamed that he should send an emissary to Nag Dal lake to retrieve some water. The Nag (snake) deity was angered at the attempt to take his water and fought with the king's servant. A jug of water was overturned and there the spring arose. Another legend has it that Shiva shot an arrow overturning the jug. The temple at Bhagsu, at any rate, said Mr. Nowrojee, "is quite ancient." The slate mines nearby, he thought, have been in operation for about 200 years.

The British annexed the Kangra district in 1848, and stationed troops in Dharamsala during the hot season. The Nowrojee family had supplied the British cantonment in Jullundur, as well as serving as the household suppliers of the Maharaja of Kapurthala, and followed the British troops to the new station in Dharamsala. In McLeod Ganj, they built a store which still stands on the same spot. In 1855 Dharamsala was made the district headquarters. Lord Elgin, then Viceroy of India, loved the area, and often stayed in Highcroft bungalow, now the Mountaineering Institute. The Church of St. John was built in the forest just outside of McLeod Ganj, and Lord Elgin was buried there in 1863. At that time there were also a couple of British shops and tailors, and the present state run Dhauladhar Hotel in Kotwalli Bazaar was the extreme end of town.

For a time there was some talk of making Dharamsala the summer capital of India, but in 1905 a devastating earthquake destroyed the town. Mr. Nowrojee believes that almost 30,000 people were killed. After the earthquake, the British army was moved and several regiments of Gurkhas took their place. Gradually the district administration shifted to lower Dharamsala, and urban growth continued there. McLeod Ganj, while still a holiday retreat, began a long slow decay. After Independence, the British

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population declined further. At partition, the Punjabi gentry stopped coming. The population of McLeod dwindled to a few hundred, and the empty bungalows began deteriorating.

Kim Butterworth, a 42 year old Anglo-Indian trekking entrepreneur, remembers the market in McLeod Ganj as The Mall it once was, a green meadow with benches and large cedars. Nowrojees's shop was surrounded by flowers, and horses were tied where today buses and taxis swing by Tibetan stalls selling crafts and clothing. The Butterworths have been in India for generations -- on his mother's side since 1780-- and coming to McLeod Ganj for decades. In 1948 Kim's parent's bought 60 acres of hilltop above Dharamkot for 7,000 Rs.

"Some of this land you couldn't give away 30 years ago," he said. Dharamkot, where Kim thinks the next wave of guesthouses will be built, had only a half a dozen Gaddi houses. "Bhagsu was basically only a Shiva Trident, a hut with an idol. There were a few farmers in the area -- maybe 300 people as opposed to the thousands now."

In 1959, faced with thousands of sick and impoverished Tibetans streaming into the country, the Indian government hoped to establish dispersed, temporary refugee camps. The Tibetans, it was thought, would either soon return to their homeland or accept Indian citizenship and assimilate. The Tibetan leadership desired compact, "homogenous" settlements that would encourage the "preservation" of Tibetan identity and culture (Planning Council, 1992). Hoping to revive the once thriving hill station, Mr. Nowrojee, who was the care taker for the empty buildings of McLeod Ganj, brought Dharamsala to the attention of the Nehru government.

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The Dalai Lama was alarmed when informed that Dharamsala was to be offered as his new home. He knew it to be a hill station like Musoorie "but in a considerably more remote location. . . . I began to have some suspicion that the Indian Government was now trying to hide us away somewhere without good communications in the hope that we Tibetans would disappear from the sight of the outside world" (Gyatso [HHDL XIV] 1990:15). But the Tibetans, living in tents, many of them engaged in grueling roadwork if not suffering from tuberculosis, needed housing and a headquarters. An official was sent to "reconnoiter" the area and returned with the pronouncement that "Dharamsala water is better than Musoorie milk." Driving up the steep switch backs to McLeod Ganj in 1960, the Dalai Lama was reminded of Lhasa. The only real drawback was the heavy rainfall -- the second heaviest in all India.

At first there were only a small number of refugees in Dharamsala -- members of the Dalai Lama's entourage and a few ordinary Tibetans living in tents. Within several weeks the first nursery was opened, with the Dalai Lama's sister in charge. Soon there were 120 children in one bedroom, sleeping five or six to a bed (bid; Avedon, 1984). Since then, with the generosity of the Indian government, investments of the Dalai Lama's fortune, aid from the West, and spiritual and touristic interest, the Tibetans have built the Central Tibetan Administration, recreated many religious institutions, and developed a thriving cultural industry in Dharamsala.

McLeod Ganj has been transformed in the Tibetans' image. It is now hyped as "Little Lhasa." In the center of the old Mall, surrounded by Tibetan shops and hotels, is the Namgyalma stupa (*chorten* ), a memorial for Tibetans who died in the resistance. Around its perimeter are prayer wheels constantly spun by Tibetans residents and pilgrims, and a few

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Westerners trying to get into the local spirit. The market is largely built on land held by the Municipal Committee, which leases it to the CTA, which in turns rents it to Tibetan businesses. At one end of the market is the bus stand, and at the other the Reception çenter, which temporarily houses the new refugees who have been arriving since the liberalizations in the People's Republic. Just above town on "TIPA road" -- once known as Circular Road --is the Tibetan Institute for Performing Arts (TIPA), which performs traditional and modern music and dance and holds an annual Tibetan Opera festival.

The religious center of the Tibetan community is the main temple, the Tsuglakhang, adjacent to the residence of the Dalai Lama and Namgyal monastery. The monastery, once housed in the Potala, has been recreated with over 180 monks in the old Masonic Lodge. Namgyal has recently opened a guesthouse and restaurant on the grounds. A new chapel with impressive murals depicting the Kalachakra Tantric cycle was constructed in 1992. The courtyard enclosed by these structures is used for various political and religious gatherings, including the Dalai Lama's yearly teachings in the Spring. On many afternoons, students from the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics-- including the occasional Westerner -- can be seen debating in the courtyard. Numerous other small monasteries are scattered throughout the area, as are several nunneries. Ganden Chöling nunnery is directly across the road from the Chocolate Log, an Indian café offering omelets, cakes, and milkshakes to travelers.

At Gangchen Kyishong, the seat of the CTA, the Tibetan Library of Works and Archives, a beautiful red structure with ornate Tibetan doors and trim, attracts both tourists and scholars. Founded in 1971, the library owns thousands of Tibetan religious texts and documents, and has an

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extensive "Foreign language" section holding a wide variety of journals and books on Buddhism, Tibetan and Himalayan societies, and a grab-bag of New Age titles in English, French, German, and Japanese. The Library publishes the Tibet Journal and offers Tibetan language courses and daily philosophy lectures delivered by Tibetan geshes (academically degreed monks) with simultaneous English translation.

The Library is a popular meeting place for travelers, Buddhist practitioners, and researchers of all kinds, including my wife and I. We took rooms there in early 1992. Our apartment was just behind and above Nechung monastery, the seat of the Tibetan state oracle. We appreciated the spectacular view over the colorful roof of the monastery to the Kangra valley below, and enjoyed watching the thunder storms rolling down from the Dhauladhar range above. Unfortunately, for several months we were daily awakened at 4:30 A.M. by the monastery's gong. Having learned to sleep though it, we caught another half hour of sleep until the door to the large prayer wheel was opened, whereupon a devout old Tibetan man, murmuring prayers, started it spinning. With each revolution, a bell clanged directly below our windows. Many Western Buddhists were jealous of the spiritual vibrations we undoubtedly absorbed each bleary morning. Some of these seekers took lunches at Nechung monastery's small café. For a time, the monk cashier sat below a signed poster of the action star Steven Segal, a gun in one hand, a sexy babe clinging to his arm. A certain musical pattern of the Tibetan long horns alerted us to the occasions when the monastery's oracle channeled the Nechung deity. Tibetans and Westerners gathered around, hoping to grab some of the blessed barley seeds tossed by the oracle as he stumbled about

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in trance. As the Tibetans clasped their hands in prayer, the Westerners raised their cameras.

Over the years, waves of Westerners have come to the old hill station since the arrival of the Tibetans. In the early 1960's, few "Injees" -- the Tibetan corruption of "English" that refers to all Westerners -- were seen, save for occasional journalists and aid workers. The rise of the "Counter Culture," a growing interest in Eastern spirituality, and the development of the "Overland" or "Freak" Trail from Europe to India led to a steady increase in tourist traffic. Eventually, some seekers were disillusioned with Indian gurus and turned their attention to Tibetan Buddhism, a process encouraged by the establishment of Dharma centers in the West, such as the Nyingma Institute in Berkeley, and the Naropa Institute in Boulder, founded by the charismatic and controversial Chögyam Trungpa. As interest in Tibetan Buddhism penetrated academic religious studies, Dharamsala's Library and resident lamas attracted numerous scholars. By the 1970's, there was a community of several hundred resident Westerners in Dharamsala. Many of them participated in a weekend flea market to help pay for their rent, their food, and their smoke.

After the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the period of validity for a foreign visa was shortened to six months. Long term residents are now forced to leave the country periodically. With the decay of the Counter Culture and the closure of the Overland route through Iran and Afghanistan, the growth of tourism in Dharamsala slowed. It has rebounded, however, with the general boom of "adventure travel" and with the continuing Western interest in "Fourth World" spirituality. Neo-hippies are now joined by legions of "New Age" seekers, many of them well-heeled. Since the opening of the Tushita center in the 1980's, McLeod

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Ganj has offered a retreat for spiritual dabblers as well as committed Buddhist practitioners and scholars.

Political events have also contributed to the growth of tourism in Dharamsala, particularly the award of the Nobel Peace prize to the Dalai Lama. This award brought renewed attention to the Tibetan cause, as did well-publicized artistic and religious events such as the "Wisdom and Compassion" museum tour. This tour coincided with the "Year of Tibet" declared by the CTA and Western Tibetophiles in 1991. The political violence in Kashmir has led to a diversion of tourism to other Northern Indian locales, including Ladakh and Dharamsala. The opening of Tibet to tourism has also contributed to a rise in interest in the refugee community. Many travelers -- particularly Israelis, who visit Dharamsala in (proportionally) large numbers -- reported that they wished to compare Tibetans and cultural traditions in exile to what they saw in the occupied TAR.

McLeod Ganj-- "Little Lhasa" -- is often hyped as a sort of living museum, where authentic Tibetan culture is preserved while Lhasa itself is bulldozed and rebuilt by the Chinese. But today, perhaps more than anything else, McLeod Ganj resembles a small, concentrated Kathmandu, with its markets of hybrid crafts, its entrepreneurs, its backpackers and anthropologists, and its banana pancakes.

## Content, Methods, Ethics

The tourism industry, especially in a transnational cultural stew like Dharamsala, raises numerous political, economic, and cultural issues appropriate for anthropological inquiry-- issues of ethnicity and gender, of authenticity and value, of cultural representation and autonomy. The

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methodological and epistemological limits to representing this multifaceted transnational phenomenon within the confines of a single ethnographic text are daunting. In his book on African art traders, Steiner (1994) has suggested that one way to construct a "multilocale ethnography" is to trace the flow of commodities through space and time, noting as examples Mintz's work on sugar (1985), Eric Wolf's Europe and the People Without History (1982), and Appadurai's collection The Social Life of Things (1986). Inspired by these works, I originally intended to study the tourism industry in Dharamsala by following Kopytoff's (1986) proposal to construct "biographies" of commodities.

As a first time ethnographer, however, what I ended up doing was quite different than what I set out to do. Unlike the aforementioned senior scholars who have produced analyses encompassing broad global processes through multiple historical epochs, this novice effort is essentially ethnographic, more about people in a particular place than about objects moving through space and time. Investigating objects broadened into a more general investigation of tourism in Dharamsala. Ethnic crafts provided a convenient window onto a range of processes and relationships associated with the production, exchange, and consumption of material and symbolic goods and services in tourism, processes involving men and women, Tibetans and Indians, hosts and guests. Tourism is, of course, not the only force of change in Dharamsala. Exile and export markets are at least as significant in their impacts. Production for tourism is linked inseparably to the entire arena of cultural production. Following MacCannell, I consider this arena to encompass not only the movement of things-as-commodities, but also the production and consumption of

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imagery and desire, of experience and knowledge, of trips and spectacles (MacCannell, 1976).

The focus on material culture has thus been weakened, and some detail on specific crafts industries, any one of which could provide sufficient material for a dissertation, has been lost. I hope the broader approach, despite numerous gaps, has produced an account that touches not only on most of the significant issues surrounding tourism and cultural production in Dharamsala, but captures some of the feel of this unique and sometimes bizarre international meeting grounds.

The first part of the dissertation lays out the general "terrain." Following the Introduction, the second chapter is a somewhat polemical review of anthropological approaches to tourism, justifying an emphasis on the description and analysis of politically and economically significant behavior rather than on the deconstruction of discursive formations. The third chapter, nonetheless, confronts a specific discourse: the myth of Shangri-la. In line with the general thrust of the dissertation, rather than simply deconstructing the essentialism upon which the myth is founded, I analyze its functions in global politics and tourism. This chapter also serves as an introduction to Tibetan society and history, "real" and "imagined." The rest of the text could be crudely divided into successive parts focusing on Production, Exchange, and Consumption. Chapters Four and Five are the heart of my description of craft production in exile. They describe and contrast the production of sacred thangka (Buddhist paintings) and secular carpets, highlighting how contrasting meanings accorded the goods as well as different institutional and religious structures in Dharamsala and Kathmandu shape artistic change and relations of production. Chapter Six examines metal crafts and tailoring. Because of a

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lack of time, previous literature, and informants in Dharamsala, these crafts are described in less detail than the previous two. However, the chapter reiterates the themes of the previous chapters, ending with a summary of the broad trends evident of craft production in Dharamsala. A split market has developed in Tibetan crafts, with higher quality, lower volume production of what Graburn (1984) calls "traditional embedded" goods on the one hand, and the production of lower quality, higher volume "souvenir novelty" goods on the other. At the high status end of the spectrum, producers are most commonly indigenous, male artisans, while at the lower end producers are often poor women and non-Tibetans. Tourism, it is argued, leads not to a uniform commoditization of the arts, rather to a multiplicity of productive structures and a diversification of artistic forms and meanings, as well as struggles within and outside the community over the direction of cultural production.

Gender and ethnic relations structured by tourism are always asymmetric. Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine turn to the marketplace and to issues of inequality. Chapter Seven focuses on Tibetan merchants, who are somewhat constrained by religious sanctions on selling religious artifacts. Chapter Eight describes the Indian economy and ethnic relations, and Nine the unequal gender relations structured by the cultural industries of Dharamsala. Depending on one's perspective, tourism has offered desperately needed income or exploited the weakest members of both the Indian and Tibetan communities. Taking advantage of rural poverty, some Tibetans pay Indian women low rates to knit sweaters and other woolen goods for resale to travelers. The Tibetan merchant middle class in Dharamsala is doing better than much of the surrounding Indian population, and some refugees employ Indian children as domestic servants

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and restaurant workers. However, new economic opportunities have also opened for Indians with the means to take advantage of them. These chapters describe how tourism has been instrumental in creating an ethnic and gender division of labor and value, one that privileges Tibetans over Indians, and men over women.

The final section of the book takes an ethnographic look at the consumers. Chapter Ten introduces the various types of Western travelers and residents in Dharamsala, arguing that while "tourists" are sometimes engaged in a search for authenticity in the Other, their experiences generally revolve around the Self. Travelers' projects of recreation and Self re-creation, however, have profound and sometimes intrusive impacts on the Tibetans. A surprise in this research has been the extent to which tourism can lead to deep involvement in Tibetan cultural production. Many travelers end their journeys in Dharamsala, finding the opportunity for long-term philosophic or cultural study. Some support themselves by working for Tibetan institutions or creating and dealing in "traditional" Tibetan arts. Others return with grants to study various aspects of Tibetan culture. Chapter Eleven looks more closely at a particularly interesting variety of Westerner -- anthropologists -- exploring the ways in which they may or may not be distinguishable from other kinds of travelers. In this chapter, I examine some of the contrasts between social science theory and practice in Dharamsala, recognizing that anthropology is itself a form of cultural production which both challenges and is challenged by tourism. Chapter Twelve discusses the consumption of people and things in Dharamsala, a consumption that runs in both directions, between hosts and guests, although relationships are asymmetric. The Conclusion briefly

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summarizes the dissertation, while admitting it has perhaps raised more questions than I am capable of answering.

This research integrates long-standing interests in both tourism and Tibetan culture, and combined standard anthropological methods of formal and informal interviewing, archival research, and participant-observation. Prior to dissertation fieldwork I visited Tibetan refugee settlements in India and Nepal in October-December, 1990, and January-February, 1992. Research in Dharamsala began in June, 1992 and was completed in October, 1993. I then traveled for several months to occupied Tibet and to refugee settlements in Nepal. There, in addition to playing the role of tourist, I informally gathered information to compare the production and sale of religious objects in Dharamsala to that at a distance from the Dalai Lama. Interviewing began in New York at a lunch at the American Museum of Natural History with an angry curator who was displeased that a Tibet exhibit had turned into a sales show for Tibetan handicrafts, and ended with tea in Dharamsala in October, 1993 with the Western woman who had planned the exhibit. In between, I conducted formal interviews with 70 Tibetans and Indians, and 60 travelers and long-term Western residents in Dharamsala. In addition, I received written responses to a questionnaire from 33 travelers.

There was a great contrast in reactions to interview requests. The Tibetans were generally reticent, not clear as to why I would want to speak to anyone but high officials and lamas, while Westerners were almost uniformly excited by the opportunity to tell their stories. In many cases, the names and particulars of informants have been changed to conceal their identity. Given the linguistic facility of many refugees, particularly the young, most interviews were conducted in English, many with the use of a

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tape recorder. However, my spoken Tibetan was never adequate to conduct detailed interviews, and I relied on the patient translating services of Pema Youdren and Karma in many interviews. I must also thank them for their efforts above and beyond, as they frequently took the initiative to arrange interviews with informants they knew I would find valuable. All of the undoubtedly many errors in fact and interpretation are my own, as are all opinions expressed. I know they would disagree significantly with many of my conclusions.

In discussing analyses of tourism, Bruner (1991) has claimed that a focus on individual interactions masks the operations of the world system on the seemingly local. I agree that we must never lose sight of the larger forces which structure individual lives, but if these macro-forces are not to remain abstractions, we must ground analysis in accounts of specific practices. Camino and Krulfeld (1994) point out that much of the discourse surrounding refugees emphasizes their sufferings and hardships, overlooking how they author their own identities, and often thrive and prosper. Tibetan touristic and cultural production might be considered, in Clifford's terms, a "nontotalizing globalization from below" that both resists and uses "hegemonizing technologies and communications. . . . Entanglement is not necessarily co-optation" (Clifford 1994:327).

Joanne Watkins argues that the use of such individualized portraits "avoid burying the voices and varied experiences of individual women (and men) under essentializing categories" (1996:19). This is important not only to convey the varied adaptations and agency of individual Tibetans, but is also crucial in avoiding the all too frequent, non-empirical stereotyping of travelers (the other Other). In an attempt to avoid dehumanizing and "overdetermining" the lives of the people represented, a

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significant amount of storytelling -- what I call "postcards" -- are inserted into the narrative. Some of these postcards appear in the chapters without any direct interpretation or explanation. While they illustrate themes dealt with explicitly elsewhere, I trust readers can make their own connections, and perhaps find a surplus of details that have escaped or even contradict the author.

Although these postcards reproduce the selected "voices" of diverse women and men, Tibetan and Western, in no way do I claim to have created a "multivocalic" ethnography through which the Other speaks. Nor do I claim the text mirrors some "objective" reality. I am speaking "of" not "for" the Other, and the information presented is abstracted, selected, repressed, ordered and filtered through the lens of a male, non-Buddhist, American anthropologist. However, neither the paralysis of the overly reflexive approach, nor the absurd stance that pretends to defer any "totalizing" interpretive stance whatsoever can fully contribute to the current multicultural conversation. In an era of intensifying cultural and economic exchange, it is not only our right but our responsibility to speak to and about the transnational processes we are all entangled in, despite the risks of error and misunderstanding.

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# CHAPTER TWO
# ANTHROPOLOGY AND TOURISM

In the future, anthropology will need to address tourism as much as it has colonialism. By the year 2000, tourism may be the most important economic activity in the world. 528 million people traveled abroad in 1994. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) expects that number to increase to nearly one billion by 2010. In 1991 travel and tourism accounted for 11.2% of capital investment and 6.5% of government spending globally. By the 1980's tourism employed more people world-wide than the oil industry. In 1994 it provided 200 million jobs and the WTO predicts that it will directly and indirectly provide some 350 million jobs by 2005 (Enloe, 1989; Specht, 1993; Sloan, 1995).

"Travel," Boeing commands us; "flight turns the world into a single marketplace." (Newsweek, International; April 12, 1993: 26-7). As June Nash points out, household production is revitalizing just as "peripheral" enclaves are integrated into an unevenly developed global economy dominated by industrial capitalism (Nash, 1984). Tourism is a major force driving this integration. In the face of a world debt crisis, many peripheral communities with shrinking land bases, or refugee communities with no land at all, are attempting to cash in on the explosion of world travel, turning not only their traditional crafts, but often their sacred objects, ritual performances, and even their bodies into marketable commodities.

Boeing's Newsweek ad, a tasteful two-page spread in reds and browns, displays exotic goods, each symbolizing a distant locale, artfully arranged around a Union Jack, the nostalgic icon of old-time imperialism. In this strange new form of economic colonialism, finished goods are

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exported from the periphery to the center, where the middle and upper classes are hungry for hand-made, "singular" objects that, unlike mass manufactured goods, escape the category of "commodity" in the minds of their consumers (Kopytoff, 1986; Nash, 1993; Waterbury, 1989). Tourism now accounts for some 11% of global consumer spending (Specht, 1993). In the early 1980's, over a billion dollars of handicrafts were exported from the Third world to the First, in addition to those sold to tourists in situ (Nash, 1993). By 1985 demand had increased to $8.45 billion, with some estimating a potential market of up to $25 billion (Popelka and Littrel, 1991). In the words of Boeing: "ordinary citizens now have easier access to the world's goods than did the kings of old." Tourism in the late 20th century penetrates every corner of the globe, entering once restricted sacred realms in search of ever more unique goods and experiences.

Anthropologists in the 1990's, arriving in distant, exotic locales, often find themselves preceded by tourists who have not only "disturbed" the cultures they came to study, but increasingly challenge the ethnographers' claims to special knowledge. The boundaries between ethnography and the expanding mass of travel writing are becoming less and less distinct. In response, some anthropologists have attempted to re-establish their authority by delineating the differences between serious research and frivolous holiday-making (a distinction which is partly responsible for the previous lack of serious research about frivolous holiday-making). Dennison Nash suggested that an early reluctance to study tourism was precisely because social scientists didn't want to be associated with tourists (Nash, 1981). It is still a put-down to label one's academic opponents as "intellectual tourists," or to criticize a ethnographic monograph for reading "like a travelogue."

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This attitude, as Cynthia Enloe (1989) reminds us, tells us less about tourism than about our traditional constructions of "serious." Enloe claims that the early dismissal of tourism studies as frivolous is due largely to the "gendered" nature of the industry; women are differentially employed by tourism in low-paid service positions, and their bodies eroticized and exoticized by travel advertising. That tourism has only recently been taken seriously is indicative of a privileging of politics over labor, labor over leisure, and men over women (Enloe, 1989). Serious anthropology has privileged the Other over the similar.

In this chapter, I briefly review the social scientific literature on tourism and issues of cultural commoditization and resistance. I argue that anthropology must take tourism and tourists seriously. It must generate sympathetic, differentiated accounts of the actual practices of tourists, highlighting the mutual determination of tourist consumption and indigenous production. While anthropology should incorporate the new insights and methods of post-structuralist approaches, I argue that many "postmodern" accounts of tourism have dematerialized and depoliticized its impacts. Anthropology must ground the analysis of cultural re-construction and tourist-host interaction in empirical and politically informed ethnographic accounts.

## Tourism: Poison or Panacea?

It was only in the 1970's that tourism per se became a object of sustained anthropological inquiry, promoted in part by the 1973 launching of the Annals of Tourism Research. Prior to this the study of tourism was fragmented into economics, leisure studies, history, and -- only in small measure-- anthropology (Graburn and Jafari, 1991). There was what van

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den Berghe has called a "panglossian" versus "catastrophic" dualism in the literature of the time (van den Berghe, 1992:235). In the early 1960's, panglossian economists hailed tourism as the panacea to development woes. Later, as anti-imperialist and Marxian analyses took root in some sectors of the academy, critiques grew more numerous.

Once regarded as a painless path to Third World development, tourism is now widely recognized as a risky business, vulnerable to "political instability" that scares off visitors, unpredictable fashions or recession in the wealthy societies of the North, and seasonal booms and busts. Expensive infrastructure development -- hotels, airports, sewage systems -- is often under foreign control. Profits then flow out of the country and into the hands of multinational corporations, while environmental costs burden the local community, and little benefit ripples outward into the rural areas surrounding tourist enclaves. As farmlands are transformed into pool decks, haphazard development and pollution often follow. Existing social and economic inequalities are frequently exacerbated as prices for land and commodities skyrocket. Until recently, social scientists were almost uniformly critical of the impacts of tourism, particularly the transformation of traditional culture into spectacles for the consumption of outsiders. In The Golden Hordes, Turner and Ash (1975) lamented the growth of a "leisure periphery" in the Third World. Tourism, they claimed, is the enemy of authenticity.

Since their book was published, tourism has continued to grow, but in a new direction. Hordes of mass tourists, disgorged from their air conditioned buses, cameras clicking, have been joined by legions of intrepid travelers -- eco-tourists, ethnic tourists, adventure tourists -- in search of unspoiled locales off the beaten track. Traveling on low budgets,

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much of their money is spent in small, locally owned enterprises. Many of these new travelers are young and disenchanted with the consumer culture of the West. Simultaneous with the emergence of post-structuralist deconstructions of essentialist notions of identity and "authenticity," these travelers' quest for authentic people and handmade goods now subsidizes many endangered cultural and artistic traditions, and has led, in some instances, to a cultural efflorescence at the "margins" of the world. In the context of Third World debt and First World industrial dominance, tourism and handicraft production are among the few viable options that remain for many rural communities, particularly landless refugees. Nature tourism has led to the creation of a number of ecological preserves, such as the Annapurna Conservation Area in Nepal favored by mountain trekkers. But "alternative travelers," who are often at pains to differentiate themselves from ordinary, destructive "tourists," inevitably bring change to the "timeless" peoples they visit. Tourism pulls indigenous communities further into international flows of money, goods, and culture over which they exert little control. Alternative travelers often form the first wave of the very commercialism they attempt to escape. The Annapurna region now bristles with signs in English advertising lodges serving pizza and Coca-cola, and toilet paper lines the trails.

Tourism, however, is but one of many forces of change in the Third World, occurring in tandem with the general expansion of industrial capitalism, the concentration of land ownership, and increased pressure on resources by population growth. Sweeping and undifferentiated criticisms of the impacts of tourism are being displaced by empirical research that attempts to specify the effects of tourism while recognizing its connection to other political and economic forces (Dogan, 1989; Nash, D., 1981).

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A focus on handicrafts provides a convenient window through which to carry out research linking cultural production in specific locales to systems of exchange and consumption globally. As a recent collection of essays on artisan production in Central America demonstrates, more nuanced field studies are now being conducted which document the contradictory but sometimes beneficial effects of tourism and handicraft production on local economies as well as gender and ethnic relations (Nash, 1993; Tice, 1996). In towns subject to "ethnic tourism" and not (yet) dominated by large investors --such as Dharamsala -- most of the income generated by tourism stays within the community. Commodity production for tourists can augment meager household incomes, empowering women formerly dependent on men, allowing them to remain unmarried and set up their own households. But this new source of cash may also exacerbate gender and ethnic conflicts while cheapening products and promoting inter-familial and self exploitation ( Nash, op. cit.; Stromberg-Pellezi, 1993). Craft workers producing tourist commodities are in a subordinate position in the international division of labor, and grow dependent on distant and unstable foreign markets (Stephan, 1993).

## Traveling Social Science

Most of the social science literature on tourism has focused on the "impact" of tourism on indigenous "hosts." Despite the title, the majority of the articles in Host and Guests barely mentioned the guests. Tourists, when they make an appearance at all in anthropological literature, tend to constitute a generalized, faceless other.

Cohen (1988a), however, notes a progression in the sociological literature towards a more differentiated, emic treatment of tourist behavior

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and motivation. In his summary and analysis of the three major "trends in the qualitative sociology" of tourism, Cohen begins with the historian Daniel Boorstin's (1962) The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America. Boorstin's dissection of modern culture replicated the venerable dichotomy of "tourists" and "travelers," grieving for the "lost art of travel" which had been replaced by mass tourism. For Boorstin, "the traveler. . . . was working at something; the tourist was a pleasure seeker" for which "pseudo" culture was not only sufficient, but preferred (quoted in Cohen,1988a). While Boorstin's confident distinction between the pseudo and the real would not be taken very seriously by current post-structuralist cultural studies, his tourist/traveler dichotomy is still repeated not only in the social sciences but also by many self-proclaimed "travelers." Boorstin's broad-brush depiction of mass tourism, with it's elitist and stereotyped treatment of working and middle-class tourism, is continued in the 1975 Turner and Ash book The Golden Hordes. In neither of these texts do we hear the "voice" of the subject.

Cohen recognizes the origins of the second trend in tourism studies as Dean MacCannell's influential The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class (1989 [1976]), the first analysis of tourism fully employing social theory (in this case, structuralism and semiotics). MacCannell called for a "sociology of leisure," arguing that "the tourist is one of the best models for modern-man-in-general" (p. 1). However, despite his claims of having carried out an ethnography of tourists, there is little in the way of empirical description of tourist behavior. In fact, MacCannel replicates the structuralist disappearance of the subject, replaced largely by semiotic readings of published texts and tourist sites. Space replaces individuals; discourse replaces actual speech.

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MacCannel reads in the "system" of attractions "an unplanned typology of structure that provides direct access to the modern consciousness" (ibid.:4) In accord with various "post-industrial" and post-structuralist theorists, he further claims that the analysis of mass leisure has become more salient than that of productive relations. In the "Modern" era, social identities are primarily constructed in consumption and leisure rather than work. The idea has spread that "not merely play and games, but life itself is supposed to be fun." Thus, he suggests, social analysis cannot make sense of modernity by studying class, status, power, and "related sociological antiquities" (ibid.:35). "Work becomes the site of touristic interest," and sightseeing constructs a false impression of a unified and direct relation between the self and a fragmented social totality. "Sightseeing," he writes, " is a kind of ritual played to the differentiations of society" (ibid.:13). MacCannell carries forward Boorstin's critique of the inauthentic nature of modern life, with tourism as the type case, proposing that the modern tourist is actually seeking this lacking authenticity. Unfortunately, the tourism produces largely a "staged authenticity," and the search promotes a new kind of cultural imperialism that freezes indigenous peoples in a pose of difference.

The most obvious problem with MacCannell's work is his undifferentiated and non-empirical analysis of THE tourist. MacCannell allows his generalized tourist little self-knowledge, steadfastly maintaining the superiority of the anthropologist, who is self-conscious and purposeful. Although MacCannell can be faulted for his sweeping generalities, his work, especially the concepts of "reconstructed ethnicity" and "staged authenticity," has proved very influential, providing useful hypotheses for the kind of empirical accounts MacCannell has not himself provided.

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**Tourism and Pilgrimage**

Cohen writes that the third trend in qualitative tourism research, one moving towards a more emic and empirical focus on touristic experience, was influenced by Victor Turner's work on pilgrimage. Turner described the establishment of "communitas" among pilgrims who temporarily leave behind the social hierarchies and roles of ordinary existence. While not analyzing tourism directly, Turner wrote that even people sunning on anonymous beaches are seeking an almost sacred state unavailable in their workaday lives (Turner, 1977; Turner and Turner, 1978). Many have described the historical continuities of pilgrimage and tourism, noting that sight-seeing has always been part of the pilgrim's progress. Thomas Cook, a Baptist minister, began his tourism empire in 1843 with an organized tour to a temperance meeting. Later he offered trips to holy sites in Palestine, promoted rail and hotel standardization, and offered the first traveler's checks (Graburn, 1977; Urry, 1990). Graburn considers tourism a "sacred journey," and holidays as Holy days that revitalize the self. Cohen wrote that the voluntary poverty adopted by many tourists heightened the sacred quality of travel (Cohen, 1973).

Travel as a form of pilgrimage is particularly relevant to Dharamsala, which has become both a pilgrimage site for Tibetans and a refuge for self-styled New Age pilgrims seeking spiritual renewal. This thesis will describe some of these pilgrim-travelers, who take up lives of simplicity or even seek out hardship in a quest for authentic experience. However, the "poverty" of these travelers is temporary and, relative to the local population, more a pose than a reality. While it is difficult not to be cynical about many of their "quests," it is also difficult to make any absolute distinctions between "serious" pilgrims and "frivolous" tourists.

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As Pfaffenberg has shown in Sri Lanka, tourists can be quite serious, and pilgrims quite playful (Pfaffenberger, 1983).

An exclusive focus on the emics of tourism as a sacred journey de-emphasizes the political-economic analysis needed to make sense of the multiple styles and impacts of travel. The opportunity for and style of travel or pilgrimage is differentiated with income level, and tourism markets stratify both guests and hosts along class, ethnic, and gender lines. Pilgrimage and tourism often re-enforce rather then suspends social hierarchies. Among pilgrims, contrary to Turner's thesis, there is often greater conformity to structure than to "anti-structure." The journey itself can be seen as a structure reaffirming quest, strengthening commitment to received religious ethics. Messerschmidt's depiction of the Hindu pilgrimage to Muktinath, for example, shows that high caste pilgrims are quite concerned to avoid pollution. They perform a purification ritual after the journey to cleanse themselves of the effects of polluting social contacts and lapses in prescribed behaviors. Thus, caste distinctions are actually reinforced by the pilgrimage (Messerschmidt, 1989).

For the local population, the establishment of tourism-cum-pilgrimage sites has unequal impacts, easily overlooked with an exclusively emic analysis. In Dharamsala, Tibetan men tend to dominate the higher prestige, higher paid forms of cultural production, such as religious teaching and painting, while women form the majority of the lower paid carpet weavers. Buddhist monks receive far more interest and support than do nuns. Within the Indian community there is increasing resentment that the Tibetans receive much more attention and support from Westerners. Many Indians are selling their land, giving up farming, and buying taxis and cafés as the price of land soars. The interweaving of

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commerce, ethnicity, and inequality even in tourism-as-pilgrimage is illustrated by the practice of Tibetans who make winter pilgrimages to Bodhgaya, the site of Buddha's enlightenment. There, some hire Indian children from the impoverished state of Bihar, bringing them back to Dharamsala to work at low wages in hotels and restaurants serving Western tourists and spiritual seekers.

**Commoditization: Romanticism and Critique**

If it is becoming more difficult for social scientists to make blanket statements about "the Tourist" or about the political-economic impacts of tourism, in the field of cultural and aesthetic critique, tourism has always and still generates an elitist and romantic critique. This attitude, and it's limitations, are well illustrated by Greenwood's essay in Valene Smith's (1988) influential collection Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism. Once a Spanish Basque municipality had decided to officially sponsor the Alarde festival and develop it into a tourist spectacle, as far as Greenwood was concerned, it had died and lacked any real meaning. The townspeople only participated as actors in a commercial production. It became, in Dean MacCannel's terminology, a performance in "staged authenticity."

The commoditization of ethnic crafts often extends to sacred objects formerly kept out of market circulation. Here, too, the causes and consequences of this new trade are complex and contradictory. Parry and Bloch have described a near universal cultural distinction "between a cycle of short-term exchange which is the legitimate domain of individual-- often acquisitive-- activity, and a cycle of long-term exchanges concerned with the reproduction of the social and economic order" (Parry and Bloch,

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1989:2). These "transactual orders" must be both articulated and held apart. Appadurai (1986) notes that political and religious elites generally reserve the right to fix meanings and enclave sacralized objects, while merchants push for "unfettered equivalence" and exchange.

While there has long been an elite market for "primitive" ritual objects re-contextualized as "art," Graburn (1984) has written that functional religious forms are unlikely to become mass marketed tourist commodities. But this is not completely true with Tibetan ritual goods. For example, thangkas -- religious paintings depicting Tantric deities -- were traditionally commissioned on the recommendation of a lama on occasions such as the death of a relative or for meditation practice. They were not to be sold for profit. Today, thangkas can be bought as souvenirs by Westerners ignorant of their traditional significance. The results of their partial commoditization are contradictory: a larger market enables the Tibetan government-in-exile to employ refugees, train more artists, and increase production, but older artists worry that quality is declining and the meaning of thangkas is being lost. Restrictions on who may produce thangkas have loosened and women are now painting for the first time. Westerners are also training under Tibetan masters, and making innovations in form and technique. Tibetans fear that selling thangkas will result in re-birth in the hell realms, and because thangkas are sacred, their production has remained more traditional and their sale more limited in comparison to secular objects such as carpets and sweaters. However, some ritual goods, such as cast metal bells (*drilbu* ) are mass produced, often with Indian labor, and sold on the tourist market.

The demand for "authentic sacred objects" has been elevated to a new scale by tourism. What is needed is empirical research on how this

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demand is generated and met, and how limits are often placed on the circulation of sacred objects . We must historicize our analyses of commodity circulation, noting both changes and continuities in the "life-histories" of handicrafts and scared objects placed on the tourist market, avoiding romantic dichotomies of pre- and post-tourist production which often merely express our taste.

In Western social thought an exaggerated dichotomy between use value and exchange value, gift and commodity, commerce and community, stretches back from Marx to Aristotle, lending itself to simplistic moralizing about the negative impacts of money on "traditional" societies in general (Perry and Bloch, 1989), and the toxic effects of tourism in particular. We cannot assume that previous forms of artistic production were spiritually "pure" and economically disinterested-- a production of "use" values rather than "exchange" values. As Jane Schneider has argued (1988), pre-capitalist commodity exchange systems were widespread and instrumental in the legitimation and enforcement of power. Previous forms of commodity circulation were often as noxious as those promoted by tourism.

The romantic valorization of pre-touristic cultural forms and economic exchange is echoed by the stereotyped assumption that Third World populations now passively consume Western cultural productions. John Thomlinson has cogently dissected the paternalism implicit in so many critiques of "cultural imperialism." Empirical studies have shown that consumers interpret cultural materials in diverse ways, often in opposition to what producers intend (Tomlinson, 1991). While it is vital to criticize the monopolization of the means of cultural production, too often the words "America," "California," "Capitalism," and "Tourists" serve as

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catch-all cover terms for dismissive judgments upon cultural forms not to intellectuals' taste, substitutes for more specific analysis.

The rejection of romantic critiques and the recognition of complexity and even irony, however, need not lead to an uncritical acceptance of the workings of touristic capitalism, nor a celebration of global commoditization that valorizes "surfaces." Without relying on essentialist conceptions of authenticity we may still distinguish between the divergent aesthetic and political implications of Tibetan monks performing modified sacred dances in Western theaters, and smugglers stealing statues from a temple just featured in National Geographic. The significant issue, I believe, is not purity of origin or contamination by the market, but the question of cultural self-determination. As we shall see, Western materials, motifs, and goods may be adopted for surprisingly "traditional" purposes, and the commercialization of handicrafts and ritual objects does not always lead to a loss of meaning. Rather, additional layers of meaning may be inscribed upon objects by new consumers, while older meanings remain intact for their producers.

**Authenticity and "Resistance"**

MacCannel claims that prior to the growth of mass tourism after W.W.II, "constructed" ethnicity was a dynamic creation of colonialism and resistance. Tourism, however, "museumifies" culture, leading to the "fictional recreation" of "reconstructed" ethnicity for the entertainment of others (MacCannell, 1984). "Ex-primitives" stage their primitiveness now that they have been conquered by the steamroller of modernity spearheaded by touristic imperialism. The faux exotics of the world now "cease to develop in themselves and only contribute to the development of white

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culture" (MacCannell, 1992:179). This is indicative of a romance of the victim rampant among many social scientists. Artistic "resistance" to oppression is considered a valid cultural expression, while cultural production for profit is contemptuously dismissed.

Waterbury reports that the embroidered blouses of San Antonino, Oxaxca have lost their "internal" meaning to the community. They are almost never worn by their producers save at an annual state-sponsored craft fairs. He writes that the blouses are "more of a trademark than an authentic cultural form" (Waterbury, 1989). Waterbury, like many anthropologists, seems to imply that only those symbols which are directed to in-group members are "authentic." Symbols that are externally-directed, especially those that are directed towards the marketplace, are spurious.

Paula Ben-Amos's point is well taken: tourist arts need to studied as communicative systems unto themselves, rather than as degenerate forms of tradition (Ben-Amos, 1977). Ritual and art, clothing and self-identification, are "performances" which are not only "staged" for others of one's kind, but for those others whom one differentiates against or wants to attract. In a later edition of Hosts and Guests, Greenwood recants. The Alarde is alive and well, he reports, the townspeople are involved again, and the interest of others is a source of pride and ethnic identity. In Haiti, performers of Voodoo rituals for tourists still actually go into trance (Cohen, 1988b). Artisans around the globe earn cash by cranking out modified traditional handicrafts for tourists while continuing to earn local reputations through skilled and often sacred production for their own communities and the gods. Graburn (1976), for example, reported that Australian aboriginal artists paint scenes to instruct their children about

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sacred sites, then sell the paintings. Myers (1992) notes that aboriginal artists consider new acrylic paintings "authentic." Perhaps they are simultaneously resisting assimilation and the loss of tradition while taking advantage of the market.

The term "resistance" has been used by anthropologists describing a wide variety of local responses to capitalist expansion, the commoditization of artistic forms, and tourist development promoted by state and corporate interests. "Resistance" is a term heavily loaded with politically hopeful assumptions which tend to obscure the fact that behaviors labeled "resistance" can serve multiple purposes, including further integration into and manipulation of the very systems apparently resisted. In "Ethnographic Aspects of the World Capitalist System," June Nash has convincingly argued that focusing on local resistance to the hierarchical arrangements of the expanding global economy serves to correct the Euro-centrism of many "world systems" analysts for whom production in the "periphery" is passively molded to the requirements of the "core" economies (Nash, 1981). Intensified artisan production should not be simply dismissed as part and parcel of the "global fascism" through tourism prophesied by MacCannell (1992).

The concept of "resistance" can highlight uneven development, local agency, and varieties of productive relations in tourism markets. It is not to this specifying sense of "resistance" that I object, rather to notions of resistance that are tied to nostalgic touristic visions of the noble savage, and to its anthropological counterpart, the isolated community uncontaminated by the West and capitalism. As Marcus and Myers (1995) observe, the kind of thinking that presents the "primitive" as the sole locus of authenticity inevitably defines "mass culture" as inauthentic. One's own

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society is held in contempt and, though its amenities are enjoyed, one hopes the innocents will not be "spoiled" by it, that they will resist, that they will fight for us. But as we have seen, the preservation of ethnic dress, crafts, and other distinguishing signs of ethnic difference are not only resistance to assimilation but *manipulations* of identity for the market -- they are literally trademarks.

Culture is always in process as new forms arise alongside the old. As Crick asks, what culture is not staged? (Crick, 1989). Bruner (1994) argues that concepts and the value of authenticity are relatively new. The question of authenticity arises in struggles over the value and control of cultural production and distribution, and over the ownership of ethnic motifs or sacred objects. Techniques of production, contexts of exchange, and perceptions of the identity of actors in these processes play important roles in establishing the authenticity and market value of ethnic crafts. However, there is often a separation between the "identity" of an object and the identity of the producers, as when Tibetan handicrafts are manufactured by low-paid Nepali children, or when American importers subcontract East Indian companies to produce Zapotec rugs (Stephan, 1993). As we shall see, a major new center for the preservation of Tibetan arts in Dharamsala, the Norbulingka, is the brainchild of a Westerner. It is largely funded through sales of western clothes and accessories with Tibetan motifs, designed by an American and manufactured by Tibetan refugees.

Rather than attempting to locate some static "authentic culture," Anthropological discourse has moved to deconstruct the concept of authenticity. However, whatever its status among academics, authenticity is a demand of tourists that tourees attempt to supply. What is needed, then,

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are empirical descriptions of the observable processes and politics of authentication. What "makes" authenticity for different communities? Who has the authority to differentiate the authentic from the inauthentic? What social and economic relations are structured by the production of authenticity? The demand for authenticity is especially key with regard to Tibetans, who have played a role in western imagination as keepers of timeless spirituality and tradition. How authentic is the plastic Buddha displayed in the Tibetan library's museum, made by an American under the guidance of a Tibetan master artisan and consecrated by a lama? We must describe how Tibetan identity is invoked, and how ethnic and gender divisions of labor are related (or not) to the authentication process and the value assigned to variously conceived objects.

What is true of the consumption of mass produced commodities is true of handicrafts. Daniel Miller writes that while there is always the possibility of the "recontextualization" of mass commodities, we need to avoid the assumption that "all such recontextualization is a form of resistance which should be regarded as inevitably positive in its consequence." At the same time we must reject an alternative romanticism that considers consumption to be always social and communalizing (Miller, 1987: 176). Between these two extremes lies the critical middle path that recognizes that "certain groups retain control over the very means of objectification, while others are forced to attempt to objectify themselves though forms which are produced in the image of other people's interests" (ibid., pg. 45). The task is to discover how touristic cultural production stratifies these possibilities.

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## At Play in the Fields of Production: Post-Modernism and Tourism

Under the influence of post-structuralist theory, some social scientists have managed to evade empirical treatments of the issues surrounding commoditization, authenticity, and resistance by simply deconstructing the terms of touristic discourse. While I have argued that the romantic and essentialist notions that previously guided critiques of tourism must be abandoned, this is only half the chore, for we must follow this deconstruction with a re-construction of sorts: with detailed descriptions and analyses of how the very concepts we have deconstructed are still deployed by tourists, tourees, and the tourism industry. Anthropologists must also move beyond the discursive to describe on-the-ground political and economic interests and conflicts that mark cultural production, exchange, and consumption.

Given the unique nature of the tourism industry the seductions of the post-structuralist theory are not surprising. Tourism is an archetypal "post-modern" phenomenon. It was a "post-Fordist" industry avant la lettre: non-industrial, highly mobile, volatile, consumer driven, and structured largely into a two-tiered hierarchy with a few monopolies and entrepreneurs employing a mass of low-paid service workers. Driven by the demand for experience and authenticity, tourism markets are dependent on image and swings of fashion. There is a tremendous investment in advertising and impression management. Tourism lends itself to semiotic and post-modernist analyses of desiring bodies, representation, and inventions of tradition. MacCannell writes that the "main procedure employed by tourism precisely parallels the founding theoretical gesture of postmodernism: an arbitrary line is drawn across the path of history-- post

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modernists jump across the line in one direction, into the historyless void, and tourists jump in the other, to 'where the action was'" (1992: xii).

Given the unusual nature of the industry, tourism studies cannot rely solely on unreconstructed materialist and political-economic analyses for a social and cultural critique. Marxist analysis, the post-modernists point out, fetishizes production and labor to the neglect of the imagery and consumption so central to tourism. Although in the Grundrisse Marx wrote that production, distribution, and consumption "form a perfect connection," he privileged production as the causal variable and consumption as its effect. "Consumption," he wrote, "is created by production not only objectively but also subjectively. Production thus creates the consumer" (Marx, 1971 [1858]: 24-26). Baudrillard has argued that Marx's privileging of work as the site of self- realization and the creation of value mirrors the instrumental rationality of the Bourgeois world-view. "Man" is economic man, and value is reduced to "the sign of utility." Marxist concepts of "use" and "exchange" value romanticize pre-market exchange systems, and assume that the critic can perceive some authentic needs beneath the artificiality generated by commodity fetishism (Baudrillard, 1975).

It is impossible for contemporary theorists to seriously assert an absolute distinction between natural and pseudo needs, and the labor theory of value is not very useful for analyzing the value of images. As MacCannell states, the value of tourist commodities is not determined by their direct labor, rather by the experience they produce (or, I would add, promise) (MacCannell, 1989 [1976]). We needn't go so far as the "post-industrial" prophets and claim with Daniel Miller that "consumption is now at the vanguard of history" (Miller, 1987:213) to realize that tourism

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studies must evaluate consumer demands, including demands for nebulous "commodities" like authenticity and ethnic identity. The alienation of craft artisans from their product may not, in fact, originate at the site of production, which is often self-owned and located in the home, but on a market where exchange rates and cultural differences distance producers from consumers, and in consumption where the indigenous meaning of goods are often radically transformed. In taking these other factors into account, it is possible to maintain a political loyalty to producers without fetishizing production.

Ted Benton's (1989) "ecological reconstruction" of Marxism is useful for considering revisions in Marxist theory that might prove useful to tourism studies. For Marx, Benton argues, nature is an unproblematic backdrop for productive activities whose limits are not natural but social. This assumption arose out of an (over) reaction to Malthusian conservatism. However, ecologists cite many instances in which nature limits capital accumulation, especially in labor processes in which the subject of labor is not a raw material directly transformed into commodities, but the conditions under which the raw materials grow and develop. Benton points to the timber and fishing industries as examples of production that are governed by natural cycles as well as social demands. Marxist productivist logic overemphasizes intentionality in the labor process, overlooking unintended and even totally unforeseen consequences -- such as toxic waste build up, deforestation, erosion, and extinction -- which limit capital accumulation. These kinds of limits are not due solely to historically specific contradictions in the capitalist mode of production, for they also occurred in pre-capitalist societies.

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In tourism, the unintended consequences of development may include both cultural and environmental effects which limit the possibilities for further growth. For example, in Dharamsala, there is severe deforestation and solid waste build-up. As tourism grows, the town becomes less "picturesque" and many tourists are disappointed. Someday they may stop coming. Dharamsala may also reach the "natural limits" of a cultural good unique to the tourism market: "unspoiled exotics."

In tourism there is an economy not only of commodities and services, but of the quality of social interactions and the uniqueness of the landscape -- "dramatic," "unspoiled," "friendly," "savage," "colorful," "hostile" (Urry, 1990). Labor is not only directed at material objects, but at impressions. The dress, behavior, and attitudes of service workers, merchants, and artisans may in large part determine the value of an exotic locale and the goods it produces. However, tourism development may lead rapidly to the disappearance of the desired commodities. The perfect, isolated beach is never the same after it has been "discovered." The exotic other is not quite so interesting when he sports a baseball hat and a Madonna T-shirt. So, writes MacCannell, the idea that primitivism is a renewable resource is a myth (MacCannell, 1990). Borrowing from the work of the economists Hirsh and Moshen, Urry has called tourism a "positional economy" (Urry, 1990) in which consumption is inescapably relational; as one person consumes the others must consume less. In the tourism market, authenticity is always scarce and the ghost of Malthus lives.

Baudrillard has called for a theory of seduction to replace the Marxist emphasis on production (Baudrillard, 1988a). Image obviously plays such a key role in tourism, and as we shall see, traveler's tales are

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now outpaced by travel literature, and adventurers have begun to copy the travelogues. To understand tourism we must begin to construct a political-economy of the sign, as Baudrillard began working towards in his early writings. In later work, however, Baudrillard abandons the attempt to get beneath the dizzying proliferation of images in the post-modern era, leaving us to the seduction of surfaces and "simulacra" (copies of reality, or copies of copies). According to Baudrillard, simulacra -- or our understanding of them -- have gone through a four step process. First they are representations of an underlying reality; second, they mask and pervert that reality; third, they mask the absence of an underlying reality; fourth, they have no relation to any reality at all (other than simulacra). From a naive trust in the senses, we have moved to a metaphysics of doubt, thence to full skepticism, and finally to the realization that appearance is the only reality

The relevance of such assertions for tourism is obvious. This alienated cultural condition generates a nostalgia for the real, for origins, for authenticity, and capital is ready to manufacture simulations to meet the demand. Umberto Eco calls his road trip through the tourist attractions of the western U.S. Travels in Hyperreality, reading the various cheesy dioramas and wax museums he encountered as attempts to simulate a history that has already disappeared. To compensate, simulations are constructed which are even more elaborate than the original. More than real, they are "hyper-real" (Eco, 1986). But such simulations are not only found in California.

In Merkers, Germany, visitors can go 500 meters below ground in a salt and potash mine to see holographs recreating -- just as Dwight Eisenhower saw it on April 12, 1945 -- a cache of gold, cash, and stolen

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art works hidden by the Nazis (Indian Express, Sept. 15, 1993). As French farmers are hit hard by global "free trade," the French ministry of agriculture is encouraging farmers to diversify into tourism. By 1993, approximately 20,000 farmers were renting out country cottages and bed and breakfast rooms (Newsweek, International, Nov. 23, 1992:24-6 ). Real farming is replaced by idealized "traditional farms" for tourists. In Hawaii's Polynesian Cultural Center, costumed college students perform for tourists in a "concrete terrarium of pseudo-villages and mock ceremonies" (Zurick, 1995:85). And outside Dharamsala, in a new center named for the Dalai Lama's park and palace in Lhasa, the Norbulingka, one can picnic in a Japanese garden and help preserve Tibetan arts by purchasing handbags and T-shirts.

The post-modern condition and the peculiarities of tourism led Thurot and Thurot (1983) to conclude that a "direct analysis" of tourist behavior is not possible. Rather, we must begin with representation. Georges van den Abbeele goes so far as to tell us that "Discourse on travel can only produce a meta- or theoretical discourse. . . . It is radically impossible to talk about travel in empirical terms" (van den Abbeele, 1980:12). Crick advises anthropologists to insert a new sense of the ludic into their accounts. What is it, he asks, that we miss because we are "working" that tourists may decipher at play? (Crick, 1985).

But a playful, post-modernist approach lends itself far too easily to simplistic, breezy accounts that reproduce some very old fashioned stereotypes. Baudrillard's depiction of the United States in America (1988b), like Eco's, is a shallow vision glimpsed through the windshield of a car. These accounts tell us very little of the empirical complexity and conflicts of American life. They do more to reveal that Eco and

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Baudrillard are intellectual snobs who, as Bruner points out, unwittingly reproduce an essentialist original/copy dichotomy. For them, the original is Europe (Bruner, 1994).

In many post-structuralist accounts, travel has become a metaphor for the more general social and cultural shifts and disjunctures of our era. "To examine travel is to examine theory" (Arshi, et. al, 1994) claim a group of contributors to the recent book Travelers' Tales (Robertson, et al, 1994). In a Cultural Studies vein, it is predictably a text in which few actual travelers are heard from, save the odd 18th century text. It has become academically fashionable to refer to refugees as "diasporas," and to use them as one in a series of "traveling metaphors" in the deployment of the various "posts" -- post-modernism, post-colonialism, post-structuralism. According to Clifford, for the diasporic consciousness "decentered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of return" (Clifford 1994:306). This is decidedly not the case with Tibetan refugees who, while they indeed rely on lateral transnational economic networks, advertise and promote their interests precisely around a teleology of return and an appeal for the preservation of (sometimes invented) traditions. Like the aborigines Fred Myers writes of, they are less embodiments of an intellectual discourse that valorizes "nomads," than "precisely those who insist in not being displaced" (Myers, 1992:343).

Even MacCannell, who has earlier been critical of a "nomadology" that equates the suffering of the homeless with the hardships of the adventure traveler (1989), continues his dismissal of tourists in defining two types of "nomads" at opposite extremes of post-modern social life. At one pole are "heroes" who collect "nothing but perishables, impressions

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and stories . . . for the nomad, the only reality is the imagination." These are typically homeless, migrants, and refugees "who leave home without knowing where they will end up" (1992:4). At the other pole is presumably The Tourist who "consumes countries and attempts to identify not with fellow tourists but with sedentary peoples encountered along the way." Never shy of hyperbole, MacCannell warns us that the ultimate goal of this type of travel is "not for freedom but for worldwide containment and control" -- one market, one passport, one currency, "i.e., global fascism" (ibid.:5). The former's totem is a "multicolored bird," the latter's is "a bird of prey."

While the imagery is certainly poetic, MacCannell comes close to romanticizing what real homeless people and refugees attempt to escape. Tibetan refugees are not heroes for choosing their stateless condition, but victims whose greatest desire is precisely for the "real estate" tied to "origin" that MacCannell dismisses. We could say that they are heroes who wish to be villains. It is only for the refugees from affluence, certain travelers who temporarily play nomad, that the only reality is the imagination.

But again, as interesting as speculations about "diasporic consciousness" or tourists-as-theorists of a post-modern "traveling culture" may be, we do not yet know enough about real diaporas, and even less about actual tourists, to appropriate them very usefully as metaphors for our general condition.

Post-modernist approaches sometimes are so self-reflexive that the people in tourism industries nearly disappear, while aspects of their lives that "remain stubbornly determined" are overlooked (MacCannell 1992:3). A case in point is the paper-cum-performance presented at the "Consuming

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Identities" panel at the American Anthropological Association meetings in 1991. With their essay "The Body and Tourism," Eeva Jokinen and Soile Viejola acted out "touring contemporary research on tourism." Provocative and clever, the two took snapshots of the audience as they recounted their fictional trip to Mallorca, eavesdropping on conversations with tourism theorists like MacCannel, John Urry, and Chris Rojek on the plane, at the beach, and in the disco. "Established academic discourse" treats space and behavior as a visual field, they inform us, but "the observed Object may have a body" (1991:18). They quote Barthes: "Reading is writing, which is a gesture of the body." Even our theorizing, then, is a gesture of the body. I had no problem with their argument. Yes: let us focus more on the rituals of the body -- sunning, moving, gazing, being gazed upon. But I couldn't help noticing that there was little mention of the laboring bodies that made this leisurely narrative possible. What of the servants who brought them cocktails as the authors mused about Judith Butler and Foucault?

Even when post-modern theorists focus on the "hard reality" of ethnic cultural production, on material culture, we often find ourselves adrift in the textual. Bouquet's article "Images of Artifacts" describes layers of representation at a Portuguese exhibit of Melanesian objects originally collected sixty years ago by Germans. Having languished in museum vaults for decades during fascist rule, the meaning and function of the artifacts now on display were filtered through the German's scientistic encoding, in turn translated into Portuguese by self-reflexive curators, and further interpreted by the museum goers. The interpretation and display of the objects had itself become an object of interpretation and display. How can we possibly get to the bottom of all this? Presenting material culture

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produces more texts (Bouquet, 1991). Van Beck finds the problem a bit overblown. Does this inevitable layering require that our writing also be obscure? Bouquet doesn't touch at all on the political economy of Melanesia and colonialism that might lead to a more clarifying analysis (van Beck, 1991).

The "post-modern" condition is not so different from "modernity" that we cannot draw maps to usefully guide us. Although we recognize that our maps are "always already" contingent representations, we need not focus soley on their contingency, nor celebrate that we are lost. We can chart the terrain pragmatically if we know roughly where we want to go. The notion that ours is a time especially fragmented, in which the dominant cultural strategy is pastiche (Jameson, 1984) may indicate a residual romanticism of the pure and authentic primitive.

Tourism studies certainly must make sense of the proliferation of simulacra, but the privileging of discourse over behavior is premature. We have hardly begun to generate studies that take tourists seriously, and empirically describe their practices in any but the most generalized terms. Those who read tourism exclusively in terms of signification are like those who would interpret the economy solely by watching the stock market, abstracting to the point of de-materializing social and economic processes with profound impacts on human beings, both producers and consumers.

Tourism is of course shot through with seduction, but the surfaces valorized by Baudrillard are someone's productions, and someone reaps the profits. Touristic simulation and mimesis are forms of cultural production with consequences for other "traditional" forms of production. Outside the misty realm of academic discourse, for whom is the play of signification more significant than who owns what? (Ewing, 1996). Because the

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demands of consumers have direct impacts on the lives of indigenous producers, because the cultures of producers shape the goods and services demanded by consumers, and because the value of touristic goods and services are negotiated through the exchange of both the desiring gaze and cold hard cash, tourism studies must simultaneously grapple with production and consumption, representation and behavior, symbolic and economic exchange.

Contrary to the notion that we cannot empirically research post-modern tourism, what we can and must generate are "fine-grained descriptions of historical rupture, the real conditions of existence of fragmented subjects, actual expressions of the 'valorization of surfaces,' and concrete examples of the 'simulacrum'" (MacCannell, 1992:289). As Crick concludes in his call for a ludic approach: "if anything goes, seriousness, better description and more demanding fieldwork are in the cards too (Crick, 1985:86). It is not quite right to assert, as do Errington and Gewertz, that "anthropology needs not a heightened sense of the ludic but of the political" (1989:39). What is needed is a description of how the ludic *is* political.

## Conclusion: Looking at Handicrafts

Anthropology needs to study tourism seriously and empirically. To do so, it must jettison obsolete notions of static cultural forms and authenticity in favor of detailed accounts of the interactive processes and politics that construct (and profit from) "authentic" cultural production. We cannot rely on purely discursive readings of tourism-as-metaphor. Rather, we need to understand the very real social, political, and economic impacts of commoditization. The anthropological study of tourism needs

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to begin to examine both sides of the industry -- both hosts and guests -- in an integrated fashion. We must abandon elitist generalizations about tourists in favor of sympathetic research into the diverse practices of actual tourists in specific locales, highlighting the mutual determination of "indigeous" production and identity and "external" consumption. This thesis attempts to begin such an integrated treatment.

Looking at handicrafts provides an entry into the entire complex of touristic production, exchange, and consumption. Art is one of the "main sites for tracking, representing, and performing the effects of difference in contemporary life" (Marcus and Myers 1995:1). Tourist art, as Appadurai writes, is a unique "form of commodity traffic [exchange] in which group identities of producers [production] are tokens for the status politics of consumers" [consumption]" (Appadurai, 1986:47). Describing each phase in the "biographies" of ethnic crafts and examining the social relations structured by them can produce accounts which do not reduce one process to another, but highlight their mutual determination.

The site of production is an excellent place to investigate the differential benefits of tourism development, as well as its impacts on class, gender, and ethnic structures (Nash, 1993; Stephan, 1993; Tice, 1995). In examining exchange, we can describe the interactions of hosts and guests, cultural brokering, and the establishment of authenticity in the marketplace. The tourism market is revealed as a form of ethnic relations when, as in Dharamsala, ethnic groups monopolize and become identified through the provision of certain services and commodities (van den Berghe, 1992). In examining exchange, we may also discover cultural limits to the circulation of historically or spiritually significant objects. Focusing on handicraft consumption provides some balance to research that

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has previously emphasized production. Demand, as Scott Cook notes, has been "empirically and analytically understudied" and monographs which discuss consumption have been impressionistic and speculative (Cook, 1993: 60). As Rutz and Orlove write (1989), consumption cannot be explained purely as an "outcome" of production and exchange. It carries its own causal force.

However, to privilege consumption would be to repeat the reductionist mistake that overlooks the interdependence of production, exchange, and consumption. As Mintz writes, "not to ask how meaning is put into behavior, to read the product without the production, is to ignore history once again." With a more holistic approach, "one decodes the process of codification, and not merely the code itself" (Mintz, 1985:14). In looking at tourist consumption we can tie the motivations and experiences of a variety of travelers to different impacts on a stratified local community, and link consumer desire to indigenous production and identity. In the case of Dharamsala, we will see that consumers sometimes begin to take control of the cultural production of others, and the identity and "authorship" of "Tibetan culture" is in question.

The analysis of this cultural and economic force must attend to both the meaning laden "mode of information" privileged by post-modern theorists and the mode of production emphasized by materialists. While I cannot claim to have produced an integrated thesis that achieves all that I have argued we should work towards, this dissertation will return constantly to the actual labor in, control over, and politics surrounding tourist arts, while simultaneously describing how divergent consumers imbue the arts with symbolic values that shape their production and exchange. It will describe handicrafts as both "artifacts" and "fetishes."

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# CHAPTER THREE

# BEYOND THE PEAKS: THE TIBETAN NATION IN THE WORLD AND THE IMAGINATION

> Countries of memory that were once real countries again make their appearance: once erased from the map, they first reappear as ghost image, quickly draw substance to themselves, and soon are undeniably here. [Andrei Codrescu, 1988:57]

> Communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuiness, but by the style in which they are imagined. [Benedict Anderson, 1983:15]

> Tibetans are seen as cuddly people with their prayer wheels and their yaks, living up in the mountains, and then the Chinese came and destroyed it all. But there is another truth. We had armies. We are not all monks. [Jamyang Norbu, in Gilbert, 1992:7]

The deconstruction of travelers' nostalgia for direct experience, timeless traditions, and authenticity has become, as Marcus and Myers note, "somewhat of a cottage industry" (Marcus and Myers, 1995:17). However, simply "unpacking" the Shangri-la myth is incomplete. Instead, this chapter attempts to initiate a description and analysis of the pragmatic *use* of the Shangri-la myth in the construction and promotion of a Tibetan nation in exile that, like the handicraft production described in later chapters, is shaped both by indigenous history and values and by foreign consumers and global politics.

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The purpose of this chapter is not in any way to deny the legitimate rights of Tibetans to self-determination, nor to support Chinese claims that Tibet has always been a part of China. Rather, it seeks to highlight the ways in which nationalist discourse deploy idealized representations of history, cultural traditions, and homogeneity to stake a claim on the world stage, asserting its legitimacy in a language that meets the expectations of the global audience. However, while "human rights," "national sovereignty," and the "Shangri-la" myth are constructions that arose far beyond the Himalayas, Tibetans are not simply victims of a Western discursive hegemony. As Watkins (1996) and Adams (1996) have demonstrated, Tibetan peoples are often adept at staging and defining international encounters on their own terms. Despite the critique of essentialist representations of indigenous peoples currently popular among Western academics, such myths are often tightly embraced by Third World peoples themselves, used to unify them internally and elicit support externally. In the case of Tibetan refugees, nationalist appeals to Western supporters reveal the strategic use and satisfaction of New Age utopian and Orientalist fantasies, imaginings which, it is speculated, are tied to guilt for an imperialist past and to dissatisfactions with the consumerist present.

Tibetan nationalist discourse thus largely transcends Geertz's (1973) dichotomy between the post-colonial rhetorics of "epochalism" (appeals to modern history and progressive values) and "essentialism" (appeals to indigenous tradition) by evoking both progressive utopian hopes and nostalgia for an imaginary past. In doing so, the production and promotion of Tibetan nationalism parallels the production and marketing of Tibetan handicrafts, reflecting the desires of both Tibetans and Westerners for the authentic original, even as the original changes to meet those desires. This

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new "postmodern" nationalism is representative of a form of nation building and cultural production unique to the media saturated late 20th century, one that strategically exploits Western romantic images of indigenous people and employs global networks of foreign activists and entrepreneurs to claim cultural identity, authenticity, and sovereignty.

**To Save Tibet**

On March 10, 1991, on the thirty-second commemoration of Tibetan National Day, a proclamation from the Office of the Mayor of New York was read to a small assembly of Tibetan refugees, American Buddhists, journalists, and curious passers-by near the United Nations building. In part it read that "for centuries the people of Tibet, a high plateau surrounded by beautiful mountain ranges, and long an independent country lived in peace and had very limited contact with the outside world." A pamphlet from the Tibet fund circulating that day informed readers that "Tibet--the mythical Shangri-la--until very recently was an isolated land whose people lived in harmony with each other and their environment." Numerous handouts and speakers contrasted the isolation of Tibet prior to the 1959 Chinese occupation with the contemporary situation in which Tibet has become an internal colony of the People's Republic, its people brutalized and timeless culture devastated.

For many in the West, Tibetan culture represents pacifistic other-worldly spirituality, an innocent lamb now thrown to the global wolves, the unarmed monk under the gun of an atheistic state. On the commencement of festivities in New York city in honor of "The International Year of Tibet" Elsie Walker, president of Tibet House, said "Everyone wants to help Tibetans-- these people whose only weapons are

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art, music and religious belief, and whose only defense is prayer." (New York Newsday, Oct. 11, 1991, p. 12). Throw into the equation a last battle against retreating Communist tyranny, and, as Jeanne Kirkpatrick (1991) once wrote, "to save Tibet is to save the world."

There is a radical disjuncture between the rhetoric which represents Tibet as an isolated, unified, and peaceful nation prior to the Chinese occupation, and a Tibetan history that reveals centuries of conflict between regional, religious, and familial factions, as well as continuous international entanglements by which competing elites sought external support to establish political dominance.

## Tibet Before 1951

Tibet, on the "roof of the world" in the rain shadow of the Himalayas, attempted to remain aloof from global colonial and imperialist struggles. Nominally under Manchu sovereignty for centuries, Tibet enjoyed a practical independence, maintaining an imperfectly unified political-religious state under the dominance of Tibetan Buddhist monastic institutions. Tibet's recorded history presents no known cases of serious class conflict or peasant revolt. However, despite notions about the timeless isolation of Tibet as a unified and peaceful nation, a short review of Tibetan society and history reveals enormous social, cultural and political diversity, violent regional and religious conflicts, and continuous foreign influences, both political and cultural.

At an average elevation of 11,000 feet, the Tibetan plateau is dry and affords little arable land and a short growing season. The majority of Tibetan peoples (estimated at about 5 million people in 1982; Samuel, 1993) lived in scattered agricultural valleys divided by mountain ranges

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and expanses of grasslands, linked by long distance trade, nomadic pastoralists, and monastic networks. Cities were few and relatively small, and industrial development minimal. In rural areas, the household was the basic unit of production. Although continuity of the household (or the "tenthold" among the pastoral population) and it's land rights and property was an important value, according to Samuel (ibid.), the importance of lineages (*rhü* ) and patrilineality was relatively muted, with some regional and aristocratic exceptions. Households were organized into polyandrous, extended, or joint families to meet varied labor and inheritance requirements. Many households engaged in multiple arenas of economic production, with some members specializing in agriculture, in herding, or in trade.

The monasteries and nunneries provided outlets for "excess" family members who might otherwise make claims on inheritance or the right to marry and reproduce, as well as meeting both spiritual values and the practical needs of the Tibetan political-religious system. Power and wealth were largely based on the hereditary manorial estates of aristocrats, incarnate lamas, and monastic institutions, which Goldstein estimates held some 50-62% of the arable land by the 20th century (Goldstein, 1989). The monasteries have been said to account for 25% of the male population, although Samuel estimates 10-12% for the central Tibetan region and less elsewhere.

The class stratification of pre-occupation Tibetan societies varied regionally. Aziz (1978) has described a basic four-fold stratification in the D'ing-ri area (southwest of Lhasa) which may be broadly representative of the central Tibetan agricultural region. The top two strata were the nobles or *ger-pa* and the *ngag-pa*, hereditary priests. These two birth ascribed

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classes formed a very small part of the population. The aristocratic *ger-pa* generally lived in more urbanized adminstrative centers, managed hereditary manorial estates, and sometimes worked for the central government. The *ngag-pa* were a largely endogamous "caste" usually tied to temples and monasteries, small or large, with celibate or marrying inmates.

The largest strata was the *miser*, or commoners, which Aziz estimates represented some 90% of the population. Within this strata were the *dr'ong-pa* , farmers tied to manorial estates (monastic, government, or aristocratic) system likened by Goldstein (in a somewhat controversial analogy) to European serfdom (Goldstein, 1986; 1989). Corporate *t'rel-pa* or taxpaying households were obligated to provide labor for the estates but also enjoyed rights over hereditary land. Many owned livestock and engaged in trade, and the most sucessful sometimes hired or leased their land to landless, non taxpaying *dü-chung* (literally "small smoke"). These families were less cohesive and often transient, although this status was sometimes temporary and debt-induced. The *tsong-pa*, or full time traders, were *t'rel-pa* who generally lived in urban centers, as did artisans. The most skilled artisans were in later centuries organized into associations that filled orders from the government. Artisans were commoners, alhough the most skilled might become quite affluent, particularly those prodoucing works of religious devotion. Other artisans, such as potters and ironsmiths, were considered quite lowly. At the very bottom were the *ya-wa* or outcastes, about whom little has been documented. They formed some 10% of the population in D'ing-ri and performed polluting labor such as tanning and butchering. Contact with them was considered defiling (Aziz, ibid).

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Tibetans use the term "rik" (*rigs* ) to describe social origin or "race." Although rik was sometimes associated with specific occupations, Tibetan stratification was neither purely "caste" nor class based (Ronge, 1978). The social strata were associated with forms of ownership that did not precisely coincide with hereditary status critera. There was a fair amount of social mobility in comparison to Hindu South Asia, and occupations were not always chosen according to familial tradition, but also by economic considerations or the needs of local landlords (Ronge, ibid). Trade and monastic careers provided avenues for social advancement beyond one's rik.

Although there are fundamental similarities in the social structure, language, dress, and religion of Tibetan peoples, there also existed significant differences in urban/rural and agricultural/pastoral lifeways, and great regional cultural and political variation. Overall, the picture of Tibetan societies was one of fluidity, flexibility, and decentralization (Samuel, 1993). Samuel points out that like "state-less" Islamic societies, Tibet had a low population density, difficulties in communications, and heavy reliance on long distance trade, factors inhibiting the development of a strong centralized political authority. Moreoever, the presence of relatively autonomous monastic orders and a decentralized political structure led to a failure to "domesticate" Tibetan Buddhism to a fully "clerical" orientation, and thus it uniquely retains significant elements of shamanic practice. The central Tibetan state, which roughly corresponds to the present Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of the People's Republic of China, controlled less than half of the pre-occupation population. This central state contained subordinate units, such as Sakya, that exercised considerable autonomy as centers of rival power. Aziz characterizes the

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presence of central state in outlying regions as primarily economic rather than directly administrative (Aziz, 1978). Other Tibetan peoples lived under the political regimes of smaller agricultural states such as Derge, Bhutan, Sikkim, and Ladakh; under varied leadership structures in pastoral areas such as in Kham to the East and Amdo to the Northeast; or were virtually self-governing, as were the Sherpas (Samuel, ibid.; Goldstein, ibid.; Carrasco, 1959). Many of these entities have been incorporated into the Chinese provinces bordering the TAR, and into the modern nation-states of India, Nepal, and Pakistan.

Samuel criticizes previous "Lhasa-centric" analyses of Tibetan history and culture which have led to confusion about the nature of Tibetan states. His usage of the plural -- "Tibetan societies" -- emphasizes the fact that there was never a unified or homogeneous Tibetan social formation. Taking Lhasa as representative of Tibet as a whole, Samuel argues, has led to the exaggerated view of Tibetan society as isolated, static, and rigidly stratified. However, the Lhasa-centric view may serve the Tibetan refugees' nationalist claims vis-a-vis China, as the world community recognizes bounded nation-states as the legitimate claimants to sovereignty.

**The Rise of the Tibetan State**

> Tibetans are unique in all the world in that their national life is wholly dedicated to Buddhism. For them the Dharma is all in all. Their culture was laboriously transformed over a thousand year period from . . . a normally ethnocentric, warlike, imperialistic national culture to a universally Buddhicized spiritual, peaceful culture. Essentially, they have been unilaterally disarmed for over 300 years. Their material

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> development has been systematically neglected in favor of their spiritual development. . . . Their rulers have been spiritual lineages of wisdom and compassion, triumphing over dynastic blood lineages. [Robert Thurman, 1988:66]

Knowledge of early Tibetan political history is incomplete. Unification of the central Tibetan state came late, as did a written script. According to the earliest Tibetan sources, rival chiefdoms and clans were first united under the Yarlung kings in the second century BC, associated with a military expansion which continued for nine centuries. In 763 AD, Tibetan armies even overran and held the Tang dynasty Chinese capital of Chang'an for several weeks. From the 7th to the mid 9th centuries, the Tibetan empire dominated the Himalayas, Ladakh, Hunza, Swat, upper Burma, Bhutan, and Nepal. It was the only time most Tibetan peoples lived under one political regime until the current Chinese occupation.

Both the unification of Tibet, and the evolution of its most distinguishing cultural characteristic, Tibetan Buddhism, must be understood in the light of political relationships stretching beyond its borders. In 640 AD, the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo demanded and received the Chinese princess Wenchen to marry. She brought with her an idol of the Buddha, and with her Nepalese co-wife, is credited with introducing Buddhism to Tibet. While relations with the civilizations of China and South Asia occasionally manifested in warfare, they always involved trade as well as cultural, political and religious influences. Songsten Gampo brought in artists from all areas adjacent to Tibet, including India, Nepal, China, Khotan, Pakistan, and Kashmir. The

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Tibetan written script was developed in the 7th century from the Indian Gupta alphabet.

Tibetan Buddhist texts devote considerable attention to the historical competition of Chinese and Indian religious philosophies and styles. According to these texts, in 792 the Tibetan king Trisong Detsen organized a contest in which famed philosophers and saints from the Chinese and Indian Buddhist traditions debated their teachings and demonstrated their magical abilities. The Indian team was declared the winner and the Chinese delegation was banished from Tibet. China has always posed the greater threat to Tibetan sovereignty. Tibet rejection of Chinese philosophical forms parallels its attempts to reject Chinese cultural and political influence. During this first great period of Buddhism in Tibet, Indo-Nepali influences in philosophy and art were greater than that of China (Mullin and Weber, 1996).

Buddhism was institutionalized under King Trisong Detsen in the 8th century. The first monastery at Samye was established in 779, and subsequently, monastic institutions grew into wealthy bureaucracies which controlled large agricultural estates and engaged in international trade, money lending, and tax collecting. Buddhism valorized the accumulation of wealth based on trade, and provided an idiom for cross-cultural understanding during this period of Tibetan expansionist activity. The spiritual -- and very political -- conquest of Tibet by Buddhism is represented by images of the nation as a pre-Buddhist demoness, tamed and pinned on her back by "nails" in the form of monasteries (Willis, 1989).

However, unification and Buddhist "pacification" was never completed. The 9th century king, Ralpachen, supported the growing Buddhist hierarchy in opposition to "old Bön" shamanic priests. (The

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modern Bön religion is considered a variant of Tibetan Buddhism; see Samuel, 1993; Kværne, 1990). This threatened the legitimacy and power of both the priests and the rival aristocratic families who were their patrons. Along with the king's brother, Langdarma, they engineered the assassination of Ralpachen in 836. After Langdarma was enthroned, he reinstated Bön as the official state religion and began a persecution of Buddhism. Langdarma was in turn killed by a Buddhist monk a few years later. The Tibetan state collapsed into warring principalities, commencing what is often labeled a 400 year "Dark Age." Tibetan power in Central Asia thus gave way to the Turks, the Mongols, and the Manchus.

Dawa Norbu has argued that it is during such "Dark Ages," when power is most decentralized and monastic hierarchies less consolidated, that Tibetan cultural creativity flourishes (Norbu, 1985). During these periods, peripheral and foreign influences are particularly evident. The "Buddhist renaissance" began in the Western periphery of Tibet. In 1042, the Indian Buddhist sage Atisha came to Tibet. After Atisha's death, his disciple Lama Drom systematized his teachings, founding the Kadampa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. The Sakya and Kargyu sects also developed in this period. All three sects were rapidly transformed into monastic networks. The art and architecture of what Tucci labels the "Kadampa period" show significant Kashmiri and Pala Indian influences (Mullin and Weber, 1996).

During this period, noble families and monastic sects alike fielded armies and waged bloody battles for political supremacy. With power constantly shifting between rival lamas and laymen, it was only under Mongol hegemony that political stability returned. In 1207, Genghis Kahn threatened to invade Tibet unless it accepted vassal status and agreed to an annual tribute. A Tibetan delegation went forth with the payment, which

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was continued until the Khan's death, then abruptly stopped, precipitating an invasion by his grandson, Godan Khan. A Sakya master, Sakya Pandita, appeared before the Mongol court in 1244, and in becoming a religious teacher to the court, "pacified" the Mongols and initiated a relationship between Tibetan clerics and Mongols rulers called *yon-mChod* by Tibetans. translating roughly as "patron-priest."

Godan Khan re-organized Tibetan bureaucratic and administrative structures, creating 13 "myrarchies" each with its own local ruler, but each under the larger authority of the Sakya lama - who was backed by the Mongol army. Despite considerable autonomy granted to local rulers and a record of true Mongol reverence for certain Tibetan Buddhist teachers, Mongol overlords demanded annual tribute, and the right to influence Tibetan political affairs to their advantage. In later centuries, Mongol overlords saw to it that incarnations of the Dalai Lamas be found only in peasant households, limiting the power of aristocratic families (Snellgrove and Richardson, 1986).

Under Kublai Khan, the Sakya sect was given political authority over not only the central provinces of Ü and Tsang, but also over Kham and Amdo. Mongol support of the Sakyas was the true beginning of Tibetan theocracy. Far from "otherworldly" preoccupations, Tibetan religious institutions always held temporal political and economic power, supported by external forces. This system is called *Cho Si Nyi Den* in Tibetan, or "dual government of religion and politics." Sakya domination lasted for about one hundred years, until deposed by the Phagmo-Drupa family. For the next 300 years, power shifted between rival dynastic families and their associated sects.

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In the middle of the 16th century, tension between religious factions intensified and once again a segment of the Tibetan elite looked to Mongolia for support. In 1577, the abbot of Drepung monastery converted Altan Khan to the Gelugpa sect and received the Khan's military support as well as the title "Dalai Lama" (Ocean of Wisdom). The Dalai Lama is believed to be an incarnation of Avalokitesvara, the Buddha of Compassion, and has remained a figure of reverence for all Tibetan peoples, including those living outside the political boundaries of the central Tibetan state. When this "Third" Dalai Lama died (the first and second were recognized retroactively), the succeeding incarnation was conveniently found in the great-grandson of Altan Khan.

The "Great 5th" Dalai Lama, facing resistance from regional, aristocratic, and monastic rivals to expanding Gelugpa power turned to the Mongolian prince Gushri Khan, who installed the Dalai Lama as the spiritual and temporal leader of all Tibet. At the death of the 5th Dalai Lama however, Tibet again descended into chaos as rival sects, families, and Mongol factions battled for dominance. The 6th Dalai Lama, noted for his amorous adventures and love poetry, died or was killed under hazy circumstances, the first of many to meet an untimely demise. Stability was restored as Mongol power waned and the Manchu Qing dynasty emperor succeeded in installing the 7th Dalai Lama. The Manchus thereafter supported Tibetan rule under the Dalai Lamas until their fall in the 1911 revolution. During this period, real power was greedily held by regents representing various monastic interests, who governed during the Dalai Lamas' minority. The Dalai Lamas were rarely allowed to reach maturity before dying "mysteriously."

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During the 18th and 19th centuries, Tibet was indeed isolated, though not only because of geography, and certainly not so isolated as mythology would have it. It is the rejection of specifically *Western* intrusions that has fed the mystique of Tibet. Tibetan armies fought against Ladakh in 1681 and against the Mongols in 1720, made several incursions into Bhutan in the 18th century, resisted Nepali advances in 1788-92 and 1854, and failed to defeat the British in 1904. During this period of the imperialist "Great Game" in Central Asia, the Manchus allowed Tibetan autonomy so long as Tibet did not fall into the hands of the British or Russians. Although Britain sent the Younghusband expedition to Lhasa in 1904, it merely established British "observers" and set up trading posts, never deeply influencing the Tibetan state or life. Britain did not desire the unprofitable expense of incorporating Tibet into the empire, rather it regarded Tibet as a buffer to Russia for its South Asian holdings. Tibet's isolation was largely a creation of international relations, reinforced by Tibet's conservative elites who were eager to hold foreign influences at bay. Various foreign adventurers vied to enter the forbidden city of Lhasa during this period. Few succeeded.

This isolation and conservatism, however, backfired on the Tibetan elite. In 1913, the 13th Dalai Lama, the first to wield real power since the "Great 5th," expelled the Chinese, and from 1913 until 1950, Tibet enjoyed real independence. Efforts by the13th Dalai Lama to carry out modernizing reforms and organize a national army, however, were sabotaged by conservative aristocrats as well as the monasteries, which deployed their own armies and were reluctant to pay taxes to the central government. After the death of the 13th Dalai Lama in 1933, when Tibet might have established wider international relations and secured its

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independence, conflicts between the central administration, the monasteries, and the regents came close to civil war (Goldstein, 1989) and the world at large took little interest.

To summarize:

1) Tibet, although rimmed by the geographical barrier of the Himalayas, has been always been shaped politically through interactions with powers beyond its borders. The relative isolation of the past few centuries was not so much an environmental inevitability as internal political and imperialist strategies.

2) Tibet has not enjoyed a significantly more peaceful history than any other nation, either before or after the introduction of Buddhism. Rather, it has been plagued by constant intercine warfare between regional factions, dynastic families, and religious institutions.

3) Far from a land where the temporal dimensions of power were neglected by a spiritual hierarchy preoccupied by the otherworldly, religious elites have always played significant political and military roles.

**Tibetans in Exile**

The 14th Dalai Lama was discovered in 1935 and installed in Lhasa in 1939. The army of the newly founded People's Republic of China "liberated" Tibet in 1951, when the present Dalai Lama was sixteen years old. At first its reforms appeared beneficial to many Tibetans, especially the poor. Improvements in the infrastructure were made while the continuation of Tibetan political and cultural life was largely tolerated. Soon however, the occupying force became more restrictive. Heavy taxation, forced collectivization and labor, and the adoption of agrarian practices ill-suited to the Tibetan environment led to the deterioration of

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most people's living standards. During the Cultural Revolution, as in other parts of the People's Republic, traditions from the "old" society were attacked. Buddhism, inseparable from Tibetan culture and identity, was suppressed, and for a time even the Tibetan language was forbidden in schools. Most of Tibet's monasteries were demolished and looted, and many of the more valuable works of art found their way onto the world market through Hong Kong and other outlets. Although the cultural situation has improved since the liberalizations of the past two decades, Tibet remains an internal colony of China, exploited for its' minerals and timber, its people becoming a minority in their homeland.

After the suppression of the 1959 rebellion in which tens of thousands of Tibetans were killed, the Dalai Lama fled to India. Thousands of Tibetans, both members of the elite and ordinary farmers, artisans and traders, followed him into exile. Many became ill or died from the passage over the Himalayas, from the shock of leaving their homes and entering new social and climatic environments, and from infectious diseases that swept through their ranks. Over the years, thousands more have fled the Chinese occupation, and today there are some 133,000 Tibetan refugees in India, Nepal, and Bhutan. The majority of them live in 52 settlements administered by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharamsala (U.S. Committee for Refugee, 1994; Planning Council, CTA, 1992).

With the help of host country governments, international aid agencies, and investments of treasure smuggled out with the Dalai Lama, the Tibetans have established an increasingly democratic welfare state-in-exile that provides employment, education, and medical care for many of the refugees. Immediately upon his entry into India, the Dalai Lama took responsibility for the needs of the Tibetan refugees, negotiating for

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resources, land and buildings. His success in this endeavor resulted from the unusual generosity of the Indian government, then under Nehru's leadership, his own dedication, as well as the charismatic power of his status to unify the disorganized ranks of refugees from different strata, regions and traditionally conflicting sects.

The CTA was founded in 1960 when elections established a "Commission of People's Deputies." In 1963 it drafted the first ever Tibetan constitution. A new constitution was passed in 1991. Elections for the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies are held every five years. The assembly has 46 legislators, representing the major regions and religious sects of pre-occupation Tibet, plus two legislators from the small population of Tibetans in Europe, and one member from North America. The Dalai Lama nominates several members who have demonstrated excellence in arts and sciences. Although generally attempting to foster a democratic ideology and practice, the Dalai Lama has considerable influence over policy, retains veto power, and several members of his immediate family and extended kin are in positions of power. Ironically, the Dalai Lama has written that his democratic reforms were considerd too radical by many Tibetans, some of whom wondered if he was encouraging some sort of communism (Gyatso [HHDL XIV] 1990).

The *Kashag* serves as the executive branch, it's members, the *Kalons*, are elected by the Assembly. The *Kalons* head the CTA's various departments, which include the departments of Finance, Religion and Culture, Home, Education, Information and International Affairs, Security, Health, and the Planning Council. Each Tibetan settlement has elected "camp leaders" and a representative of the CTA who reports to the Department of Home. In 1992 there were 399 "posts" in the CTA. The

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CTA operates fourteen "major" and eight "minor" agricultural settlements on land granted by the Indian and Nepali governments. The largest of these are in South India where large tracts of land, although swampy and in need of clearing, were available. Twenty-one "agro-industrial" settlements engaged in farming and petty industries and ten handicraft centers have been established, primarily in North India and Nepal. The CTA also runs 83 Tibetan schools with some 23,000 pupils (Planning Council, 1992).

With no agricultural holdings in Dharamsala, the Tibetans have relied on donations, tourism, trade, and cultural production for economic support. Handicraft production is now the largest source of income for the CTA. Early on the Tibetans began knitting wool vests and sweaters and selling them on the plains during the cold winter months, emptying out McLeod Ganj. This petty private trade continues, though the Tibetans now primarily deal in synthetic sweaters from Indian factories. Although numerous artisans work privately in their homes, the Dharamsala crafts industries are dominated by the co-operatives and schools established by the CTA to "rehabilitate" the refugees.

In 1950 the Dalai Lama was able to send a portion of his private assets into Sikkim on the backs of over 1000 pack animals. Gold, silver, and old coins were deposited in a bank, and converted in Calcutta to about $8 million cash in 1960 (Avedon, 1984). Using a portion of these funds, the Dalai Lama established the Charitable Trust in Delhi, which organizes much Tibetan craft production and exports from Indian. The "Charitrust" operates a branch store in Dharamsala which sells carpets, metal goods, posters, and books. In 1977, it opened the Centre for Tibetan Arts and Crafts in lower Dharamsala, which includes training in Tibetan metal crafts, woodworking, and painting. Upper Tibetan Children's Village

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(TCV) also offers crafts training in painting, carpet weaving, and tailoring for less academically inclined students.

The Handicraft co-op (the Tibetan Handicraft Production-cum-Sale Co-operative Industrial Society, Ltd.) was established by the CTA in 1963 to provide work for Tibetan women. It now employs both men and women in several facilities, including a carpet factory in the McLeod Ganj market, a tailoring workshop across the street, and a shop. Like many CTA operations, it offers cheap housing for its workers.

The Tibetan Library trained painters for some years, but these courses were canceled in 1993. In it's place -- and providing a new center for Tibetan cultural production and scholarship -- is the new Norbulingka Institute of Tibetan Culture in the Kangra valley. Its Centre for Arts opened in 1991. The Norbulingka Institute in part funds itself through production of the "Norling" line of dolls, scarves, belts, and other goods directed at Western markets.

As the following chapters will show, crafts production in Dharamsala both continues and alters the traditions of pre-occupation Tibet. The various crafts were practiced all over Tibet, but regions specialized and produced the finest examples of different arts. The Gyantse region south of Lhasa, for example, was held to produce the highest quality carpets. The central Tibetan state collected taxes though district officials, and payment was sometimes met in kind through crafts produced to government specifications. Thus, for example, Gyantse might pay some of its taxes in carpets (Information Office, 1981).

During the reign of the fifth Dalai Lama, the government established *bzo khan* (workshops) which for lack of a better English word, will be translated as "guilds" in the following chapters. The *bzo khan*

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ensured that city craftsmen were available for government jobs (Ronge, 1978). Monastic institutions and aristocrats were also important sources of patronage, although all Tibetans required the occasional services of crafts workers, for example at the death of a relative. Only the best artisans entered the government guilds. When time allowed, guild artisans worked privately as well, which like today was more remunerative than government work. Non Tibetan craftsmen, particularly Nepalis, were also employed and sometimes considered far superior to local artisans. A vocation in a specific craft was often transmitted patrilineally for generations, and artisans entered long apprenticeships with master artisans.

In Dharamsala, like Lhasa, nearly all the important arts are practiced, and the CTA and the monasteries provide institutional patronage. The *bzo khan* hierarchies have been replaced by schools and co-ops, but students often train under old *bzo khan* masters, many of whom once worked in the Dhonphel, the government workshops at the foot of the Potala palace in Lhasa. Although some artisans are continuing age-old family traditions, the arts have been opened to refugees, men and women, from all previous walks of life. "Newcomers" -- a new wave of refugees who have been arriving in India since the PRC's liberalizations -- are particularly in need of employment. A few foreign artisans have trained in the "higher" arts, such as thangka painting, leaving the lower status crafts, such as carpet weaving, to poorer refugees.

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**Nationalism and Transnationalism**

> Tibetans now settled in Nepal and India do not form a tightly structured society but are a conglomerate of diverse elements accidentally thrown together. . . . despite this heterogeneity . . . these elements are held together by the feeling of a common national identity which is more strongly expressed by the refugees in the diaspora than had been the case in Tibet . . . [Christophe von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1990: 54]

Tibetan nationalist and Western "New Age" rhetoric depicts traditional Tibetan society as bounded, isolated, and devoted to spiritual development under a benevolent Buddhist regime. Tibetans in exile are represented as a unified and egalitarian reserve that preserves authentic Tibetan culture until it one day can reoccupy Tibet. This rhetoric can be understood both with respect to the specific situation of the Tibetan diaspora, and to broader generalities of nationalist discourse in the global arena. Its deployment reveals great continuities between past and present Tibetan politics.

The discourse of Tibetan nationalism has not been constructed solely on its own terms, rather it reflects the requirements of nation-building in the 20th century, in which bounded nation-states are the legitimate political units of the United Nations and the transnational economy. In recognition of the importance of international relationships for the political and economic support of the exile project, CTA offices have been opened in Delhi, New York, Zurich, Budapest, Canberra, Paris, Tokyo, Geneva, Moscow, Kathmandu, Washington, and London.

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Like other nationalist movements, the Tibetans must:

1) Present an image of unity as a people with an agreed upon representative.

2) Claim a distinct identity and independent history which establishes a moral right to separate nationhood.

3) Demonstrate, through force or moral worthiness, that the international "community" must deal with their plight.

Tibetan nationalism is increasingly successful in all these tasks.

The development of a national Tibetan identity has been dependent on political, social, and economic confrontations with ethnic others and on the formation of new transnational relationships. Prior to 1950, sub-national identities were primary in Tibet. Before the "politicization" of Tibetan ethnicity, writes Dawa Norbu, Tibetan supra-regional categories generally distinguished between Buddhists and non-Buddhists. At present, particularly in the towns, regionalism and sect are becoming secondary, and there seems to be a pan-Tibetan identity forming in which the Chinese serve as a "generalized other" (Norbu, 1992).

Likewise, the construction of a "nation" in exile has been possible only through the development of a collective identity. This is in large part due to the necessity of adapting to the transnational economy and to nonagrarian support for local and sectarian institutions, as well as the realization that, however diverse Tibetans may be, they share more with one another than with the largely Hindu populations among whom they live. But it is also due to the deliberate nurturing of what Benedict Anderson (1983) has called "an imagined community" that bridges real differences. As with other imagined communities, education has played a key role in its construction. The schools operated by the Bureau of His

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Holiness the Dalai Lama foster national consciousness and loyalty, a sense of Tibetan cultural uniqueness, and faith in the Dalai Lama as the personification of the nation (Nowak, 1984). The central Lhasa Tibetan dialect has become a "national language." The Tibetan administration also promotes ethnic endogamy and a high birth rate, and discourages assimilation and citizenship in host nations.

The refugee situation is one of creative adaptation in which new forms of social community, kinship, and economic activity may be developed in conjunction with the construction of an identity with a heightened sense of ethnic differentiation (Krulfeld and Camino, 1994). Through Tibetan cultural enterprises, as well as continuing donations from within and outside the community, the Dalai Lama's administration has been able to reinvent traditional religious institutions and artistic production while simultaneously fostering a sense of Tibetan unity and cultural distinctiveness.

The continuation of monastic power is largely founded on the ability of religious officials to reach beyond linguistic and cultural barriers to elicit financial donations. Over 117 monasteries have been reestablished in exile, in part through Western donations and monastic entrepreneurship. This echoes the traditional *mYon-chod* (patron-priest) relationships between Tibetan and Mongol and Manchu overlords. Kleiger points out that "by finding a place for potentially disruptive outside agency, and by utilizing it to economically and ideologically support the perceived continuation of Tibetan cultural patterns, the Tibetans have historically maintained themselves as Tibetans. This process still continues in the diaspora" (Kleiger, 1991: 21).

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Rather than directly competing with many Indian and Nepali businesses, Tibetans have been able to sustain a "renaissance of Tibetan culture" (Haimendorf, 1990) through elaborating traditional arts and crafts for the export and tourist markets. An appeal is made to foreign consumers to help preserve a priceless cultural tradition under fire by the Chinese state. As Marjorie Nowak has written, the assertion of a Tibetan exile national "self" is carried out with great involvement and concern for the ethnic "Other" (Nowak, 1978). However, as later chapters will illustrate, much Tibetan cultural production is designed for and managed by Westerners, and a critique of the "dependency culture" has developed within the Tibetan community.

The discourse of cultural distinction and preservation is not merely for the consumption of tourists or spiritual seekers. The assertion of a new national Tibetan identity and the refusal to assimilate also play important political roles on the global stage. Refugee status, writes Zohlberg, "is a privilege or entitlement, giving those who qualify access to certain scarce resources or services outside their own country, such as admissions into another county ahead of a long line of claimants, legal protection abroad and often some material assistance from private or public agencies" (Zohlberg, et al, 1989:3).

Emphasis on the religious traditions of Tibet also provides a safe idiom for framing the nationalist agenda in recognition of the sensitive relationships existing between its patrons and opponents, namely India and China, who share a disputed border, and China and the West. In India and Nepal, Tibetans must be careful to avoid negative political attention, as the PRC commonly reacts with angry recriminations at the Indian and Nepali governments. The Western powers, while offering words of sympathy for

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the Tibetan plight, are far more concerned with retaining good relations with the Peoples' Republic, looking to penetrating its huge market. The Dalai Lama and especially his Western supporters circumvent these delicate international realities by presenting their intentions as peaceful, their ultimate goal not just Tibetan independence, but the establishment of a Himalayan "Zone of Peace" and the spiritual awakening for all of humanity. A moral appeal, much enhanced by the Dalai Lama's 1989 presentation with the Nobel Peace Prize, replaces what would be a hopeless guerrilla war launched against an overwhelming opponent from the territories of uncooperative host nations.

Appadurai (1990) writes that as "nation" and state are increasingly "disjunctive," national elites attempt to mythologize internal similarities, pacify differences, and maintain a monopoly on the taxonomy of cultural distinction. The bounded state as imagined community is felt (or promoted), claims Anderson, as a deep horizontal comradeship. But such communities continue to be divided by both horizontal divisions and vertical stratification. While the traditional largely inherited strata of Tibetan society receive little institutional support in exile (Goldstein, 1978), new class-based strata are emerging, and regional antagonisms persist, occasionally flaring into minor violence.

CTA attempts to downplay enduring regional, sectarian, and class divisions reveal an awareness of the economic and political advantages of ethnic unity. Tibetan nationalists, attempting to construct a nation that never was and win a state that hopes to be, are understandably disturbed by external observers who "deconstruct" essentialist cultural and national myths. These critics are frequently vilified in print, while internal critics are sometimes physically threatened. Tibetans are rightly concerned to

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counter propaganda from the People's Republic about the evils of the old society and its claims that Tibet has never constituted a distinct cultural or political entity. Idealized portraits of traditional Tibet are promoted in order to both foster nationalism within the refugee community and to elicit political and economic support from foreigners. Many Westerners, for their part, are eager to project their utopian fantasies upon the Tibetans. Not only spiritual seekers, but many academics are prone to highly idealized representations of Tibetan society and history. Bishop (1993) notes that while earlier Orientalist discourse -- replete with "degenerate" Buddhism, corrupt lamas, and stultifying hierarchy -- portrayed the Tibetan political system as the dark mirror image of the rational British Indian administration. Tibet later came to be seen as an endangered sacred space in need of protection, and in1955, Andre Migot would argue that it was one of the best governed places in the world. Similarly, Franz Micheal has portrayed the pre-occupation political system, one that operated with a high degree of nepotism and patronage, as a sort of ideal Weberian bureaucracy (Samuel, 1992). A glance at the appendix of his Rule by Incarnation (1982), however, reveals that his data seems to have derived almost entirely from interviews with male members of the elite.

Despite the popularity of post-structuralism in the groves of academe, demonstrating that a nation has been constructed historically, rather than deriving its existence from a timeless cultural essence, delegitimates its claim for sovereignty. Thus, for example, in Israel attempts have been made to undermine Palestinian claims that they have lived as a people in the West Bank from "time immemorial," the better to demonstrate that, in the words of Gold Meir, "there are no Palestinians," only Arabs who oppose Israel. Given the need for a bounded identity with

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deep time-depth, nation-builders seeking international legitimacy must sometimes create a separate history and "reinvent tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) to bolster their claims. Tibetan nationalists and their supporters thus rely on representations of Tibet as eternally isolated and uniquely spiritual to highlight Tibet's distinctive identity and the anomaly of Chinese rule.

At the same time that idealized representations of Tibetan culture pay off in economic and political terms, it is clear that spiritual desires among elements in the West are also met. The Dalai Lama's oft repeated "I am just a simple monk" appeals tremendously to many young, disenchanted members of industrial, consumption oriented societies who lend their time and money to the "Tibetan cause." In The Myth of Shangri-La (1989), Stephen Bishop perceives a need for European and American cultures to sacralize faraway places and the people who inhabit them. As our own social and geographic spaces are disenchanted, places not pinned down in the grid of Western knowledge become objects of fantasy. Thus, Tibet has come to represent a timeless space outside the degraded sphere of bloody history, a magical realm of Abominable Snowman, and Illuminated Masters.

## Saving and Selling Shangri-la

> In the search for the 'authentic' Tibet or the 'real' Tibetans, it is forgotten that travel does not so much discover worlds as create them. [Stephan Bishop, 1993: Pp. ?]

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> As a Romanian, I am sorry that Romania's main symbol in the West is Dracula. As minister for tourism, I have to take advantage of this. -- Romanian Tourism Minister [in Matel,1993: Pp.?]

In Dharamsala, an old nun and a charmingly wizened monk earned their daily bread by striking poses for tourists. The monk was particularly picturesque, his wrinkled and smiling face adorned with a huge walrus mustache. He would station himself in front of groups of foreigners, always spinning a much-used prayer wheel. Few could resist taking his photograph -- plucky Tibetan faith preserved incarnate-- upon which he would retrieve from under his ancient robes solicitations for money in German and English. Charming the first time, he and his female counterpart rapidly became nuisances. The old monk never seemed to remember who he had just hit up, and would appear before the same travelers day after day, staring directly at them, grinning broadly, twirling away with his prayer wheel. He did manage to hold the focus of quite a number of the documentary film makers constantly passing through Dharamsala, stationing themselves importantly with their equipment in the middle of whatever event appeared most traditional, spoiling the snapshots of mere tourists. My young Tibetan friends were embarrassed by the behavior of these two. They called the nun "Thukpa Ani" (literally Noodle Nun) since she lived in large part off meals solicited from Westerners in restaurants, where she could be seen in her robes, sipping a newly available Pepsi in a haze of cigarette smoke and Rock and Roll.

Westerners come to Dharamsala in part for the traveler's "scene." They have heard it is full of other interesting visitors and offers a restful mountain retreat from the hassles, heat, and dust of the Indian plains, as

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well as a market full of inexpensive Tibetan crafts (many of them made by Indians). But many travelers are also drawn to the spiritual mystique of the Tibetans. Tibetan society is often seen as entirely egalitarian and pacifistic, a model for what the world should be and might become. The Tibetans have become extremely image-conscious, sophisticated at impression managers, and adept at soliciting "sponsorships." Crude behaviors like the old monk's and Thukpa Ani's are discouraged, despite the prevalence of begging in Tibet (and in Buddhism generally).

Despite the deconstruction of essentialist representations of indigenous peoples currently popular among Western academics, such myths are often tightly embraced by Third World peoples themselves. Hotels or restaurants with the name "Shangri-la" -- the invention of a Western novelist -- can be found in nearly every Tibetan settlement catering to travelers. Even Hong Kong capitalists attempt to cash in on the Shangri-la image. Newsweek, Time, and other international publications have run ads of the Shangri-la hotel and resort chain offering "The Promise of Shangri-la in 17 Destinations" including, ironically, Beijing and Shanghai. "Alternative travelers" are unlikely to afford or desire the luxury suites they offer. Instead, many seek the "real" thing.

A traveling Shangri-la industry has developed, with locales competing for status as the genuine article. Political crises and problems associated with the growth of tourism always seem to effect a displacement of this sacred space, such that it continually moves just beyond the traveler's grasp. With the assumed destruction of traditional Tibetan culture by the Chinese, Kathmandu -- with its refugees and indigenous Tibetan peoples, as well as its own colorful Nepali exoticisms -- contended for Shangri-la status for a time. But rapid urbanization and the tourism

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boom since the 1960's have led to traffic jams and air pollution that compete for the world's worst, while rivers are polluted by the dumping of tons of toxic chemicals by Tibetan carpet factories.

Bhutan now vies for the title. A pamphlet distributed by the Bhutanese Etho Metho Tours and Treks, Ltd, informs the West that "Bhutan is best known to the world today as the Last Shangri-la . . . there is no other destination like this land of pure and exotic mysticism." It retains its mystique in large part by keeping most foreigners out, especially low-budget backpackers. The government allows in only a few thousand well-heeled travelers a year on controlled tours. It is easier today to visit Lhasa than to visit Bhutan, and there is nothing more effective in enhancing a traveler's status than to obtain entry to a forbidden space. The tour promotional tells us that in Bhutan, "every moment is special as one discovers a country which the people chose to keep in its magical form." Not included is news that the Buddhist monarchy enforces dress and language codes, in part responsible for ethnic violence in areas where Nepali Hindus have settled.

Culturally Tibetan regions freshly opened for the tourist gaze regularly compete for the title as the "last Shangri-la," but rapidly spoil. In India, Ladakh contended for a time, but now Zanskar, Lahaul, and Spiti carry greater caché. The recently opened Nepali region of Mustang perhaps has a better claim. Or is it Dolpo today?

The timelessness, internal harmony, and innocence of disappearing cultures are regular themes of coffee-table books, charitable solicitations, and travel advertisements. The alleged isolation of such societies grants them a special interest to Western travelers precisely because they have not yet been "contaminated" by the West. This imagining relies, as has been

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shown in the case of Tibet, on excluding accounts of the internal violence and hierarchy that existed within these societies, as well as overlooking the impact of the world economic and political system on even the most isolated peoples. The image of the idealized other is also constructed by projecting the opposite of whatever dissatisfactions exist within one's own society. For many Westerners, an imagined egalitarian and otherworldly Tibet has become a key symbol of spirituality and tradition struggling against the onslaught of modernity, meaninglessness, and materialism. Bishop has analyzed various Western literary accounts and fantasies, noting that in "each of these images of Tibet is also mirrored an image of the West: for Conan Doyle, Tibet's remoteness defines Europe's centrality and its familiarity . . . . Benjamin evokes Tibet in a criticism of bourgeois disenchantment; Artuad's Tibet stands in contrast to the West's spiritual contamination, suffering, ignorance" (Bishop, 1993:25).

But there may be a more politically charged imagining at work here. Tibet, as Bishop (1989) notes, was always just beyond the grasp of Western imperialism. In gazing on Tibet, Westerners see that, for once, the oppressor is "other"-- the Chinese. Spiritual seekers can thus empathize with a political victim while avoiding analysis of the historical guilt and present problems of their own societies. Jeanne Marie Gilbert points out that the movie "Lost Horizon," depicting the fictional hidden kingdom of Shangri-la, where all was peaceful, opened in New York 1937, as fascism and the rumblings of war clouded the real political horizons of the West. Shangri-la, she notes, was run by a benevolent dictatorship, and suffered from no "isms" (Gilbert, 1990).

Like the idea of the noble savage, the myth of Shangri-la places impossible expectations upon the refugees. Western visitors to Dharamsala

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are often bitterly disillusioned when it is discovered that even the Tibetans are only human -- that there is conflict, corruption, alcoholism, and domestic abuse, and that refugee values and interests do not always coincide with those of their benefactors.

What effect might it have to see one's culture become a symbol for outsiders not only of victimization and superhuman spiritual purity, but also for the irrational and bizarre? A number of Tibetan intellectuals are critical of the illusions grasped by so many Western supporters of the Tibetan cause. Tsering Shakya complains that for the West, everything about Tibet is "esoteric and beyond 'ordinariness.' Tibetans simply do not drink tea: it has to be qualified by adjective, as in 'rancid butter tea.' The Tibetan landscape is sacred: one does not simply travel across it, one experiences and communes with the geography of Tibet" (Shakya 1992:13). "Ironically," he writes, "the ruined monasteries and the tortured faces of the people have become part of the tourist attraction" (p. 14). Tibet has become a "Disneyworld for the Western bourgeois" (p. 15). Shakya believes that exoticizing representations of Tibet hamper the political cause and obscure the "real nature" of the Tibetan struggle. The Shangri-la myth, he claims, leads other Third World peoples to see the Tibetan cause as an irrelevant instrument of white interests. Thus, there is little of the international solidarity enjoyed by African or Palestinian struggles.

I would argue that the disinterest of Third World activists is not primarily due to Western fantasies, but to the global politics of the Cold War, in which the communist powers were often supporters of Third World anti-imperial resistance. Furthermore, the fact remains that the Tibetans have preferentially elicited support from Westerners -- including wealthy New Age seekers, celebrities, and movie stars -- rather than reach

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out to relatively impoverished non-Western political organizations such as the PLO or SWAPO. While there is some truth to Shakya's protest regarding the dehumanizing consequences of the Shangri-la myth, it ironically valorizes the notion that Tibetans are hapless victims of Orientalist and travelers' fantasies rather than, at least in part, active agents of their manipulation.

**Summary**

In Dharamsala, the Tibetans have not only joined the "modern" world, but leaped in to the post-modern era. The exile community there is perhaps a model of what MacCannel has called the "post modern community," one that develops consciousness of itself as a model and learns to profit from its image. . . . 'Development' is now conceived as the production of a consistent, clean and positive image of the community in the wider world" (MacCannell 1992:102). In Dharamsala, tourist arts have become marketable incarnations of the local image, material embodiments of an essentialized identity, even when they are designed and produced by non-Tibetans.

The rhetoric deployed by some Tibetan nationalists, but particularly by their Western supporters, is one in which, in the words of Eric Wolf, "a complex orchestration of antagonistic forces is celebrated instead as the unfolding of a timeless essence" (Wolf, 1982:5). In contrast to this representation, the formation of historical Tibetan states and of current nationalism did not derive solely from the internal evolution of a bounded society, but has always been linked to a wider field of international relations, and is now tied to foreign consumption of goods and images. Recognizing this fact in no way delegitimates the right of Tibetans to an

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independent state, but it does question the historical realities masked by nationalist discourse and pursues the functions of this masking. The answers lie, it is argued, in the international audience to whom claims to national rights are addressed. This interrogation, admittedly, suits the goals of Western social science, not the aims of Tibetan nationalism or the tourist industry.

The denial of heterogeneity presents a unified front to the world, with the Dalai Lama as its easily identifiable and admirable face. The emphasis on isolation and cultural distinction counters Chinese claims that Tibet is naturally a part of China while simultaneously fostering a collective Tibetan identity and marketing it to political supporters, tourists, and spiritual seekers. Through a non-violent strategy and the representation of Tibet as historically peaceful and spiritual, Tibetans garner sympathy and financial support from guilt-ridden foreigners, while avoiding an unwinnable guerrilla war and maintaining good relations with the Indian and Nepali states concerned not to arouse Chinese aggression. In tying the dissatisfactions and utopian hopes of the Occident with the invention of Oriental tradition and history, Tibetan nationalist discourse combines and transcends epochalism and essentialism, as the community's essence is partially found in foreign consumption of moral appeals, traditional goods, and spiritual teachings, and as an imaginary Tibetan past becomes the model for a universal spiritual future.

While social scientists may support the struggle for an independent Tibet, we must forward to a world in which the right of self-determination need not be legitimated through a discourse that suppresses historical realities of internal conflict and stratification, and mythologizes bounded national essences, for such mythologies inevitably lead to chauvinism and

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the repression of difference and criticism. The best hope for Tibetan nationalism may lie in the loosening or dissolution of the present Chinese state along the lines of what has occurred in the former Soviet Union, and the establishment of the Dalai Lama's proposed "Zone of Peace" on the Tibetan plateau. In such a scenario, Tibet would return to the role it played in the 19th and early 20th centuries as a buffer between larger powers, its political and cultural autonomy guaranteed, as it always had been, through links to a field of transnational interactions, conflicts, and imaginings beyond the peaks.

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# CHAPTER FOUR
## THANGKAS: THE SACRED COMMODITY

These are not like wall hangings in town that you can bargain for! You don't bargain for thangkas. It's not the same as clothes or bags. These are deities! -- TCV painter

This chapter describes the production of thangkas [Buddhist paintings], the changing conditions of painters in exile, and pressures for and limits to commoditization. Thangka painting is perhaps the most sacred and highly esteemed craft described in this thesis, and as such provides a good comparison with secular craft production. Indigenous spiritual and cultural values attributed to particular objects, as well as the density of social and religious institutions near sites of production, can significantly limit the commoditization of a particular art in response to tourism, as well as the degree to which techniques and relations of production are altered. As Gregory Starrett has written, the "dialectic of display and internalization, the commoditization of intellectual work, and the tensions between different loci of production and authority make religious commodities particularly sensitive markers of cultural transformation" (1995:65).

To some extent, the presence of foreign consumers and non-Tibetan artists and dealers has blurred distinctions between thangkas' spiritual and secular meanings and trajectories. The recruitment and payment of artists, the consumers for whom they paint, and even (to some degree) the sexual division of labor are being transformed by exile and the growth of external markets. However, in comparison with many secular industries such as

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carpet weaving (described in the next chapter), artistic forms and techniques are relatively unchanged. In conjunction with the following two chapters, this chapter will describe how divergent relations of production and contrasting paths of artistic evolution are structured through interactions of indigenous value with local social structures and with the desires and tastes of new foreign consumers.

**Traditional Thangkas**

Thangkas are pictorial representations of deities and religious subjects. They may be painted on canvas, or made through appliqué and embroidery or woodblock printing. (This chapter will consider only painted thangkas). According to legend, thangkas originated during the time of the Buddha, when King Uttrayana of Dadok gave King Bimbisara of Magadha a set of armor made from precious stones and metals (Sangay, 1984). Because Bimbisara could not afford to reciprocate, his minister advised him to present Uttrayana with an image of the Buddha. The Buddha granted permission, but when the King's artists began drawing him they were blinded by intense light. The solution was to draw an image from the Buddha's reflection in a pond. While this story expresses the precious value of representations of the Buddha, it also implies they are mere reflections of a more fundamental spiritual force. As discussed below, thangkas are regarded both as objects of representation and as actual embodiments of enlightened presence. Thus, they are sacred commodities that are, in some sense, alive and must be handled with respect.

Thangkas are probably derived from the tradition of Indian painting which the Buddhists adopted to spread the Dharma. Portable Buddhist paintings are identifiable by the eigth to ninth centuries A.D.

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(Khosla, 1979). Although most commonly thangkas are used for devotional or Tantric practices and the generation of merit, in Tibet traveling lamas and storytellers called Manipa employed them didactically, hanging them in public to illustrate various parts of the narratives in the career of the great Yogi Milarepa, the life of the Buddha, or the folk epic of Gesar of Ling. I saw several such storytellers hanging thangkas around the chorten in McLeod Ganj, discoursing on religion and legend, as well as on hygiene and politics. Protected in a brocade "home", thangkas are easily rolled up and carried about (a convenience to tourist consumers). Although thangkas may be as small as a paperback book, or as large as a movie screen and hung on monastery walls for festivals, the most common size is about seventy-five cm. high by fifty cm. across (Dagyab, 1977).

In Tibet, thangkas were commissioned by monastic institutions and tantric practitioners, aristocrats, commoners, and the government. They were hung in temples as well as in lay people's shrine rooms above a small altar with gold, silver, or "white metal" (aluminum alloy) offering bowls and statues. In exile, many refugees cannot afford a separate shrine room or a real thangka and hang poster reproductions above makeshift altars. The creation of a thangka generates merit (*bsod nams*) for both the artist and the patron. Lay patrons usually consult a lama as to appropriate deities for their thangkas. Probably the most commonly produced thangkas for lay Buddhists are those commissioned at the death of a relative. These thangkas (*skyes rtags*) transfer merit to the deceased, aiming to ensure a good rebirth. They should be completed within the forty-nine days that the deceased is in the intermediate states, or bardos, prior to rebirth. Other thangkas function to overcome obstacles (*bar chad sel ba*), promote health and long life (*zhabs brtan*), or generate merit to balance previous misdeeds.

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misdeeds. In the past, wealthy Tibetans commissioned numerous thangkas, perhaps ordering sets of thangkas on the deeds of the Buddha, sets of medicine Buddhas, sets of Taras (*sgrol ma* ) a female deity popular in Tibet) and sets of the sixteen arhats (early disciples of the Buddha who had achieved nirvana) (Yeshi, 1984). Sometimes the visions of meditators were commissioned as subjects of paintings. Some religious leaders, such as the 10th Karmapa, produced such paintings themselves (Jackson and Jackson, 1984).

As "bodily supports" (*sku rten* ) of the enlightened body, speech, and mind of divine figures, thangkas are also used in Tantric meditations in which the deity is visualized and then dissolved into the practitioner. The material representation supports visualization until the image has stabilized in the mind's eye. Understood on a "lower" level as objects of devotion, on a "higher" level the deities are recognized as aspects of mind inseparable from the perceiver. Either way, thangkas and statues, which also "support" these beings, must be handled with reverence. The devotee may receive a blessing by bowing and touching the crown of the head to the bottom of a thangka or statue.

The dieties represented in thangkas may be peaceful, such as Avalokitesvara (Tib. *Chenrezig* ), the embodiment of compassion, or wrathful, such as Palden Lhamo, the fierce protectress of Tibet. Other subjects of thangkas are the lineages the Dalai Lama, the Pachen Lama, Milarepa, Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche), Tsongkhapa and other great religious personalities of history and legend. The Gelugpa sect in particular commissions *tshogs zhing* thangkas (variously translated as "assembly fields" or "merit fields") which illustrate lineages of spiritual transmission which are used in "graduated path" (*lam rim* ) and Guru worship practices

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(Jackson and Jackson, 1984). The Tibetan medical tradition also used thangkas to illustrate anatomy, illness, medicinal herbs and minerals.

**Thangka Painters From Tibet to Exile**

Sangay Yeshi was the thangka master at the school attached to the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. It took me some time to obtain an interview, as he was busy painting a large Sakyamuni Buddha for the Dalai Lama to present to the Indian government. Like many "living repositories of tradition," he had been interviewed many times and seemed a bit weary of the process.

Yehsi told me that our discussion was "only a rough idea. If you really want to know about thangka painting, you must study about Buddhist philosophy and art. It's really very complicated and not easy." As we spoke, one of his students continued working on a large drawing for the Sakyamuni Buddha thangka that was spread across the floor.

Yeshi was born sixty-six years ago in Kham (eastern Tibet). His parents were farmers, and while there were no artists in his immediate family, there had been thangka painters among his relatives for generations. The third of three sons, he entered the Gelugpa monastery of Gyesar Gun at the age of fourteen. "It was considered very precious that this son would be placed in a monastery," Yeshi said.

From a young age he was interested in drawing, often watching a famous painter who lived nearby. Eventually he was accepted as an apprentice. "In my region we didn't have to give anything to the master. I brought my own food and often prepared his, and did chores for him."

In the Lhasa guild one had to study under a master for seven years, turning over all one's earnings. In his region he never heard of any guilds.

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Yeshi worked with his master for fourteen years--until the master passed away. They prepared paints together, and one would draw the figures while the other painted. Yeshi said:

> We did individual orders and some from the monastery. There was no tradition of asking for money; the fee depended on the client. The patron would say "I'll give such an amount," and we would have to accept. There was no tradition of turning them down if it wasn't enough. Sometimes they would give four times the cost of the gold in the painting, sometimes a bit less. Normally the clients would bring the gold in themselves. Rich clients sometimes made orders for twenty or thirty painters. The poor usually only one after the death of a relative.

After his master died, Yeshi went to Drepung monastery outside Lhasa and painted constantly. "There were so many orders!" he said. Six years later the Dalai Lama fled Tibet and Sangay followed. Since then, like many skilled artists, he has moved many times, pushed by political forces or pulled by the desire to transmit his skills.

After spending five months in a transit camp in India, he was sent by the nascent Tibetan government-in-exile to Sikkim, then an independent Buddhist kingdom on the Indo-Chinese border. He painted in the King's workshop; "Otherwise I would have done road work." He worked there until 1962, painting "gifts and souvenirs" for the King's guests. During the 1962 Indo-China war he left Sikkim -- deemed too dangerous for Tibetans -- and went on a three month pilgrimage to Bodhgaya. From there he continued on to Delhi, and then to Dalhousie, becoming the art teacher at a

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school founded for young tulkus (reincarnate lamas) by Fredi Bedi, a German woman married to an Indian diplomat. "Trungpa Rinpoche and other tulkus were there at that time. Many Injees came there to look and to volunteer to teach or do odd jobs for fifteen days or a few months. There were seven or eight cottages for Injees. Each had a Tibetan servant to take care of them."

Master artisans who escaped into exile were often summoned to work near the Dalai Lama. In 1974, he was called to Dharamsala. In 1977, the thangka school attached to the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives was inaugurated with financial assistance from the John D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund, with the aim of stopping the "marked deterioration in the standard of thangka painting" (Information Office of HHDL,1981). The Private office of HHDL asked Yeshi to guide five students there. Since then he has taught about 100 students. The Library school has recently been terminated as funding has dried up. "This is alright," said Yeshi, who has taught "for so long," because "now the Norbulingka has started."

Artisans producing religious works were the most highly esteemed in Tibet. They were called *lha-bzo-bha* or "depicters of gods", although most thangka painters also painted houses, walls, and furniture. Great religious artists were considered "divinely emanated artists." "Whoever masters a handicraft," said a proverb, "and above all can paint gods, that person will not have to suffer in hell" (Ronge, 1978).

Many painters were hereditary members of an artistic lineage. The ideal painter was a fully ordained monk, though perhaps most were laymen. None of my informants were aware of any female painters in traditional Tibet. Painters were supposed to be initiated in the Tantra

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whose deity they depicted, and for some figures the artist was required to undertake a meditation retreat in preparation for painting, or observe food taboos, such as abstaining from meat, garlic, and onions (Dagyab, 1977). Prayer and initiation invoked the deity, which manifested in the painter's materials and labor. Sometimes an astrologer was consulted as to the most auspicious day on which to begin a thangka. These procedures represent an ideal of which the actual practice fell short. The Jacksons (1984) claim that these ritual steps, while described in texts, were not carried out by most painters.

Thangka paintings were not signed. If anyone was to receive recorded credit, it was the merit-generating patron who commissioned the work. The great Italian Tibetologist, Guiseppe Tucci, recounts that "repeated journeys through Tibet have yielded me no more than three score names of painters" (Tucci, 1967:111). Tucci claimed that the sacred act of painting was a negation of the self. Sometimes, he reported, the name of the painter or lama who suggested the layout of a wall mural would be inscribed -- to record an act of piety, not the creativity or skill in executing a work of art.

Painters were well paid even when doing compulsory work on restoration projects for the religious-political administration. Artists' wages were generally agreed upon before the work commenced, and determined by the amount of time required and the amount of gold used in the painting. A with other arts, clients somtimes brought their own gold to the artist. Informants in Dharamsala report that fees were set according to the patrons' wishes and ability. The poor often paid less than the value of the work, as Yeshi noted, while the rich might pay more. Payment to an artist could be viewed as an offering or ransom payment (*slu yon* ) that

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invited the sacred presence into the home (Jackson and Jackson, 1984). This conceptualization is, of course, lost on the tourist market.

Artists working in the patron's home were provided food. Ronge (1978) reports that patrons provided transport for jobs far from the artist's home. Wealthy patrons might set up camp sites and field kitchens along the route for large groups of artists. Upon arrival, gifts were sometimes given to the master artisans. Large jobs were often paid in kind with horses, barley, tea, meat, etc.

Apprentice painters often lived with their master and served him during a five or six year course of study. When deemed competent, they might be presented with a box of good brushes and a scripture on iconometry. Sometimes masters passed on their "tikse"-- drawings of deities which the students would trace onto their canvases. The organization of artists was more structured in Lhasa than in peripheral regions. According to Sangay Yeshi, about one hundred painters in Lhasa were organized into a guild under a monk director appointed by the government. Ranking below the director were two or three masters, five senior teachers, twenty junior teachers, and about seventy "ordinary," or student, artists. Painters from other parts of Tibet were not allowed to work in Lhasa without the guild's permission (Yeshi, 1984).

**A Postcard from the Norbulingka**

It was a beautiful April day in the Kangra valley. The monsoon was several months away and the hot season was mild that year--or so it seemed under the shade trees of the Norbulingka. As Karma, my translator, and I sat near the burbling streams in the very Japanese looking garden, Tenpa Choepel, the Norbulingka thangka master, walked out of the workshops to

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greet us. He was wearing grey slacks, a T-shirt, and flip-flops. Only mid-way through the interview did I discover he is a monk. Several picnicking Tibetans lolled about on the grass nearby, giggling at the Injee with his tape recorder, furiously scribbling notes.

As usual I was taking an artist away from his work. However, also as usual, I was told that it is crucial for Westerners to understand Tibetan art. Tenpa was then painting a long-life thangka for His Holiness which would include some 120 images and take "three or four months of hard work" to complete. He had done the main drawings and would paint most of the finer details, while his students finished the "easy" painting. From the Loseling monastic college in southern India he received precious metals, and from the Private Office precious pills and some of the Dalai Lama's hair, all of which were mixed and plastered onto the canvas. "It looked a bit dull and black then," he chuckled.

I asked him how he got started painting. "If I tell you, it's very sad," Tenpa said. Despite this, he broke into an amused smile whenever he looked at me, and grabed my hand and pulled it to his lap, linking our arms as he told me his story.

Tenpa was born in 1959 in Lhasa. His father was from a central Tibetan family that had for generations been stewards to the Dorings, one of the Tibetan aristocracy's richest families. After the Lhasa uprising, his father was imprisoned, and the house was sealed with all the family's possessions inside. Although his father was released after a year, Tenpa's family fell into the "reactionary" category whose members were assigned menial jobs such as cleaning toilets. His father was subjected to many "thamzin": humiliating and often brutal public "struggle sessions." As

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these families received no educational privileges, Tenpa never attended school.

Tenpa remembers total chaos during the cultural revolution. The two Red Guard factions in Lhasa, the Namdrel and the Gyenlok, shot it out in the streets. The most important temple in Tibet, the Jokhang, founded in 650 AD by the King-hero Songsten Gampo, was used as headquarters by the Red Guards, it's yard turned into a pig-sty. "Many learned religious figures were killed as well as skilled artists. All those aware of this destruction want to preserve what's left. The masters tried to secretly teach their skill."

One of the family's neighbors in Lhasa, Gyelsten Namgyel, was a former painter at Mindroling, a Nyingma monastery outside Lhasa. Tenpa became his apprentice in 1972. His master told Tenpa that he wanted to pass on his knowledge even though he could not use it, for the next generation might. Meanwhile, the master painted walls and houses. Tenpa also took up this work and was hired to restore the Jokhang--"doing the very worst jobs"-- cleaning walls laden with grease and smoke from butter lamps, and painting window panes and walls. "I felt very strange working at the Jokhang. I had to have an identity card, go through two guards, and enter a big iron door like a prison."

Because his family was closely watched, when Tenpa decided to become a monk he did so secretly. He and a friend from Kham rode to Drepung on bicycles, hiding their robes. At the monastery they put on the robes, recited their vows, then took them off again for the ride home. During these years as a member of Building Co-operative #4, Tenpa studied thangka painting with his master early in the morning or at night. In the late 1970's, religious restrictions were eased and Tenpa began

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painting thangkas more openly. He took private orders and taught some students, including several tulkus. In 1982, he and his students joined the restoration of Ganden outside Lhasa. Ganden was the oldest Gelukpa monastery and had once sheltered some 4000 monks. It was almost completely leveled during the Cultural Revolution.

After his father's death in 1983, Tenpa applied for permission to leave Tibet; "not to escape, but to visit my relatives in India." His application was granted a year and a half later, and he went to Kathmandu, financing the journey by selling turquoise and gold jewelry. Reaching Dharamsala in 1985, the Dalai Lama advised him to learn English before he began teaching students. He went to the Dialectics School in McLeod Ganj for a year and became literate in Tibetan, but has never studied English. He spent several years at the re-established Drepung monastery in Mundgod, South India, studied philosophy, and began painting again on the request of the Dalai Lama.

Tenpa agreed to teach at the Norbulingka in 1989 when asked by the Religious Office and Kalon Kelsang Yeshi. He now lives at the Norbulingka and teaches fourteen students, all "Newcomers" from Tibet, all male. They work from nine to five painting buildings, furniture, doors, beams, and secular murals on interior walls. They also produce thangkas commissioned through Kim Yeshi or the Department of Religion and Culture. Tenpa teaches many of his students after working hours. Now, he reports, "some are pretty good." Tenpa sometimes accepts private orders as well, working until one or two o'clock in the morning. He said he has taken "not one day off" since his arrival at the Norbulingka, and that it is difficult to get permission to leave.

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I asked him about the orders they have received. They have just completed a painting for, he thought, an embassy in Delhi. "The orders from Westerners are very important as ways to show our culture and traditions, so we are taking care to be very traditional, even attempting to use authentic stone colors from Tibet."

As Karma and I left he walks over to a completed White Tara. A younger monk has just finished painting the eyes. "This is not so impressive," he said. "It's very rough, like in Kathmandu!"

**Painting Thangkas**

While some new materials have been adopted, the step by step process of painting thangkas has changed little in exile. Before beginning work on a thangka, a painter should be initiated into the class of tantras to which the deity belongs, and prepare himself spiritually. While representing the ideal, it is unclear just how far this was ever carried out. The present masters agree, however, that things are more lax in exile. Tenpa said that he used to tell his students to spiritually prepare themselves, but so far "the students don't seem to be so careful about this."

Thangka painters traditionally prepared their own artistic materials; they manufactured brushes, stretched and treated canvases, and mixed their own paints. In exile, some of these time consuming steps have been shortened by the use of ready-made products available on the Indian market.

The first step in producing a thangka is sizing and stretching the canvas. Canvases in Tibet were generally of Indian muslin or Chinese cloth. In Nepal and India they are cut from light-weight Indian cotton cloth (Jackson and Jackson, 1984). The Jacksons report that in Tibet, the best

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sizing was called "deity glue" (*lha spyin* ) and was made from animal skins free of dirt, fur and fat. Tenpa told me that this "authentic" glue was derived from yak skins. This white sizing provides the painter with a smooth surface on which to paint. The canvas is air-dried as it is stretched and stabilized within inner and outer wooden frames stitched to the canvas. The canvas remains in these frames until it is finished and permanently "housed" in brocade. Students of the government schools as well as private painters still prepare canvases themselves, but the glue is now usually bought on the market.

The next step is sketching the design in strict accordance with iconographic and iconometric rules applied to the main figures. These conventions evolved from Hindu sources and have been increasingly systematized since the fourteenth century (Bentor, 1993). The rules derive primarily from three texts: the Kalachakra-tantra, the Prtimalaksana-tantra, and the Mahasamvarodaya-tantra, although there are others in the canon. These regulations are usually transmitted orally from master to student. Respect for them is considered an act of devotion (Lo Bue, 1985). Faulty workmanship of religious objects brings demerit not only to the artist, but to those who gaze upon "incorrect" works of art, for they "invite irreverent thoughts and remarks from beholders" (Dagyab, 1977). There is greater freedom in the color scheme and shading, and in secondary or "decorative" landscape elements (clouds, rocks, animals) which have no direct religious significance. "Creativity" in depicting the deities would be considered a "mistake", if not a sin. Patrons sometimes prescribed the outlay of their thangka, detailing the positions of each figure, but generally specified only the deities wanted. Tracing the figures from a master's "tikse" was common, but now photographic reproductions

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of all sorts can also be employed. This practice had already begun in Tibet before the occupation. Photographs were used as a model for a mural painted in the 1950's at the Lhasa Norbulingka which depicted the present Dalai Lama with officials and western diplomats (Lo Bue, 1985). The Library school in Dharamsala has used slides from museums and private collections (Information Office of HHDL, 1981). Gonpo, the retired TCV thangka master, said that in Tibet students started drawing on wooden planks with charcoal, but in exile it is done on "modern" paper with pencils. In every instance I observed, artists drew with pencils. However, Tenpa claimed that his students make and use charcoal from trees found locally. Tenpa said that to erase pencil sketches one must rub the canvas, which wears it out. With charcoal, the "canvas can be tapped and it comes off."

The initial coats of paint fill in the main areas of the sketch. Paints were traditionally derived from mineral and organic sources--- blue from azurite, green from malachite, white from chalk, black from carbonized wood, etc. (Jackson and Jackson 1984). These were ground and mixed in mortars by the painter. Although sometimes "stone colors" are used in exile, they are expensive and difficult to obtain. Chemical paints are more common. "It's easier and very convenient," commented Sangay Yeshi, "but they don't last long and fade very quickly. In Tibet the paintings looked the same after 100 years." Gonpo cited another drawback: "The main difference between the old and new thangkas are the colors from the stones. They weren't so harsh. But the chemical colors are harsh, probably because the paints are made by machine." Thangkas are most commonly multi-colored, although there are three types in predominantly one color: black (*nag thang* ) red (*mtshal thang* ) and gold (*ser thang* ).

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According to Jackson and Jackson (1984) the black thangka was the most common among these, while the others were rare and are hardly ever produced now. My informants, however, report having received several orders for red thangkas and fewer for black.

Brushes were also made by painters in Tibet; from juniper or pine or, preferably, sandalwood. "The quality of the brush makes a big difference in the quality of the painting," notes Gonpo. For coloring broad areas, goat hair brushes were used; for finer details, cat hair. At the Norbulingka, painters use commercial brushes which Tenpa claims can be better than the traditional ones. TCV students buy commercial brushes and cut them down to various sizes.

After the initial coats of paint, shading and details are added; steps which demonstrate the skill of the artist. The sky is textured through a dotting technique, and the deities are outlined with golden rays emanating within a surrounding nimbus (see Jackson and Jackson, 1984, for a more detailed discussion of painting technique). Golden jewelry is drawn over the the limbs and torsos of the deities. These details were traditionally painted with gold supplied by the patron. The gold was finely ground and mixed with a binder. In exile, painters generally use gold leaf which is easily crumbled. Artists purchase it themselves and add it to the price of the thangka when, as is often the case, the painting will be mailed or delivered to a distant consumer. The amount of gold in large part determines the variable costs of thangkas, while labor charges are usually on a per day basis. (The labor costs of a more detailed thangka is greater because it takes more time, not more skill). Sometimes, report the Jacksons, painters in exile use brass instead of gold. Bentor (1993) writes that despite merchants' claims to the contrary, gold is never found in the

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"tourist thangkas" of Kathmandu. All the painters I spoke with denied ever resorting to imitation gold. "That would be cheating," scoffed Tenpa. Ideally the gold is burnished with a dZi stone (an valuable agate) when it has dried. Few painters can afford these rare items, and so other smooth stones, or "duplicate dZis" according to Tenpa, are used.

The image comes to life when the face and eyes are painted. An "eye opening" ceremony may be conducted on an auspicious day, although this is less common in exile. Sacred syllables are painted on the back of the thangka at the head, throat, and heart of the main figure, and thangkas must be consecrated by a lama or they are considered "lifeless." Sometimes the hand or fingerprints of religious personalties are also placed on the back, lending the thangka particular power. Consecration transforms a material depiction of a deity into one with a living spiritual presence. All Tibetans have their thangkas consecrated, which is generally the responsibility of the client. Most of the painters I spoke with assumed that western patrons had their paintings consecrated, but they weren't absolutely sure.

An "authentic, traditional" thangka is not complete unless framed in a brocade "home" fashioned by a tailor. The proper proportions of the brocade housing are fixed: below the painting the area of the brocade is 1/2 that of the picture, widening out at the bottom; above it is 1/4 the area of the painting; the sides are 1/2 as wide as the bottom (Dagyab, 1977). Red and yellow "rainbow" strips (*ja marpo serpo* ) run along the front sides of the painting, which is protected by a silk cover (*zal-khebs* ) hung from the top. It has a slit down the middle so it can be pulled aside to display the image. (This may only occur n the context of religious practice, such as an anniversary service for a deceased relative). Two thin silk strips hang to just below the bottom of the thangka. Ending in triangular points, they

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resemble men's ties and are left hanging when the cover is gathered up. The back of the painting is lined with cotton or silk, and the brocade attached to wooden rods (*thang shing* ) running along the top and bottom. The rods end in decorative knobs (*thang thog* ) of silver or "white metal". Although every Tibetan I knew provided their thangkas with brocade "homes,"western travelers generally mailed or carried them about "homeless."

**Schools, Money, and the New Generation of Painters**

The thangka painting schools run by the Tibetan government-in-exile are providers of social welfare as well as vehicles of artistic preservation. Gonpo contrasted the old patronage system in Tibet, where he received more orders from monasteries, to that in exile which is primarily private. However, the schools and government arts' center like the Norbulingka provide new institutional sources of patronage. While these institutions preserve many essential technical features of the old system, the social relations of production have been altered and the government now links local painters to culturally and spatially distant non-Tibetan consumers; painters still train in small groups under a master, but may fill orders arranged through government intermediaries for foreign religious centers or political allies. Although most artists I spoke with mentioned that they had shown a previous interest in art, some become thangka painters simply because they had no other skills or resources and the schools placed them in a handicraft center.

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**A Postcard From TCV, July 15 1993.**

The sun is a faint gray ball. It's humid, and the rapid hike to McLeod Ganj up the hill from Gankyi has left me swimming in sweat, further polluting the atmosphere surrounding my monsoon-moldy clothes. At least I'm not alone -- no one can get their clothes dry these days. I meet Karma at noon in his friend Tashi's shop across from Nowrojee's general store. We're doing interviews today at Upper TCV.

It starts raining as we walk through the clipped rhododendrons lining TCV road. Soon the torrent overwhelms my small umbrella, and even though Karma insists I take his large, multicolored one, in a minute I'm completely drenched. My pants stick and rub against my legs, opening an infected bedbug bite. The blood spreads through the moisture creating a big red stain over my left knee and thigh. What an impression I'll make!

We take a short-cut through a hole in a barbed-wire fence and run up a muddy trail to a gap between the flat roofed, two story blocks of the TCV handicraft school. We hold our noses as we pass the toilets in the outbuilding, and slosh up the stairs to the small room where the thangka painters work. Their pillows are lined up along the walls, the highest seat at one end for the teacher. I'm surprised that of the four painters now in the room, two are women, one of them a nun. Karma recognizes one of the painters as an old school mate, and introduces me to a slim man with one bad eye, a scraggly beard, and an gregarious manner. "Kelsang" speaks English well, so Karma stretches out and relaxes as we speak. I sit cross-legged with my parka over my bloody leg.

Kelsang is thirty years old and was born in Darjeeling. His parents were originally from Sakya in Tibet, but he doesn't know what they did there; farming, he guesses. He came to Dharamsala in 1972 to attend the

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TCV school, and started thangka training after class five. His parents had died; "after that my mind changed. I was interested in art-- fine art, modern art-- and after they died I got interested in religion. I won a gold medal in an International art competition for children in 1979. His Holiness came and talked to me for 40 minutes and told me I could be a thangka painter and after we were free I could paint monasteries in Tibet."

Suggestions given by the Dalai Lama are taken very seriously. Kelsang opens up a book recording the "Silver Jubilee" of TCV and shows me a photograph of himself with the Dalai Lama. Then, laughing, he points to another picture of a very innocent-looking Tibetan boy.

"Who's that?"

"Uh . . . I dunno."

"It's me!" reveals Karma, then whispers: "When we went to school and someone said, 'I'm in handicrafts,' it's finished! We looked down on them. They were the ones who failed studies, or who were careless."

Kelsang studied painting at TCV for eight years along with fifteen other students. Some have left, and now he tells me there are seven "graduates" still working there. Kelsang shows me the Chenrezi he is working on, which he thinks is for a European Buddhist Society. "The office tells us what to paint and who they are for, or sometimes not." His last painting was a Wheel of Life for an American Dharma group. Next he will work on a Green Tara for a new TCV house. He's very proud of his work and tells me he'd like to "show thangkas in the West where I have a lot of friends; to demonstrate my talent."

Another young painter listens in and laughs occasionally, and when we talk about technique goes to a closet and pulls out some black stones. "These are from Tibet," he tells me. "The color from them will last for

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years! It's very difficult to get these colors. If we get our freedom, colors will be no problem!"

Kelsang becomes animated when I begin to ask him about their wages. All the TCV handicraft workers get free room and board, but he protests:

> The tailors make more. They can make 600 or 700 Rs. a month! We only get 300 to 500, depending on what we paint. If we do a work worth 10,000 Rs. we only get 3000. If a tailor did the same, he'd get 5000. If we were paid according to the quality of our work, we would get a lot more! Because of this we've made a union of painters like the drivers have, both government and private. One of the main aims is to help poor or sick painters who are in critical situations. If I am unhappy with my salary or have problems with the office, then a union could help.

When pressed, he admits that the union is his personal idea and only in the planning stages. "But all are interested--we can discuss it after the monsoon." This "union" sounds like a *kyiduk*, essentially, a traditional form of voluntary self-help association. Kelsang hopes to make postcards to sell for Losar (Tibetan New year) and Christmas to make money for the union. "Maybe the office will be angry."

I ask him to imagine he has made a thangka that will sell for 5000 Rs. Where will the money go? He considers. The cost of the materials might be 2000 Rs., 1200 for the gold. He gets paid 1200 Rs. for two months work. The rest of the 1800 Rs. goes to TCV, "for orphans and food and things."

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"When I go to relatives in the South they think I must be very rich. I am a thangka painter and the school pays for everything: clothes, food, and a big salary." He laughs. "Many people leave here because the pay is so low."

The schools have regularized the training and pay of painters. The use of money as an equivalent for these sacred commodities is not unique to exile. Both pre-1959 thangka masters were generally paid in cash in Tibet. However, they both remembered that fees were not so precisely fixed as they are now. Sometimes, as Yeshi claimed, the poor paid less than the price of the gold in a thangka. With the new institutional intermediation of the schools, it is doubtful that any client could obtain a thangka at a price below its value. Payment in kind is rare; instead, painters receive definite wages and tend to work relatively regular hours. Idealizing the past he had never known, one young painter commented:

> They [thangkas] were done traditionally in complete rest, easy in mind. In the old times it was not for greed. . . . They were given as a present, not for cash. People paid with animals for art-- five horses or twenty sheep, butter, flowers. This was old Tibetan business. Now people work very fast for cash.

At the Norbulingka the painters work from eight to twelve in the morning and from two to five in the afternoon. One monk painter told me that when rushed to fill an order, they work seven days a week and at night. Few holidays are taken. The monk told me he thinks he gets about 60 Rs. per day (about $2). The Department of Religion and Culture's

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proposal for the Norbulingka institute (n.d.) has budgeted "allowances" of $35 per month for the apprentices, with a 10% raise each year. Apprentices in the other crafts receive the same "allowance." Rooms are free but crowded--two or three to a room-- as there are not many completed yet. (Private painters are generally not provided with room and board as they were by wealthy patrons in pre-1959 Tibet.)

Thangka teachers' salaries are budgeted at $130 per year + 10% each year. At the Library school and at TCV (once the painters are filling orders) the students receive 30% of the price of the thangkas they produce, which they estimate amounts to about 400 to 600 Rs. per month. TCV students live at the school. While library students must pay for their own room and board, they can stay with other students in small rooms at Gankyi for 20 Rs. a month, and eat at the subsidized "Staff Mess." These wages are generally in line with other government handicraft workers, but less than what private painters can earn. Sangay Yeshi believes that his students working privately can earn up to 150 Rs. per day.

While the training period is about the same length in exile as it was in Tibet, "graduation" is more precisely defined. The Norbulingka, for example, has proposed a six year period for its apprentice painters, while at TCV and the Library, trainees take writing and drafting exams and receive a certificate if they pass. The certificate authenticates the painter's knowledge in a manner unnecessary in pre-1959 Tibet, before the development of a tourist market. Sangay Yeshi told me that the certificate gives the painters "an identity. It shows where they learned. This is how it works in the modern world; it complies with what society expects."

While wages and training have been more formally defined, relations between student and master are looser. "Traditionally in Tibet if one works

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for a master one is very respectful," remembered Yeshi. "You would serve a teacher, live around him, go for walks. Here the training is less formal, but more intensive. One just concentrates on learning." The intimate, and sometimes servile, relationship of students to masters has been distanced.

However closely spiritual prescriptions were followed in Tibet -- and it is doubtful that practice ever met the ideal -- ritual steps are frequently skipped in exile. "I tell my students to be initiated and to pray and make the visualizations," Gonpo said, "but I can't tell if they do it." Laughing, he tells me: "I believe some of them are doing it."

Sangay Yeshi complained about a loss of respect among the new generation of painters. "Often students will say 'this Chenrezi is no good.' This is a big mistake. One must say: 'the thangka painter has not drawn Chenrezi correctly.' This is the proper way to criticize." Westerners are very poor about handling the thangkas, Yeshi said, "but even among Tibetans there's a big difference from before. My students even put a thangka over a bed, whereas in Tibet it would always be over an appropriate place."

In the schools there is a lot of joking and informality. The painters socialize after hours, and at the now closed Library school, many were friendly with the Westerners who attend classes there or live nearby. As one Western volunteer put it: "None of these thangka painter guys are very religious. Anything I've learned about it [thangka painting] is from Dharma classes. . . . I mean, in their spare time they watch STAR TV. They're just normal guys in their twenties."

At the Norbulingka there is a more serious atmosphere. Almost all those in the schools are lay painters whereas four of the six painters I spoke with at the Norbulingka are monks. One of these monk painters told me

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that before beginning work he meditates on Manjusri, the embodiment of discriminating wisdom, "to improve my mind." Then he visualizes the deity he is about to paint and invites its' presence into his materials. The differences in attitude might be accounted for by the fact that at the Norbulingka nearly all artisan trainees are recent arrivals from Tibet. They all expressed gratitude to "the grace of His Holiness" and a desire to "repay" the Tibetan government. While their statements might be dismissed as stock "party line" answers, I believe they were sincere. Unlike the Indian born trainees, many "newcomer" artists are still marked by recent experiences under the Chinese occupation.

Champa, for example, only 17 years old in 1993, had been stabbed several times by Chinese soldiers and left in the street after a restaurant fight during the Lhasa demonstrations in March, 1989. The Chinese hospital refused to admit him. A few days later he was told that his friend had been arrested and tortured to death. Before dying, the friend informed the authorities that Champa had been the instigator of the restaurant fight. Fearing for his life, he left Lhasa and began painting houses in rural areas. After several attempts, he escaped Tibet in the Fall of 1992, and was painting in the Norbulingka by January of 1993

**After School: Two Private Painters**

The CTA school pay very little for thangas compared with what can be made on the open market. However, they offer a sure income, low cost food and housing, and a security with which many artists are reluctant to part. Private painters of recognized skill may continue to work on orders from traditional Tibetan patrons -- the monasteries and government. Many, however, must supplement their painting with office work or small

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trade. Still others turn to the new patrons of Tibetan cultural production: foreigners.

**July 15, 1993** It's clearing a bit as Karma and I leave TCV, having had a productive day. My pants are nearly dry, and the diluted blood stain is not so noticeable. Karma's umbrella is newly decorated with the Eight Auspicious Symbols a friend painted while we snooped around. We part ways at the bus stand, and I trudge through the muddy streets, hop over an open sewer, and enter Krishna's "café", a good place to meet freaky travelers and other local characters. This den of iniquity is a dark small concrete room with a long wobbly table surrounded by wicker chairs and a wooden bench, sparsely decorated with a few posters of Hindu gods. Krishna, ex-Hindu renunciate turned hustler and hash dealer, is not in. A young Tibetan man with long hair walks in. Sitting down, he lights up a smoke and stares pensively out the barred glassless window at the view down the soggy ravine to the Kangra valley. I ask him what he does, and he angrily launches into a diatribe.

> I've painted since I was very young, I've had many teachers. The library teacher is one. They are like Kung Fu masters, you know. They don't take everything [one's profits]. But I stopped painting thangkas. I drew carpet designs for awhile. One big design for a big carpet, and some others, but they only paid me 600 Rs. a month and 20 Rs. for a room! 20 Rs. is not enough for a room! Now they have many orders for the carpet and I get nothing. Then I painted the big wall painting [for a certain building] with thirty Buddhas and one Tara. I wanted to do a good job, but the owner he always say 'Hurry,

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hurry, you must finish!' Then he hires monks and other painters to finish it, with bad outlines. Oh, this is not possible!

I ask him about the owner.

He does it just to make a name. He paid me 2000 Rs. for one month. You figure: that's 30 days so only 70 Rs. a day. But the other painters, they get 250 Rs. a day! He makes *chorten* [Skrt. stupa] and things, but his insides are not clean. My heart is clean when I paint, but he always says to me: 'Why do you smoke hash?' I smoke hash, but my inside is clean! Really the best painters are monks. Other painters they do it for children, make money, help parents. Best is for monks, but these days monks are not the same. But I don't care, I'm free. I work with Indians, foreigners, anyone. You know [a certain] café? I made those paintings.

I do know it. It's a hippie hangout with a great view, beautiful spot with a stone patio where Westerners, long haired Tibetan boys, and Indian, men sit in the sun, play chess, swim in the stream, and smoke hash surrounded by large color paintings on grey slate slabs of Shiva, Buddhas, and Rastafarians.

"I also painted for the Baba and the Italian man at Bhagsu, you know, "the painter continues. "This Italian, he gave Baba 60,000 Rs. 'This is stupid,' I told him. I know Baba; when foreigners are not around he goes and eats with local girls. I told him, 'you are not a real Baba, you only feed your stomach!' Why do they say 'Oh Shiva, Shiva'? Leave Shiva up," he says, pointing to the sky, "not here, not in the stomach!"

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I ask him if he knows Babaji Trilock Swami, who periodically enters an underground chamber and fasts, unmoving, for three days. His tiny home atop a ridge across form the Library is equipped with a stereo system that blasts devotional music, audible for miles, every morning and evening.

"Oh yes, I also did his paintings. He is a real Baba. Not only an eat and fuck Baba," he says in disgust. He falls silent and turns away.

Tenzin Dharghey, twenty-nine, lives with his monk student in several small rooms below the library, just off the stone path that leads down to the main bazaar. His father and uncle were artists; members of a lineage of painters that reaches back at least to the time of the fifth Dalai Lama in the seventeenth century. Before 1959, he said, "my father painted privately, my uncle served the government. They got quite good incomes, but not so rich. We were in the middle, and our work was never done. We were not as rich as business traders."

After 1959 his father and uncle were forced to stop painting. Because their lineage had produced religious artists for centuries, the Chinese made them an example and beat them publicly. They started painting again in 1975, "but only tables, cupboards, houses. Just enough to feed themselves." When religious restrictions were relaxed, his father was asked to teach thangka painting at an institute in Lhasa the Chinese opened in 1981. Tendar went with him and began his apprenticeship.

Students at the institute mostly worked to reconsruct demaged monasteries, and studied thangka painting in their spare time. (This is quite similar to the schedule of the Dharamsala Norbulingka). They generally used synthetic paints but sometimes managed to obtain stone colors. Occasionally they painted thangkas with gold, which Tibetans

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always desired, though few could afford. "We were paid pretty well. By 1986 I made five yuan a day." Orders came from the Chinese. "They wanted to improve their image for tourists. They only did it for show. I'm 100% sure of this, and not because I'm anti-Chinese."

By the mid-1980's, the Chinese administration took a fairly laissez-faire approach to religion. "We could do prayers, initiations, and consecrate thangkas according to tradition. We would be blessed, and exchange katas before working." Nevertheless, Tendar felt constrained and decided to leave Tibet. "I didn't come to India for the money. I had a comfortable life at home. But my family had a lineage. If I came to India I could properly carry it on and improve my painting." He obtained a traders' visa for movement in Tibet, then walked and hitched to the Nepali border. There, he shaved his head and pretended to be a Nepalese coolie. He carried three large bags which he tied into a bundle and supported with a strap across his forehead. Bending down to further hide his face, he had no problem passing through the border.

In India Tendar enrolled in the Library school, receiving a 400 rs allowance. He elected to get his own rooms however, because he wanted to paint privately for extra money. He left the Library after 5 years and now works mostly for traditional patrons: the monasteries and the Tibetan government. In 1991, he worked on the Kalachakra chapel in the main temple alongside his uncle who had come to India in 1985. Namgyal monastery paid him 70 Rs. a day. He was "initiated and received teachings and blessings -- it was all very traditional."

When I spoke with him he was busy painting a series of thangkas reconting the life of the Buddha for the Gyuto monastery near Kalimpong. He received 150 Rs. per day, more than twice what the students make and

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more than most government office workers. He hadreceived an order from a monk at Bir for a thangka with 36 images of the Buddha. "This has so much detail and 5000 Rs. worth of gold." It would him over two months to paint it.

Tendar never solicits orders, relying on his reputation and connections. He has recently accepted commissions for a Sakyamuni for a Japanese man, and a Green Tara for a French woman. Both patrons are sponsors of Tibetan monasteries. "It makes no difference if it's for Tibetans or Injees," he charges the same prices for all. "If I wanted to get rich, I would make these distinctions, but it doesn't matter if it's for the high or low."

**The New Market: Change and Preservation**

> And as for those 'divinely emanated' painters of religious images--
> Phooey!
> Their crooked images possess neither correct shape nor proportions
> -- Phooey!
> Without making clear the 'eye-opening' of the deity by means of
> their colors and shading
> They do shading with dark and dilute lac dye -- Phooey!
> Not thinking of the payment offered by the patron as being a basis
> for the gathering of a stock of merit
> They fix a price of one bre for each deity -- Phooey!
> Without restoring the murals of old temples
> They sell for a profit the thangkas that they lazily paint -- Phooey!
> I have still more gossip of various kinds about such painters.

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Even if I do not utter it, I would like to!
-- 16th century "mad yogi" 'Brug-pa kun-legs
[Ardussi, 1972; in Jackson and Jackson, 1984:12]

Bentor has noted several features that make thangkas a suitable tourist art. They are relatively small and portable, easily rolled up and carried or shipped in poster tubes. Thangkas come in a range of sizes and prices, and their symmetry and color contrasts appeal across cultural boundaries, especially the more abstract, geometric mandalas most popular in the stalls of the Kathmandu tourist market. As with other Tibetan crafts, they not only represent the traditions of a "simpler" people, but evoke the mystique of Shangri-la (Bentor, 1993).

Analyses of "tourist art" usually contrast the "internal" and "external" markets for ethnic crafts (ibid; Graburn, 1976). The internal market is constituted by an "audience" from within the producers' own socio-cultural group. The external market is constituted by consumers with little knowledge of the artifacts' cultural context. In describing the market in Kathmandu, Bentor posits another audience for thangkas, one particularly relevant to Dharamsala: the "intermediate audience" of non-Tibetans-- Westerners and Buddhists from other parts of Asia -- who are familiar with and have adopted parts of the Tibetan religious tradition.

The presence of the Dalai Lama and monastic institutions, the persistence of a significant internal market, and the growth of a relatively knowledgeable intermediate market that demands art works adhering to the Buddhist canon limit the extent to which tourism has impacted on traditional thangka production in Dharamsala. This is in contrast to Kathmandu, where hundreds of "tourist thangkas" are on sale to the

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external market in rows of shops near Durbar Square. There brass is substituted for gold, and most thangkas are of poor quality and "incorrectly" designed. In Kathmandu, while the internal market is dominated by ethnic Tibetans, tourist thangkas are produced predominantly by Newaris and Tamang (Bentor, 1993). Although these groups also had traditions of sacred objects and paintings quite similar to the Tibetans, they now produce a new style of painting targeted directly at the external market. Newari and Tamang painters and merchants sometimes attempt to pass themselves off as Tibetans, but do not feel so constricted in selling sacred obects as are the refugees living near the Dalai Lama and the religious institutions that are thick in Dharamsala. As one western researcher said: "In Tibet and Dharamsala, thangkas are expensive and hidden. In Nepal they call out on the streets: 'Look at the gold! The mineral colors!'"

Living in the center of Tibetan culture and politics in exile, many Dharamsala refugees are concerned about the image their community presents to international visitors. Tenpa Chopel told me that in Kathmandu thangkas are painted "just for the stomach! Without any background they make a thangka, without even knowing what the images mean. They paint whatever they like, and this gives a bad impression to the Westerners."

In Dharamsala, there are few "incorrect" thangkas for sale, and selling consecrated paintings generates unease. Tenpa Choepel says he doesn't know if the thangkas produced at the Norbulingka for Westerners are consecrated, but he assumes they "must be" by Kim Yeshi, or by the client. Even if they are not, he thinks "by looking at it you should get merit if you are open to the image." Consecrated thangkas, said Gonpo, "shouldn't be hung on the wall for decoration. But I can't say if it's just

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for a decoration that it is bad. Hindus and Christians also have such pictures."

If a thangka is consecrated, care must be employed in handling it. It should be rolled from the bottom upwards, and hung in an appropriate spot, such as a prayer room. Selling thangkas to Westerners who may, as one artist feared, hang thangkas in the bathroom, is worrisome. Many painters express a desire to educate western buyers in the proper meaning and care of thangkas, but in the new transnational market they may never meet the consumers of their products. Bentor notes that there is as yet no institutional framework for bringing together traditional painters and foreign consumers in Kathmandu. There, the separation of buyer and producer lends itself to the cheapening of this art into souvenir with little spiritual significance. In Dharamsala, the schools and the Norbulingka provide the link but often eliminate the traditional face to face commission by patrons. One young painter at Norbulingka told me that doing paintings for patrons one never meets is "very strange. But if the Westerner is helping the Tibetan government or its projects, or if it's for a monastery, then it's Okay." The government institutions also provide a degree of control over the quality and marketing of thangkas, which is lost when art is "privatized" or when thangkas are produced without traditional training.

> Thangka painters do not have bad *rik* [race, origin]. If they are skillful they are very good, but if they make mistakes it is a very big sin. If they mispaint an eye then in the next life they will have the same eye problem. -- Woman from D'ingri

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I was introduced to Ngawang Tsultrim by an American friend who was swapping an Enfield motorcycle -- the choice of the hip traveler --for some thangkas and secular paintings. Ngawang works at Lower TCV school, painting in his spare time. He agreed to an interview one day after giving the paintings to my friend. We drank sweet tea in his high-ceilinged studio just past the rows of bunk beds where the children sleep.

Ngawang was born in Kham to "middle semi-nomads"-- the English expression Tibetans use to characterize middle income agro-pastoralist. His family left Tibet in 1959 and built roads in Ladakh for many years. After 9th class, he left school and joined the military, serving in the Indo-Tibetan border police for about 20 years. He made good wages but "was young and naughty-- a smoker and drinker-- I just ate up my salary." Married with three children, he was quite poor when he left the army. He became a teacher at Bir school but only made 150 rs. a month -- "nothing!" After four years a monk artist advised him to take up painting to improve his living standard.

Ngawang studied with the monk for only one year, but "put everything into it." His first painting sold for 100 Rs.-- "50 for him 50 for me. I wanted full profit so after a year I went on my own." Ngawang never learned to draw the deities correctly, so his monk friend still sketches the figures for 200 Rs. a day. "We do the Khampa style--Menri? I don't know." Ngawang does prepare his own canvases; "If a painter can't make a canvas, he's no good!"

He paints about two hours a day in addition to his work at lower TCV, augmenting his salary of 1300 Rs. a month. "With the thangka money we get good food and things I like," he explained. He works informally, listening to music in his studio. Unlike many of the other

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painters I interviewed, he only works on one thangka at a time, "slowly." He points to a large Buddha hanging on the wall. "That took five years! But some painters are quick. Money, money! Quick, quick! I do very neat work."

I ask Ngawang how much he makes for each painting. For a normal sized thangka, he told me, he'll pay the monk 200 Rs. for the drawing. Then maybe the gold will cost 600 Rs., the commercial paints next to nothing. Then he'll have a have a relative sew the brocade for 200 Rs. The brocade itself will cost about 1000 Rs. Total costs are thus about 2000 Rs. and he'll sell it for 4000 Rs., making a 2000 Rs. profit.

"I don't get orders. I do what I like. When I finish Tara, I think in my mind I'll do a Buddha. Send the monk the design, then paint it. It will sell," he says emphatically, "someone will want it.

"People come, friends tell friends. The last few years we had volunteer teachers from America and England. They come and sit with me and when they go, they buy. If they don't have money they give me calculators--that Walkman is from a British man." His customers are almost always Westerners, occasionally a Tibetan. "Never Indians. If I say 4000 Rs., they'll jump! Never!"

He writes mantras on the back of his paintings, but this is not a consecration, which clients must arrange with a lama. He told me:

> Some painters ask great lamas to put blessings on their brushes, so everything they do is blessed. But this is just thinking. We are the younger generation, we don't need this. We should throw out the rubbish and keep the good things, new things.

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> Many old people say: 'You are sinning! You will make deities' noses crooked, the eyes wrong! This is a great sin!' The old say this, but I am proud. These paintings go to the West and make a name for Tibet. And we must save our culture! So I am doing good. These sweater sellers, they say Manis [prayers]-- 'oh, I am so good!' But even eating is a sin: killing beings. Sin is everywhere.
>
> My paintings look good close up. Many look good from far away, but not close up. Whoever looks at Tara should be pleased: Then that is Tara!' If a Tara looks like Guru Rinpoche, then this is a sin. The paintings from Nepal are like this. They're spoiling our Tibetan art. Just block-print and slap it on. If I did like that then people would really get mad at me!

I asked him if it mattered that Westerners don't know the significance of what they buy. "Actually I don't know either. I only know colors; and they like it and take it -- just like that!"

Ngawang also makes secular paintings -- monastic processions, lama dances, etc. -- of which he keeps several in stock, selling them for between 600 and 900 Rs. "It's very hard work, it takes a long time. Thangkas make more money."

**Innovation and Preservation**

> Tibetan art . . . is not "creative" in the Modern Westen sense, but rather it is expressive of the discipline and mythology of the enlightenment experience. [Mullin and Weber 1996:2]

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Tourist-local interaction, generally characterized as shallow and stereotyped in the anthropological literature, generates what Graburn calls a cross-cultural code akin to a pidgin language. Tourist arts come to employ a few simple motifs that represent a locale or ethnicity across cultural boundaries (Graburn, 1974). This shift has occurred with thangkas directed at the external market in Kathmandu. Thangkas are of low quality, display little skill in shading, and are sometimes miniaturized and simplified, or else busy with invented details. Although rarely commissioned by individual Tibetans, and generally painted on temple and monastery walls, mandalas (*dkyil-'khor)* -- symmetric, generally more abstract representations of the "palace" or "abode" of a deity -- are by far the most popular thangkas with tourists in Kathmandu (Bentor, 1993). Many are "incorrect;" I saw numerous Wheels of Life, a depiction of the cycles of samsaric existence, with five realms instead of six. Pastel colors are used to appeal to western tastes. Gold is seldom used and frames are painted on (Bentor, 1993). Gonpo and Sangay Yeshi both said that Westerners bring them thangkas bought in Kathmandu and ask what they represent, but they are unable to tell. "You cannot refer to any style--they're supposed to be traditional but the most important part is the iconometrics, and they don't comply."

Following Graburn, Popelka and Littrel (1991) delineate several conditions that propel craft evolution in adaptation to tourism: a large number of consumers outside the traditional market, artisans willing to produce for non-traditional consumers and to change traditional standards of production, a breakdown of limitations on who may produce, and the incorporation of new techniques and materials. All these conditions exist in Dharamsala and despite the institutional support of the schools and the

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Norbulingka, there is a general consensus among Tibetans there that the quality of thangkas is deteriorating as a result. As one young painter told me:

> So many people come from the West and other parts of the world. Our art is new to them. They come to India, come to see artists, but unfortunately they see non-skilled artists generating money. I think it harms our culture. They accept it as real. Due to what Westerners want, Tibetan art at present is changing. It has bad aims, just to do it very fast, and neglect the main essence of traditional paintings. One can see just by looking that something is missing. . . The paintings lack the essence, they have plain backgrounds. Art is declining.

The refugee writer Jamyang Norbu told me that:

> There is a deterioration in quality that is quite noticeable. Then artists begin to, well, one good thing is that artists can make a living. But in Tibetan society artists can make a living from Tibetan society itself. But after a while artists tend to stick to a few deities that sell. There's another thing--they begin to draw things to conform to what the tourists like. It's not that much now, but more than that, you have the sort of New Buddhists, the New Age Buddhists, and there you see thangkas created that look sort of like science fiction covers! The colors, the execution. 'This is a mandala that I conjured up', you know. And there's again a falling of the culture. In painting it's not that bad at the moment, you can blame anyone. [The "thangkas" in Delhi] are just rubbish, just tourist thangkas. But its sort of developed

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into its own thing, and some are not too bad. Not meant for true purposes, and one can take it at that level, Okay.

However, although the conditions outlined by Graburn and Popelka and Littrell are present in Dharamsala, they have yet to develop to such a degree that significant formal changes have appeared. There are new consumers, but many are quite knowledgeable of the traditional significance of thangkas and demand the "real thing." Many western Buddhists and long-term residents develop personal relations with artists or friends of artists, a situation characteristic of the early stages in the evolution of tourist arts (Bentor, 1993, Ben Amos, 1976). As noted earlier, in Dharamsala a large proportion of Westerners reside for months or even years at a time and are able to commission traditionally produced works. Even if standards are not so high as formerly, thangka painting is still a source of status and pride. New materials have been adopted, but only where necessary; traditional materials are still valued and sought. Although there are new artisans entering production -- women and Westerners -- they are few in number and generally receive training in traditional methods. An "authentic" thangka should be produced as a religious act, which entails adhering to strict iconographic rules and ritual steps which slow down the process of production and restrain innovation. There are two paths to craft commoditization: mass production--often entailing standardization, simplification, and miniaturization--and individualized low volume production of more expensive, high quality goods (Graburn, 1976, 1984; Popelka and Littrell, 1991). These two paths can occur simultaneously, as we will see in later chpaters. Unlike other Tibetan crafts in Dharamsala, however, thangkas have taken the latter

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course, retaining the use of gold and brocade frames. This has kept the price of thangkas higher in Dharamsala than in Kathmandu, and painters' wages are relatively good although production is limited.

Rather than standardizing in adaptation to the tourist market, the style employed by painters is homogenized by the very institutions designed to uphold quality. In Tibet there were three major styles. The Menri is characterized by Sangay Yeshi as the "central tradition." Thangkas in this style have "light backgrounds," said Yeshi, and are not as detailed as those in the Mensar, which have more "refined" scenery details. The Karma Gadri was more prevalent in Kham and employed "harsher" backgrounds. Yeshi said that there are no "big differences in the styles, it's the backgrounds that differ-- a thangka painter brought up here can't quite tell what style a painting is. But those who learned in Tibet can easily distinguish them." As the Menri was predominant in Lhasa as the "central tradition", it is taught at the schools and the Norbulingka. In fact, all the thangka painters with whom I spoke usually painted in this style, except the private painter without full training who executes thangkas in a self-styled "Khampa" tradition.

Western consumers provide some impetus for innovation in thangka painting. While many intermediate consumers order the same deities as do Tibetans, leaving it to the artist to design the thangka appropriately, others bring photos or postcards to show artists what they desire, sometimes adding their own images or color combinations. For example, a Swiss couple who lived near a painter at the Library commissioned a Avalokitesvara (Chenrezi) and told me: "Maybe we'll use a postcard as an example, then he'll do what he wants." However another long term resident had commissioned a Vajrayogini, and specified that it must include

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Tara and several living teachers, including the Dalai Lama and the lama that had initiated her. "I don't know if that's usual," she confessed. That even a serious Buddhist practitioner, fluent in Tibetan and using the thangka for meditation, would consider departing from tradition demonstrates the push for innovation from intermediate consumers. Said Sangay Yeshi: "Some who are Buddhists order traditional designs but then say 'I want more blue and green but no red'. They give strange orders like that."

**Non-Tibetan Thangka Painters**

As with other Tibetan arts, Westerners are becoming involved in the production of thangkas, although whether their work will be considered "authentic" by Tibetans remains to be seen. Sangay Yeshi has taught several Westerners for various periods of time. One Russian has completed the Library course and is now painting thangkas in Dharamsala. He speaks Tibetan well, lives in small rented rooms at the Library among other young artists, and is considered a good painter by his Tibetan peers. However, he paints almost exclusively for other Westerners -- they can pay more than Tibetans. He take his time painting and, as one western Dharma student told me: "He knows that if he puts in 20% more effort and detail than the Tibetan painters, he can get a lot more. His sell for $300, not $50." A Western researcher told me: "I wouldn't buy thangkas or statues [from Tibetan artists] unless I knew really good ones. Only in the original style original methods. I'd buy from Alex. They're real Tibetan thangkas, and I saw some from Tibetan painters which weren't such a good value like Alex's. Alex feels like a Tibetan and he wants to live as a Tibetan." For

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this researcher, authenticity did not derive from the identity of the producer, but from the methods and skill of execution.

Kenji Babasaki is another non-Tibetan painting in Dharamsala, a Japanese who has lived for many years near the Tushita retreat center. Having learned Tibetan and studied with a Tibetan master, Kenji paints high quality thangkas sold in Japan. His work is finely detailed and is reproduced well on postcards, some of which are sold (with his name on the back) in bookstores in McLeod Ganj. A few Tibetans, such as one of my translators, prefer Kenji's thangkas to those by young Tibetans. "You see," he told me, "in painting, they don't create, not like Kenji who does something new." Kenji departs from the Tibetan style in his use of lighter background colors, for which he gets constant grief from other painters. It's become something of a running joke.

Most western artists who study thangka painting come to Dharamsala for short periods of time. They pick up a few techniques and motifs to add to their western training. They have a commitment to personal expression, to "creativity", which is quite alien to the Tibetan tradition. Few are willing to apprentice themselves for years in order to copy their teachers. Most are like the cool New Jersey kid who briefly took up residence in the Library. Tall and thin, with pony tail and dark glasses, he loped around Gankyi, ever ready with a "Yo, dude!" Taking a break from art school in New York, he was in Dharamsala to "learn Tibetan painting" for one month.

At one of the hotels in McLeod Ganj, I interviewed a 22 year old Australian woman taking a few months out of her 2 year trip though Asia and Africa to study thangka painting with one of the Library students. Typical of relationships between Tibetan refugees and Westerners, they

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were trading services. She helped him write a leaflet in English about thangkas to help foreigners commission "authentic and good quality" paintings. "I felt he is very traditional," she said. "Keeping up the ethical side of it. He doesn't seem to want it mostly for the money. I'll give him some addresses in Australia. . . and direct people to him later."

She also paid him 25 Rs. (less than $1 US) for each several hour lesson. She was going to complete one thangka of Sakyamuni Buddha, going over each step, including canvas preparation, one at a time. She had training in interior design, but had never painted before. "Some of the fine-line drawing skills I had came in handy. This was more useful than a fine arts education that focuses on originality and self-expression. They'd find it difficult whereas with a design background-- well, we spend hours over a drawing board copying designs."

Sangay Yeshi agreed with the Australian about western artists: "Certain things are hard for Injees, especially outlining and details -- this needs so much patience. But in Western painting it seems you don't need this detail and control; you just...," Yeshi gestured wildly with his brush. Given a postcard reproduction of black thangka done by a British painter, he put on his glasses and peered intently at it for a minute before declaring: "This is trying to be in the Menri style, but still the body, the stomach, and the form of the fingers are a completely new style which doesn't comply with any of the traditions."

Evaluating a reproduction of a Chenrezi by Kenji Babasaki, Yeshi commented: "The face is done perfectly--really well--the design and the color combinations are the Menri style, but the background is not Menri. This Japanese is very good at the figure but he never listens to me about the colors. If they were darker the contrasts would stand out and it would be

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more beautiful. The rainbows around the figures in the upper corners are very unusual. . . . Among the foreigners, he is the best. But foreigners only compare themselves to other students, not to traditional thangkas. They learn a little and get very proud and you can't tell them anything. They won't listen."

That western artists produce thangkas is perhaps not as strange as that a few Tibetan women are now painting them as well. After all, Westerners can become Buddhists and be initiated into tantric practices. That Tibetans generally prefer Tibetan-made thangkas may be due to a greater assurance that Tibetan thangkas will be "correct." Paintings are evaluated first and foremost for their adherence to the iconographic and iconometric rules. Creativity--in the Western sense of originality--is not accorded value. Thus, while the Tibetologist Guiseppe Tucci (1967) complained that high internal demand along with the "iconographic command" led to a "repetitive stagnation" of Tibetan arts, the Tibetan attitude is best represented by Gonpo who scorned painters who "create things that don't exist." One young Tibetan painter told me, however, that "traditional artists work like machines." He felt that Tibetans needed exposure to modern art. "It's different from our old style. Completely new. It is important for us to have greater knowledge. From my point of view it will enrich Tibetan arts; will introduce new feelings." This attitude is one that seems limited for the most part to young Tibetans, especially those with education and a knowledge of Western values.

I again asked Jamyang Norbu to pronounce on the direction of Tibetan arts. "When we look at Tibetan art," I said, "or speak to Tibetan artists, we [Westerners] are surprised at how one must follow certain guidelines. We might ask 'where's the creativity?' Is there a tension

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between creativity and tradition? Should Tibetan artists be more creative, or stick to more traditional forms?"

Norbu replied:

> That depends on what kind of artist you are. You see within these traditions, there is a great creativity. I think sometimes limits can give you scope for creativiy. When all these rules are set, then you have to someone extraordinary to be creative. Not to be "creative" like Magglethorpe or some such, after a while "creativity" becomes like a god unto itself. And its a very vicious and demanding god. What can you do with just creativity alone? Kenji feels he can be fantastically creative within that [tradition]. Maybe he finds the confines a bit narrow, but it is ritual art. I think Tibetans need to be entering other arts, where you can be more creative. In one you are executing more technical skill, certain images are reqired for various practices, so that has to be technically correct. But at the same time you can see the differences between artists at once, you can see novel ways of presenting the images. Its not always that rigorously ritualized. One can sort of draw more naive thangkas. Storytelling thangkas, narrative thangkas.

While critics in the West extoll creative freedom for "modern" own artists, ethnic crafts are considered "degenerate" when they adapt new forms for external consumers. They become merely "tourist art." Art critic Robert Hughes wrote that authentic "tribal" art "is:

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> never free and does not want to be. The ancestors do not give one drop of goanna spit for 'creativity.' It is not a world, to put it mildly, that has much in common with a contemporary American's. . . . But it raises painful questions about the irreversible drainage from our own culture of spirituality, awe, and connection to nature [in Marcus and Myers, 1995:15]

As Jules-Rossette points out (1984) western artists may legitimately resort to "Primitivism," but if Africans import motifs, their art has been "commoditized." Evolution is reserved for white art (Ames 1992). The evolution of thangkas is thus limited by the internal market as well as external and intermediate consumers who demand "authentic," static Tibetan crafts.

But change is inevitable in the continuation of a tradition outside its former contexts of meaning, value, and exchange. In a telling pamphlet, Makkuni (n.d.) describes the establishment of an "Electronic Sketch Book of Tibetan Thangka Painting" in a collaborative effort with the Tibetan painter Senge Lama, Xerox corporation, the San Francisco Museum of Asian Art, and "the Tibetan community." Makkuni is building an audio-visual data base of thangka designs to create a "craft medium that uses video and computing representations to preserve and disseminate the vanishing practice of Tibetan thangka painting." Such innovations are important, he claims, because "today a variety of sources threaten the practice of thangka painting, moving the craft towards irrevocable simplification. . . ." (n.d.:1).

In a few sentences Makkuni has encapsulated the ironic processes described in this dissertation: claims of deterioration and declining

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production promote intensified production, authentic Tibetan culture is reinvented by foreigners, and change supports preservation. Despite these contradictions, the sacred status of thangkas and the presence of religious institutions in Dharamsala have (to a degree) limited commoditization and the alienation of artisans, demonstrating that producing communities can often retain some measure of economic and cultural control over crafts placed on the tourist market. However, this form of cultural autonomy, and the (uneven) benefits it provides, varies greatly between different art forms, both as a result of indigenous meanings attributed to the goods, and as a result of divergent social and productive structures, decisions, and pressures.

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# CHAPTER FIVE

## TIBETAN CARPETS: FROM FOLK ART TO MASS PRODUCTION

> From the wild solitude of the remote Himalyan villages come these exquisite Tibetan rugs. Made today as they have been for centuries by craftsmen laboring at looms like their grandfathers before them, each rug is completely dyed and woven by hand. An individual work of art in its own right, each rug is a singular reflection of the lifestyle and traditions of the individual who made it. Imbued with a rare bueauty that at times borders on the mystical . . . Radiant, bold, and exotic. . . [ABC Carpet (New York) promotional leaflet; late 1980's (n.d.)]

Uneven development, debt, underemployment, and insufficient agricultural resources in the Third World have combined with tourism and the demand for handcrafted goods to produce a disjunctive world economic system in which multiple social formations and relations of production co-exist simultaneously. Through a comparison of the carpet, thangka, and other craft industries, this and following chapters will illustrate how different markets, social institutions, and cultural values lead to divergent paths of development and artistic evolution in craft industries. This will demonstrate the inadequacy of linear Marxist and Leninist models that assumed an inexorable replacement of petty commodity production by capitalist industry (Cook and Binford, 1984; Nash, 1981, 1993; Smith, 1984). I will also argue that although tourists and the tourism industry often attempt to imbue craft purchases with extra symbolic value derived from witnessing production -- from enjoying "close encounters with the

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Other" -- this attempt to secure authenticity and overcome "commodity fetishism" often only apparently succeeds, or succeeds for the consumer alone. Goods such as Tibetan carpets may come to symbolize the very traditions and productive relations that the industry itself demolishes.

**Carpets and Commodities**

Commodity fetishism stems from the separation of the consumer from the mystery of production. Consumer goods appear as the anonymous products of industrial capital rather than the products of human labor, available through the exchange of money, itself an abstraction (Marx, 1977; Miller, 1987). Handicrafts are appealing in part because of their apparent status as products of non-alienated labor, allowing consumers to "singularize" them more readily than mass produced goods through often imaginary and idealized histories of their production and exchange. Miller suggests that with such types of object "production becomes reified as having a separate connotation and it is not the actual process of manufacture which is important, but the ability of the object to stand for a particular type of production and its attendant social relations." An object may "proclaim one technological origin while actually deriving from another" (Miller, 1987:115). In the case of tourist arts, objects churned out by piece workers may masquerade as the products of artisanal care, and invented traditions may signify timeless ones. Tourist goods may also stand for a particular type of exchange, as the give and take of purchasing a souvenir is remembered as an intimate encounter with a member of another culture.

Thangkas remain what Graburn (1984) termed "functional" arts, ritually important in their culture of origin. Although the larger social

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context of their production and exchange has undergone change, most thangka painters in Dharamsala have largely adhered to traditional form and technique, lengthy apprenticeships have survived, and artists are accorded high status. The commission system guarantees a relatively high level of artistic quality for the consumer and a sure return for the artisan. However, in non-sacred craft industries directed to the tourist and export markets, investment is risky and sales subject to fashion. Dependency on external markets increases competition, requires the speed up of production, and often cheapens products, reducing artisans to piece-workers (Nash, 1993; Stromberg-Pelazzi, 1993). However, profits for entrepreneurs are potentially much higher in these industries, as absolute production is increased and designs, less constrained by indigenous religious or cultural traditions, are modified to foreign tastes and facilitate standardized manufacture.

In contrast to the limited market in thangkas, the Tibetan refugee carpet industry has become big business -- it has grown into Nepal's largest manufacturing industry. Although carpets remain functional objects for Tibetans, they are also mass produced commodities targeted directly at the tourist and export markets. Carpet manufacture enjoys some of the mystique of other Tibetan cultural productions, and in Dharamsala continues to support individual refugees and exile institutions. However, in Nepal, it also supports private capitalist enterprises which employ non-Tibetans, including children. The carpet industry pushes at the productive limits of handicraft manufacture, drastically decreasing production time, de-emphasizing apprenticeship and artisanship, and radically modifying designs and materials.

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The transparency of much Tibetan craft production, in which consumers may specify designs and witness manufacture, authenticates and personalizes the objects. For many consumers, Tibetan handicrafts in particular connote more than other "authentic ethnic goods." The purchase of a thangka may be both a spiritual and political act, involving patron and artist in the protection of Tibetan spiritual culture from the onslaughts of the secular Chinese state. For many travelers, this local drama is but part of a global postmodern struggle to preserve, resurrect, or invent ancient wisdom, folk traditions, and human-scale production in a rationalized, disenchanted world. While not all consumers have such grand motives in mind when purchasing Tibetan crafts, this underlying incentive permeates the analysis -- and marketing-- of Tibetan arts in academic and popular discourse.

Carpet manufacture is perhaps the Tibetan craft most open to the tourist gaze, the production process itself a spectacle tied to the marketing of carpets and refugee culture generally. However, its largely female labor force is poorly paid, and many weavers cannot afford to buy the carpets they produce. The transcendence of commodity fetishism by the consumer does not always end the alienation of the producer.

**Tibetan Carpets Leave Tibet**

In the West, carpets are generally used as floor coverings, or less commonly as wall hangings. In Tibetan societies they usually function as seats. Various carpets are used on and below saddles, as seats for lamas or aristocrats, for picnics, and weddings. In exile they most frequently cover beds, which double as sleeping and sitting surfaces. Floor rugs were generally reserved for sacred or elite contexts (Denwood, 1974; Kuloy,

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1985). Today, it is primarily foreigners who buy Tibetan carpets for the floor, purchasing most of the larger rugs produced in exile. Tibetan refugees most frequently buy the 3' by 6' carpets which fit over wooden Indian bed frames. Also produced are small square carpets, about 19" by 19" which can fit over cushions or on chairs.

The history of Tibetan carpets is hazy and, as we shall see, contested. There is little documentation until after 1880. The Smithsonian holds the oldest datable sample, from around 1880 to 1885, collected by the American W.W. Rockhill (Kuloy, ibid). The wide distribution of carpet weaving in Tibet leads Diane Meyers to believe it an ancient folk art (Meyers, 1984). Carpet weaving was widespread by the 11th century, and Chinese influences are clear by the 18th (Denwood, 1974). Although most weaving was domestic and has been classified by various scholars as a "folk art," carpet manufacture may have represented the only significant factory industry in Tibet prior to the Chinese occupation.

The Englishman Perceval Landon encountered a rug factory on the Doring family estate in 1903, estimating its annual production at 500 carpets a year. Sarat Chandra Das observed a large rug and blanket factory in 1880 which employed some 90 women (Meyers, 1984). The southern Tsang region, particularly the Nyang valley between Shigatse and Gyantse, had numerous carpet workshops renowned for the quality of their weaving. In Lhasa, however, Ronge believes that the industry developed late. The Tibetan government founded a weaving mill in the 1950's, which may have been prompted by the Chinese administration (Ronge, 1978).

Carpet manufacture was diversely organized. Most Tibetans owned simple, domestically produced rugs. Weaving generally remained a low status occupation, sometimes providing winter work for rural women

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producing for the local market. Landlords sometimes maintained workshops with a few weavers, and local governors might hire teams of male and female weavers. In the cities small companies employed specialized weavers, spinners, and dyers. The production of such factories was primarily targeted at an elite market. Ronge (1978) reports that customers often provided weavers with pre-dyed wool, and kept careful track of their materials. Looms and even weaving stools might be owned and set up by the client in their own home. It appears that Tibetan customers were concerned about both the skill and honesty of artisans.

In an attempt to open the Tibetan market, in the 1870's the British established trading posts along the border in Sikkim, Bhutan, and Darjeeling. After the Younghusband expedition fought its' way to Lhasa in 1904, wringing trade concessions from the Tibetans, wool and a few carpets were exported to British India. Perceval Landon attempted to create a demand in Britain. Some traders began sponsoring production, but workshops remained small and rarely employed more than 30 weavers. Although the quality and prestige of Tibetan carpets increased, elites, having acquired a taste for foreign goods, continued to prefer imported rugs (Meyers, 1984).

It is in the context of exile, foreign sponsorship, and new tourist and export markets that the Tibetan carpet industry has expanded tremendously. Carpet manufacture is one of the largest employers of and revenue generators for Tibetan refugees. From limited beginnings in the 1960's and 1970's, exile settlements in India were producing 33,457 square meters of carpet worth U.S. $2,173,750 by 1981, with private manufacturers accounting for an additional 17-1800 square meters (Kleiger, 1992). The Tibetan carpet industry now employs some 10,000

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workers in India. In Nepal it employs approximately 300,000 workers and in 1992 generated U.S. $120 million in export revenues (CWIN, 1993). The Tibetan exile carpet industry is perhaps the world's most successful example of what Erik Cohen has called "rehabilitative commercialization," the externally sponsored and marketed rehabilitation of a declining craft (Cohen, 1993b).

The refugee carpet industry was largely initiated by Westerners concerned for the plight of the impoverished refugees in Nepal. In 1961, the first small production site was established at the Jawalakhel refugee camp in the Kathmandu valley by aid workers of the International Committee of the Red Cross, with technical and financial help from other European and American agencies and donors. Ming Na, a carpet master from Tibet, was recruited to oversee the construction of five looms and the training of 20 weavers (Forbes, 1989). Similar small factories were soon founded in other Tibetan settlements in Nepal.

Ann Forbes, a researcher for Cultural Survival International, reports that initially the refugees enjoyed free rations, but wove carelessly and refused to work long hours. The situation hardly improved when they were informed they would be paid for work with a choice of food or money. A Tibetan assistant for the Red Cross explained to Forbes that "both the men and women were very lazy." He understood the difficulty as due to the transition from agrarian to more regimented factory work. Some Swiss officials, however, believed the Tibetans simply wanted to live on charity, and were only looking forward to their return to Tibet (ibid.: 53). In 1965, the carpet centers switched from a guaranteed daily wage to a piece rate, which is now the norm in Tibetan crafts enterprises. The

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adjustment to rapid piece-work and regimented schedules remains difficult for many newly arrived Tibetan refugees entering into export industries.

In 1966, most refugee carpet factories in Nepal were made into private enterprises managed by Tibetans. According to Welcome Nepal, a promotional tourism journal, "it was a happy coincidence" that the carpet industry developed at the same time that Nepal's tourism industry boomed (Welcome Nepal, 1993). In the early 1960's, however, not enough carpets were sold locally to keep pace with accumulating inventories. The Swiss provided the first contacts for foreign exports, setting up the Tibetan Carpet Trading Company in joint ownership with the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan community. (The Nepali government later requested that the word "Tibetan" be removed). A German importer, Itan Mariz, then bought all the quality carpets in stock and placed orders for as many as could be produced (Forbes, 1989). After the Swiss left in 1972, the industry continued to grow, with many Tibetans establishing their own businesses. In 1974, Bryan Haffner's Oriental Carpet Manufacturing, a German import company, contracted to become the sole customer of the Himalayan Carpet Exporters (HCE), a private Tibetan enterprise that had struggled to find a stable export outlet. Welcome Nepal calls Haffner the "father" of the carpet industry for lifting it "out of the cocoon of the help-the-refugee approach" and persuading Tibetans to manufacture carpets with non-Tibetan motifs. "He recognized the infinite possibilities of design and color that could be created and manipulated to suit the varied tastes and temperament of the Western market" (Welcome Nepal, 1993:12). With the huge boom in tourism now providing a large local market in addition to exports, the carpet industry in Nepal expanded rapidly. From a labor force of 2,500 mostly Tibetan workers in 1970, it now employs 300,000

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workers of various ethnicities, primarily non-Tibetans (ibid.; CWIN, 1993).

**Carpet Production in Dharamsala**

In Dharamsala, the largest producer of carpets is the Tibetan Handicraft Production-cum-Sale Co-operative Association (hereafter referred to as the Co-op). It was established in 1963 as the Tibetan Women's Co-operative Association with start up capital from the Dalai Lama and a loan from the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) (Information Office, 1981). Like other Co-operatives in India, it is under the direction of the CTA, and its principal aim is to provide assistance and employment for refugees with few skills, education, or opportunities. It employs some 100 weavers. Above McLeod Ganj, the TCV school runs another small factory. H.H. The Dalai Lama's Charitable Trust operates a store in McLeod Ganj selling carpets as well as other handicrafts and religious objects, clothing, and incense. Some private shops sell a few carpets woven in homes, and occasionally older carpets are re-sold in shops or are offered on the street by recent arrivals or pilgrims.

At the Co-op's main McLeod Ganj factory, the looms are set up in a large room with windows opening out onto the street. The Co-op offices are on the upper floors, and a sales shop is around the corner. Nearby are four residential blocks, a nursery, and a restaurant operated by the center. Up a short flight of stairs from the unpaved road, tourists often stand at the open doors, watching the women weave, sitting cross-legged in rows on the floor in front of vertical looms. Many of the women wear simple Tibetan chubas, their long hair in braids tied with colored cloth. Some wear a *pangden*, a multicolored apron signifying marriage. One women sits

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upright in a chair, working on a horizontal loom on four legs. A few children scamper between the rows of women; some stare at or tease the foreigners. As one enters the room, to the right five men are combing and contouring carpets with metal combs and scissors. They are wearing scruffy Western pants, shirts, and machine-made sweaters. An altar can be seen at the far end of the room, along with a photograph of the Dalai Lama. The atmosphere is dusty but cheerful; the women talk and sing as they work, and usually acquiesce to requests for photographs. Some turn to smile at the tourists' cameras; others are embarrassed, laugh, and turn their faces into a neighbor's shoulder. Some simply ignore the intrusion and continue weaving.

The women sit one, two, or three at a loom on cushions or blankets. Their wooden vertical looms are nearly identical in all Tibetan settlements and have changed little from pre-occupation Tibet (Denwood, 1974). They are made of strong vertical poles, bolted on blocks at the top and bottom with metal screws or nails, with lighter horizontal crossbeams. One possible change in the looms is the addition of a heddle pole running perpendicular to the uprights about 18 inches from the loom in order to ease the use of the heddle rod. Denwood speculates that this innovation has been copied from Indian weavers. In Nepal, some iron looms are now in use. Most of the looms are about five square feet, at which one weaver works alone, weaving an entire carpet. Some looms are larger, and several weavers may sit together working on 5' X 6' or 12' X 9' carpets.

Weavers sometimes copy the backs of old carpets, or know the designs by heart, but most frequently they follow designs plotted on white graph paper by the center's designer. The Co-op buys wool from the Charitable Trust's yarn center in Panipat. The thread is either a pure New

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Zealand wool or a blend of Indian and New Zealand wool, which is a bit cheaper. All the thread is pre-colored, primarily with synthetic dyes. Since the beginning of the 20th century, both the warp and weft of Tibetan carpets have generally been cotton. Weavers knot the threads from left to right, connecting them over the horizontal rod. After a row is completed, they are cut with a knife, the heddle is removed, and the weft beaten in with a metal comb. Tibetan carpets generally have 50-70 knots per square inch, Tibetan rugs are not as fine as Persian, Turkish, or other Indian carpets. The use of thick wool thread limits weavers to relatively simple designs. Tibetan rugs are durable, easy to care for, and cheap. A standard 3' X 6' carpet costs about U.S $100 or less, affordable to the low budget travelers common in Dharamsala and Nepal.

After the weaving is completed, carpets are taken off the loom and the fringe ends knotted on the floor. Sometimes the knot rows are leveled by pushing on the knots with a sturdy needle. The carpet is then scraped with metal combs, removing excess lint and debris. The piles is clipped to level the surface, loose ends are cut, and the edges of the designs are contoured to emphasize them. These finishing steps were usually done on the loom in pre-occupation Tibet, (Denwood, 1974) but are now done on the floor, nearly always by men. Traditionally, carpets were backed with felt or cotton, but this is rarely if ever done in exile.

The manager of the Co-op, Sonam Dumdel, told me the Co-op owned a total of about 150 looms and employed about 100 weavers, mostly women. (Later, I was told by several weavers that all of them were women, and I never witnessed a man weaving). Mr. Dumdel estimated that 75% of his weavers were "newcomers," and 25% were born in India. The Co-op employed two carpet "teachers", both male, and a male designer, a

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former thangka painter. All 10 cutters were men. "The first part of cutting is trimming," he said, "and that's very hard." The Co-op's workers are employed for nine months of the year. During the three month winter "holiday," most find other employment, most commonly selling sweaters.

Mr. Dumdel estimated that about half the Co-op customers were local Indians and Tibetans, and half foreign. "We don't have any constant contract buyers. Often Injees order here and then we ship. If companies order from abroad and they want huge amounts quickly, we can't supply it, although we do have an export license." Overall, he said, business had been good and was continuing to grow, mostly due to tourism.

"Nyima" is a middle-aged woman who weaves about 26 days a month in the Co-operative. I interviewed her on another rainy afternoon during the 1993 monsoon in the two small rooms supplied by the Center. Her friend Yangchen was my translator. We sat on three beds along the walls. I noticed they are covered with blankets rather than rugs, so I asked if the weavers did not receive a special price on carpets.

Yangchen snorted: "This is a dream!"

"We are like coolies," Nyima laughed.

The walls were washed pale green. In one corner was a small table-cum-altar on which sat a line of metal bowls half filled with water for offering, two butter lamps, and three *paycha* (Tibetan religious texts). Nearby was a framed photo of the Dalai Lama with George Bush. Above hung posters of the Dalai Lama, Guru Rimpoche (Padmasambhava), and an Indian rendition of the Buddha. Nyima cannot afford a thangka. On another wall was a very large poster of the London Bridge in its new incarnation as a tourist attraction in the Arizona desert.

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Nyima had been weaving for 19 years. She weaves from around eight in the morning to seven at night, with an hour break for lunch, and earns about 600 Rs. a month (about U.S. $20). She received no pay during her initial three month training, working alongside another woman who served as her teacher. In the beginning, it took her three months to produce a 3' by 6' carpet working alone, or one and half months working with another weaver. By the time of our interview, she could make one carpet a month, "unless it's a complicated design, or I get sick." Before and after weaving a carpet the materials are weighed and the numbers recorded. The figures are added once a year. If more than a half kilogram of wool is missing, Nyima must pay the difference. Payment is reduced if the carpets are not exactly the right size or there are mistakes in the design.

Although she admitted the wages are fairly low, Nyima stays with the Co-operative for the secure income and the subsidized rooms it provides. One room is free --"after 15 years!" -- and one room costs 40 Rs. a month. She also enjoys the sociable atmosphere in the factory.

"Happy mind -- fingers going, mouth going, joking, singing. We play around. People bring in tape recorders. When we get paid I get sick when I see how little it is, then I forget after a few days." The work is hard on her hands. During our interview, she put out her hand to show me her swollen knuckles. "My hands look like ginger root!"

Many tourists come and watch the weavers. Nyima said she liked it when Westerners take pictures, but because she knows no English, she can't ask them to send her copies. "Some Injees look in the window but are too shy to come in, so I wave them in."

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Nyima supplements her income by weaving nights and holidays for a woman whose son sells carpets in the United States. Her husband used to work in the Co-op, but now has a stall selling "Free Tibet" T-shirts, shoes, flip-flops, and the like. "Hong Kong things, Taiwan things," she explained. "This is a little better income, also less hard work." Yangchen laughed: "When he doesn't sell, she gives him no food!" Indians are the most frequent customers, so in the winter months, when few Indian travelers pass through Dharamsala, Nyima and her husband sell sweaters on the plains.

"We get things for Losar [Tibetan New Year] by selling sweaters. If I said we were poor no one would believe me since we sell sweaters. It's difficult to make good money in Dharamsala, because not so many [Indian] tourists come here. But the Dalai Lama is here so I like it. More tourists come now but Indians like Shimla and Manali better."

On another morning, Yangchen took me to visit "Pa Jamyang," a carpet cutter. Cutters can earn several hundred rupees more per month than weavers. Cleaning, leveling, and contouring a carpet takes three or four days and pays 100 Rs. Cutting "is man's work," Nyima had told me. "Before one woman did it, but she's old and her eyes are bad now. . . . Men are stronger. When women do it, big pain."

Yangchen claimed that before exile "some weavers were men. Now all are women. In Tibet," she says, "I heard men are making carpets. Men decide to do business, since weaving has low wages, but they leave their wife and children in the handicraft center. Before some women wanted to learn cutting. Now they think this is no good, because this is man's work. I know one woman, she knows cutting, she does it very well. But she

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doesn't like it, because she stays with men, doing man's work. I [would] also like to do -- I can do it. Money for cutting is better."

Pa Jamyang was sitting on a stone patio near his rooms off one of the main market streets in McLeod Ganj, cutting a cream colored carpet with blue dragons and a multicolored border. Yangchen told me he had an interesting past.

Pa Jamyang's father was in the Tibetan army, and his mother's family were middle level, tax-paying farmers in the D'ing-ri region. His family purchased carpets in Gyantse or Shigatse; he knew of no carpet factories in the region. When he was eighteen, Jamyang entered the army in Kham and played the trumpet. He never fought, though he carried an old British rifle. His position was sponsored by a wealthy family as a form of land tax. Jamyang remembers being paid "in barley and about 10 Rs. worth of Tibetan money per month. We didn't use money much."

"I was in the army when the Chinese came," he said. "They first arrived and built a camp, built houses, and didn't bother us. Only after 1959 did they punish us. In 1951 our guns were collected and we were sent home. If we had gotten together we could have fought, but the powerful people in Lhasa took big money from the Chinese and disarmed us."

He went home and worked in the fields. In 1953 the Chinese came to his area and attempted to foster good will by buying barley from well-off farmers and distributing it to the poor. They lent money for no interest. Jamyang and many others, especially the poor, were impressed at first. But, he said, "it was all for show."

One night a Tibetan army leader came home to D'ingri. A Tibetan woman informed the Chinese, who went to the man's house to arrest him.

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He resisted. "They shot him 13 times but he wouldn't die because he had a blessing string [from a lama; worn around the neck]. They stripped him and found his blessing string, then killed him."

In 1959 "the rich and government people were put into jail and many killed or punished. So many escaped to Solu-Khumbu" [in Nepal]. Because Jamyang and his wife had two small children they felt they couldn't attempt an escape. After farms were collectivized "most people got poorer. There wasn't much to eat. We only got some black tea and tsampa." The Chinese took much of the harvest. "The Chinese pushed us in work, punished us, denied us food. We worked all day, and had meetings at night. There were self-criticism sessions. The poorest were sometimes pro-Chinese and would inform on us."

By 1974, his four children were older and stronger, "but they couldn't do prayers." He decided they must leave so they could "see lamas." Jamyang and his family walked out of their region with some cousins, selling possessions along the way to buy food and supplies. They handed out presents, telling people not to say which direction they had passed. They crossed the Himalayas in the winter, with the passes full of snow. "I could have walked it alone in three days, but with the whole family it took 12 days." They reached Solu-Kumbu in May, 1974, then continued down into Kathmandu. Near Swaymbunath, Jamyang began tailoring, and his wife made blankets. Their 13 year old daughter and 18 year old son went to work in private carpet factories run by other D'ing-ri refugees.

The following year Jamyang and his family visited Dharamsala with the intention of placing the younger children in Tibetan schools. They decided to stay and entered the Handicraft Co-operative. His wife made

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*pangden* [womens' aprons] his older son and daughter wove carpets, and Jamyang made mats for the weavers to sit on at the looms. In 1977, they were given rooms by the Handicraft center.

"At that time I made 30 Rs. a month. My wife made more, 1.5 Rs. a day. We were given food, but it was not very good. We were poor, but our minds were relaxed. We had work and weren't hurried." He told me that two of his sons was in the Tibetan regiment of the Indian army, one daughter was a teacher, and only one daughter was still making carpets. He wanted his children to have a good education and work for the CTA. "We are only in the handicraft center if we can't do anything else. We stay because of the rooms. They are safe and cheap."

In 1978, Jamyang learned carpet cutting. He trained for two months without pay, but now earns up to 700 or 800 Rs. per month at the Co-op. Jamyang makes 105 Rs. per carpet, 20 Rs. more if it has a complicated design. "It's better to cut ones with fewer designs," he said. "It's less pay but you can do it faster. Last year we did some with funny designs. Very easy. Very fast. Only two colors. This one I'm doing now is easy. It's probably for an Injee. This cream color Tibetans don't like. It becomes dirty very quickly." Like many government craft workers, he also works privately on his own time, earning 200 Rs. a carpet, nearly twice the Co-operative's wages.

"Many Injees come and watch and take pictures. I think they are very lucky: they can see everything, and do what they want. " Sometimes they send him copies of their photos. Often they take his picture without asking. "It doesn't bother me. I invite those in who are shy." The Indian tourists, however, only "come for pilgrimage. They just look at us a little."

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Jamyang showed me his tools: one tapered scissors, about 8 inches long, and a large scissors with flat shears and a square tip. Their handles were wrapped in wool to soften the pressure on his hands. "When I started," he remembered, "it hurt my hands very much." Jamyang pointed out his "horse comb" with teeth about 3/4 inches long, and a sturdy wood-backed brush with metal bristles. Jamyang uses the Co-operative's tools when he works at the factory, and his own when he works privately. Like everything else in Dharamsala, he pointed out, the price of tools had inflated. "The large scissors are twice as expensive in Dharamsala as in Amritsar," he complained.

As we speak a light rain began falling. Soon it was raining hard, and we went inside to his rooms. The first room was dark and dusty, with balls of wool piled all around. Jamyang's wife was sitting at a small horizontal loom, making a coarse looped rug with a thick, shaggy pile and a simple, abstract design. These rugs are soft and cheap. They often double as blankets. Jamyang tells me his mother used to make these at home along with *pangden* and chubas. In old Tibet, he said, these rugs were made with natural white and gray wool. Today, they come in brilliant, synthetically dyed colors. "Amala" [mother], told me that she's weaving for customers in Lahaul and Spiti, Tibetan Buddhist regions of Himachal Pradesh. Sometimes she gets orders from local people, but only rarely from Westerners. The garish colors of these rugs does not appeal to many Westerners, who can afford better carpets at any rate. Amala remembered, however, that an Injee once ordered one for his dog. They reminded me of bathroom rugs in the West, although I kept this to myself. Designs are becoming more complicated. There are stars in the center, or triangles of different colors around the edges. Some look very much like

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the carpet designs ordered by Western importers, but Amala said her designs were inspired by the prayer flags that line the roads to welcome the Dalai Lama from trips abroad.

Her loom is narrow, so she said she makes two separate strips and sews them together. She can make one pair of strips in a week, and last year sold them for 1000 Rs. That year she had fewer clients because the monsoon hasdclosed many roads, and she could only get 400-450 Rs. The wool is expensive, so the profit is low, but she can crank them out rapidly. The loom was brought from Tibet for a weaver whose family sold it for only 150 Rs. when she died. "They usually cost about 500 Rs!"

"In Tibet all women did this," she said. "A family had two or three looms and used good wool. We called our friends to help, and made these rugs and clothes for our own use. Sometimes we sold them. I made all these things in Tibet." She remembers using pure wool with slight color variations. In exile, wool and nylon are sometimes mixed in these cheap rugs. "It's good-- strong and soft. But pure wool is good for the health. If wool, the rug lasts nine to ten years. Nylon mix lasts longer. Real carpets last a whole lifetime. But these are easier on the hands to make. People want real carpets but the poor usually just buy these. They're warm in the winter. In Lahaul and Spiti they use them for marriages. They put them on the ground for seats, or down on the road for lamas. Handicraft people don't own carpets usually. They can't afford them."

Amala's eyes were failing. "Handicraft center work is hard. But private work we can do whenever we want."

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> Many of the Tibetans left their country from a dislike of over-organization and they do not take kindly to some forms of disciplined industrial labour in exile. [Phillip Denwood, 1974: 77-8]

In contrast to male thangka painters or skilled metal workers, female weavers earn relatively low wages and receive little status. However, given limited economic opportunities and the secure income and cheap housing offered by the co-operatives, crafts production centers in Dharamsala have little problem recruiting labor. The Co-op manager compared the settlement in Dharamsala to the South Indian agrarian camp where he grew up: "There is no problem finding workers here. The problem is having enough rooms for them. Here we have no land, so we must do this kind of labor. During the three months off, people go sell sweaters, and weave for nine months. In Orissa, there are others things to do. There carpet weaving is more of a supplement."

The CTA's handicraft schools and production centers are particularly important for the "new arrivals" from Tibet, who may have little education, Hindi and English language skills, or family connections. Given the low wages in crafts co-operatives, however, without this continuing source of labor some refugee enterprises have difficulty attracting new employees. The Tibetan Review reported that at the Tibetan Self-Help Handicraft Centre in Darjeeling, training programs were hard-pressed to find new students. The average age of the Darjeeling workers in 1993 was 45, and "motivated" workers were aging while young workers were "indifferent." Only 30% of the refugees were working to support the rest (Bhawa, 1993).

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The Darjeeling Centre was established in 1959 at the site of the 13th Dalai Lama's exile from 1910-1912. It enjoys a growing demand for its products, which include Tibetan carpets, furniture, dolls, aprons, boots, and clothing. About 50% of the Centre's products are exported to Europe and the rest are sold in Indian markets. According to the Tibetan Review, in 1993 the Centre employed 650 workers, and provided them with medical care and housing, free education for their children, and care for the elderly. Workers could earn "more than 200 Rs. per month." The manager observed that "in the eyes of modern youth, vocational training and handicrafts are unfashionable and undignified. Moreover, the meager income from such professions is not enough to meet the extravagant lifestyle that they wish to pursue." The Tibetan Review noted that after the 1990 Varanasi Kalachakra, four recent arrivals left the Centre to return to Tibet, as had five others soon after, claiming they could earn a better living in Tibet.

I was quite impressed with the Centre on my visit there in 1990, my first to a Tibetan settlement. Accompanied by a letter of introduction, I was given a tour by a young man fluent in English, who walked me through each section of the camp. I was thrilled to take so many photographs of smiling crafts workers, who may have thought I was somebody of some practical significance -- a donor or reporter -- rather than a graduate student in search of a field site. My little Instamatic was surely less impressive than the 16 mm. cameras of the European film crew competing for their attention. A young Tibetan boy ran up to me and tugged at my jeans, and I lifted him into my arms as my guide began to open up a bit, expounding on the dissatisfactions of life in exile. Thirty years of non-violent struggle had led no closer to independence, he

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complained, only to a stifling security in these settlements. More money could be made in town, he said, in private business.

**Capitalism, Merchants, Labor**

Both Neo-classical and Marxist models of economic development predicted the inevitable disappearance of what has been called the "household mode of production" and its replacement by "fully proletarianized" labor under the capitalist regime of accumulation (Nash, 1981, 1984, 1993). June Nash has pointed out points out that these models were unable to foresee the resurgence of household production, such as that engaged in by many refugee artisans, and are inadequate for the analysis of the unemployed and self-employed. Cook and Binford (1984) have also criticized unilineal models of capitalism, such as Lenin's model of rural development, for assuming an inexorable process of development without delineating possible limits to growth and class differentiation.

The organization of artisan production in many cases appears to restrict fully "capitalist" development. Carol Smith (1983/4) found that the economic context of craft production in Totohicapan hindered differentiation into "owners" and "workers." She targeted low initial investment costs, relatively high wages, alternate choices for laborers, little technological innovation, and incomplete proletarianization as limiting factors. Cook and Binford (1984) criticized Carol Smith's analysis as teleological in that it defined "capitalism" in such a way as to exclude petty commodity production a priori. Such production, they believe, can serve as a "seed bed" for capitalism. Smith clearly demonstrated, however, how particular forms of petty commodity production limit capitalist differentiation. The nature of the *handicraft* market, with its demand for

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"authentic" hand crafted goods, generally limits the extent to which technological investment can increase productivity.

However, various crafts manufactured in one locale may follow different trajectories of development. Differences in target market and in the type of training required of artisans, as well as the gender and ethnic composition of the labor force can lead to widely divergent productive structures. The development of weaving industries may proceed through the expansion of absolute production in fashion unlikely to be possible with ritual goods such as (ritually functional) thangkas, in which highly skilled artisans produce on commission.

Waterbury (1989), found that the output of embroiderers in the Oaxaca valley was expanded by the development of a division of labor and a putting-out system, with a concomitant increase in class differentiation between entrepreneurs and producers. Weaving industries can also increase absolute production through the employment of more home laborers and more looms. While some entrepreneurs remain aloof from the actual process of manufacture, acting as middlemen for the exchange of "autonomously" produced goods, others own the "means of production" and operate workshops where they control design and technique, output and sales, and pay wages to employees. They are capitalists, no matter how "traditional" production appears.

Like the diverse settings in which carpets were produced in pre-occupation Tibet, there are varied productive arrangements in exile with varied social effects. Carpet production is organized into private, co-operative, familial, and individual enterprises of diverse scale. Many of the limitations to capitalist development outlined by Carol Smith apply to CTA refugee industries. The relatively small scale of Tibetan cultural

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production sites, as well as the need to employ unskilled refugees and maintain "traditional" production limits the speed and capacity of manufacturing. Social and political interests also limit the accumulation of surplus value available for reinvestment. The costs of the Tibetan administration and its provision of employment for the jobless, medical and social support for the elderly, and education for Tibetan children drains much of the profits generated.

Most private entrepreneurs in Dharamsala are properly categorized as "merchants" rather than "capitalists." Like the pre-capitalist merchants of Europe, they "reap the benefits of commodity circulation, while delegating the risks of production to the direct producer" (Wolf, 1982: 265). Although merchants and self-employment often pay a better rate than does the CTA's handicraft centers, they do not offer subsidized housing, medical care, or education. These benefits are partially funded by the artisan's own labor for exile schools and co-operatives in addition to foreign grants. These "entitlements" allow artisans to survive on less than a living wage, and often also benefit the children and families of merchants. Thus, the welfare system indirectly contributes to entrepreneurial profit, which can be reinvested in business ventures or in status enhancing religious-political donations. Some merchants become small capitalists, providing looms and wool for production carried out in the weaver's home. However, in Dharamsala, private industry remains relatively small, limited by the lack of available space for expansion, the limits on land ownership by Tibetans, and the schools and co-operatives' absorption of unskilled labor and their dominance of the local market. In addition, anyone who can afford a loom can become a petty entrepreneur. There remains a fair amount of small-scale private production and "self-

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exploitation" in home enterprises, although returns are usually only supplemental to full-time work elsewhere. Most successful business people in Dharamsala remain petty traders or perhaps buy a hotel, rising into a growing Tibetan petty bourgiosie, rather than forming a wealthy elite. Those who would truly enrich themselves often expand their businesses outside of Dharamsala, often relying of transnational networks of kin elsewhere in India (particulary Delhi), in Nepal, and in the West. In Nepal, the carpet industry is less limited by social and economic constraints, and enjoys a much larger tourist market. From a small, foreign-sponsored "rehabilitation" project, it has grown into Nepal's largest source of foreign revenue. As in Dharamsala, the carpet industry in Nepal still supports poor refugees and middle-class entrepreneurs, but it has also generated significant fortunes for a few families.

Ann Forbes writes that "in Nepal, being a producer of hand-woven carpets has become synonymous with being a Tibetan" and that nearly all of the ten to fourteen thousand Tibetan refugees there are somehow involved in carpet industry (Forbes, 1989, pp. 50). Forbes and other observers have pointed out that the carpet industry has allowed the refugees to remain in "homogenous" settlements. However, the only thing "Tibetan" about many Nepalese carpets is the ownership of the means of their production and the imagery used in their marketing. In contrast to thangkas, whose spiritual significance guarantees some degree of traditional design, carpets are secular, "folk" artifacts which are often so radically modified for Western markets that they retain no Tibetan motifs whatsoever. The fortunes of carpet entrepreneurs are intimately linked with that of foreign importers. Most significantly, the carpet industry has

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relied for it's growth on the labor of thousands of non-Tibetan Nepalis, about half of them underpaid children (CWIN, 1993).

As described above, the TIbtan carpet industry began small. After landing stable foreign buyers, and benefitting from the boom in tourism, Tibetan carpet entrepreneurs in Nepal sub-contracted to other small enterprises to meet the new demand, producing the "satellite" system now in place. Large numbers of small manufacturers, deploying perhaps 10 to 30 looms, sell to larger manufacturers and well-connected exporters. With no mechanization, factories can be operated with flexible numbers of workers (Denwood, 1974). Although the industry as a whole is quite large, individual enterprises are considered "cottage industries," tax-exempt for the first five years, and subject to few regulations.

Because of the simplicity and small scale of production sites, it is relatively easy for those with a limited amount of capital to begin carpet production. Competition has become fierce, and under-cutting and over-production are increasingly problematic. Although market advantage can be sought through quality craftsmanship and innovative design, the price of production must remain low. Production time has been reduced through training, factory discipline, and piece-rate incentives. However, because technical innovation in handicraft production is limited, entrepreneurs must increase the number of looms in use while maintaining low labor costs. This is often accomplished by employing children.

Many carpet entrepreneurs are "capitalists" in that many provide the initial investment and supplies for the operation of factories. However they frequently do not oversee production or the labor force. Often a labor contractor, or "naike," recruits and pays the workers, directing a set amount of production in an agreed upon time. They take advantage of a

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"docile" labor force driven into factory employment by unequal land distribution, population pressures, and environmental degradation in the countryside. 97% of child workers are from outside the Kathmandu valley, and some 7% are working off their parents' debts (Pradhan, 1993). Welcome Nepal cheerily informs tourists that "carpet knotting is labour intensive with the unemployment and underemployment in the rural sector, there is no dearth of labour if the labourers are trained, the industry has vast potential for expansion." The writer estimates that the industry employs up to 800,000 workers rather than the commonly accepted 300,000. He claims it provides needed employment for those below the poverty line, and so "the development of production and exports of Hand knotted carpets has had a positive effect on rural development in Nepal" (Pankaj Raj Sharma, 1993:10). However, some 1600 of the nation's approximately 2000 carpet factories are in the Kathmandu valley, concentrating most of the positive and negative effects of the carpet industry there (CWIN, 1993).

Aware of the growing worldwide concern about child labor in the carpet industries of South Asia, a later edition of Welcome Nepal claimed that in "Nepal's primitive villages, it is difficult to get any job that pays in cash. Thus the lure of immediate cash payment attracted labourers from the villages of the kingdom-- and the labourers consisted of men and women, adults" (1993, pg. 12). However, a survey conducted by the Child Workers In Nepal Concerned Center (CWIN) found that half of Nepal's carpet workers are children between the ages of 5 and 16, with the largest number between the ages of 11 and 14. 62% of these children are male and 32% female. Above the age of 16, workers are primarily women, many with children who grow up in the factories (CWIN, 1993; Pradhan,

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1993). Child laborers work an average of 13 hours a day, earning a bit below 400 Nepali rupees per month (approximately U.S. $8), about half the adult rate. This is significantly less than weavers in Dharamsala earn, with none of the social benefits. Only about a fifth of the children are given three meals a day, and nearly three quarters sleep in the factories. The children are often abused. The CWIN survey found that 44% of the female workers had been sexually harassed. More than 15% percent of Kathmandu's reported rapes involve carpet workers. CWIN claims that many of the 200,000 Nepali prostitutes in India, 20% of them under the age of 16, are recruited and sold by carpet naikes (Pradhan, 1993).

According to Nepal's 1992 Labour Act and Children's Act, it is illegal to employ children under the age of 14. Children aged 14 and 15 may only work 6 hours a day, and those 16-17 a maximum of 8 hours a day. They must receive half-hour breaks every three hours. Minors are not allowed to work in any hazardous industries. The conditions of the carpet factories, which rarely provide adequate ventilation and lighting, should be considered hazardous, but the small size of the factories, the young and shifting work force, and the subcontracting system make the industry difficult to regulate.

Many Indian children are employed by Tibetans in Dharamsala, usually as domestic help or restaurant workers. Although there was some embarrassment about this practice among a few Tibetans I interviewed, many defend it, claiming it provides needed opportunities for the poor. Although they receive no formal education, their situation is quite favorable when compared to the carpet workers in Nepal. Few if any are engaged in artisan production of any kind in Dharamsala. I cannot testify to this for the other Tibetan settlements in India. Children are routinely

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employed in the indigenous Indian carpet industry. According to the Constitution of India: "No child below the age of 14 shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment." Because a complete ban on child labor is considered impractical, the Child Labour Act of 1986 only regulates the conditions of work and forbids the use of children in hazardous occupations. It does not apply to family enterprises. The Factories Act of 1948 also regulates child labor, but only applies to mechanically powered enterprises with more than 10 workers, or unpowered enterprises with more than 20 workers. As with the Nepali carpet factories, many small units are not covered or remain undetected (Seetha, 1993). The International Labor Organization estimates the number of child laborers in India runs as high as 44 to 50 million (San Francisco Chronicle, Sunday, Jan. 23, 1994). Many work in handicraft industries, and a number are brought as bonded labor from the impoverished state of Bihar to the carpet factories of Uttar Pradesh. As in Nepal, they work long hours in poor light, with little ventilation. Sometimes they are shackled to the looms.

In the pricey Hauz Kaus "village" in Delhi, where shoppers can find both Indian and "Tibetan" crafts at fixed prices, thousands of workers live in tents and huts. In December, 1993, a 15 year old bonded embroiderer at Hauz Kaus, Jaffer Imam, told his employer he could no longer work in the poor conditions. The owner poured kerosene over the boy and set him on fire (Paul Murphy, 1994 ). Such incidents have led to renewed efforts to enforce India's child labor laws, but police often take bribes and look the other way. Some recent efforts by NGO's and unions to require all exported carpets to carry labels certifying production without child labor have had limited success. Some importers voluntarily agreed to use such

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labels, and in 1992, carpet importers in Germany were directed by the government not to import carpets manufactured with child labor (Shukla, 1992).

The carpet industry countered "malicious propaganda" with a publicity campaign, including a full page "response feature" in the Times of India (February 21, 1993). Sanjay Mehrota wrote that "nobody can force a weaver to weave for them or stay with them. In this matter they are completely free." He worries that if new regulations were enforced, banning weavers under the age of 14, "where would the children associated with the carpet manufacturing go?" The feature also pointed to the need to counter foreign competition. Indeed, Nepal's use of child labor keeps prices low, pushing others in the region to follow suit.

According to CWIN, some 25,000 Nepali children work in Indian carpet factories, many brought by the carpet naikes of Kathmandu (Pradhan, 1993). The Economic Times of Bombay reported that in 1991 there were 10,000 people employed in the Tibetan carpet industry in India (Dec. 26, 1991). It is doubtful that all of them are Tibetan. The spinning and dyeing center in the Bir settlement in the Kangra valley, for example, employed Indians. However, at Bir I saw only one Indian child, possibly someone's domestic servant, working at a loom. I believe the use of child labor in refugee carpet industries in India is minimal or nearly nonexistent. Jobs in the CTA's industries are needed for Tibetan refugees. Were child labor exploited to any visible degree in Dharamsala co-operatives, there would likely be an outcry from the many foreigners that form a large part of the market.

Thus far, there has been little backlash against the carpet industry among foreign consumers visiting Nepal. Tourists generally encounter

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only ready-made carpets displayed in Kathmandu shops. Some venture to the Tibetan settlements, there seeing well-fed, cheerful adults supporting a thriving refugee community. Buying a carpet can seem to constitute a politically positive or charitable act. Few witness the conditions in private workshops. There is some awareness, however, of the environmentally destructive consequences of the industry in Kathmandu. Many foreign visitors to Nepal are "eco-tourists," frequently engaging in mountain trekking or visits to the Chitwan nature preserve. The deforestation of the countryside and the overcrowding and pollution in Kathmandu are more obvious to these tourists than the exploitative conditions in the carpets factories. Carpet washing and dyeing results in run offs of sulfuric acid, chemical dyes, sodas, and bleaches into the already polluted rivers of the Kathmandu valley, exacerbating water shortages (Pradhan, 1993). The importation of New Zealand wool for the production of carpets, begun in the 1980's during a shortage of Tibetan wool, is thought to have introduced anthrax into the country (Indian Express, July 10, 1992:10). Marianne Fink, a long-term French resident of Dharamsala, reports that 90% of the carpet industry does not conform to government environmental regulations. She writes that she is a "lost client" for the Kathmandu industry, adding that another Westerner told her she hopes that one day owning a Tibetan carpet will be as socially unacceptable as owning a Leopard-skin coat (Fink, 1993).

**Postcard from Gankyi, Dec. 3, 1992**

Lunch in the tiny private restaurant just up the road a bit from Gankyi. Some CTA office workers prefer this place to the subsidized "Staff mess", which provide filling, but monotonous fare. I order meat

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mo-mos, one of the very few dishes on the menu -- and certainly their best -- and sip very hot milk tea. A CTA worker, Norbu, sits across from me smoking. I request an interview, and after we set a date he continues talking, telling me about his parents.

He says they were "semi-nomads," the wealthiest in the area. "They owned what we called '10,000 white, 1000 black;' that's 10,000 sheep, 1000 yak." A polyandrous family, he enjoyed three "fathers." The eldest he called Pa-lak, the the other two he referred to as uncles. The family fled Tibet in 1959, disguised as pilgrims. Thinking it would only be a short time before Tibet regained its independence, they brought little with them, mostly food. "The three brothers left the children and their mother in Nepal, just across the border, and made several trips back into Tibet. But each time they brought mostly food! Bit by bit they sold off their religious objects and jewelry. One uncle gambled a lot of money away. Then it became apparent that it was for the long haul, and they had to really work!"

Pa-lak died very young, at 34, and his mother died soon after. Disgusted with life, one "uncle" became a monk. "But one uncle got lucky in business. He started dealing carpets. He went to Lhasa at one point and bought two very old Tibetan rugs. He bought them for maybe 10,000 Nepali rupees, but sold them for several hundred thousand. So he went back to his old village area, and built two big prayer wheels, with Chinese permission, in two villages. Now he's mostly retired, living in Kathmandu, selling a carpet now and again -- he has some old ones locked away -- and feeling that he's got it made for the next lifetime. Mostly he prays and does Kora in the morning, and gambles in the afternoon."

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Norbu was the only one in his family that didn't go into business. He got an education, then taught in Tibetan schools, sometimes in remote areas. Sometimes he taught night-classes for adults. "I'd come home after eleven hours of teaching and received almost nothing in wages." Tiring of the low pay, "I quit and worked for a year in an international philanthropy organization. All I did was sign my name to pick up paychecks." Feeling useless, he resigned and went to work for the CTA. "I have only about 15 years of active life left. We are not so healthy, you know," he says, lighting up another cigarette. I ask him why he never went into business.

> Oh, I had been in business for the Tibetan government, exporting carpets. But the real money is in private enterprise. In carpets people became rich overnight when the industry got started. They could be people from any background, usually with absolutely nothing, but then they'd meet some German guy with money to lend, get an agreement to ship some carpets. Then go to private weavers who had nowhere to sell their carpets and tell them to bring them to him. He'd start with nothing and end up rich in one or two years. He was nothing but a middleman, but he was the one who found the foreigner and got it started.

Now it wasn't so easy, Norbu thought.

> Some importer in Germany gets to be well known, exporters visit his house, invite him to Kathmandu. He'd come to the airport, and be met by all these people and not know which exporter's car he should take to the Oberoi, the most expensive hotel in town. One guy would pay

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> the hotel bill, another wanted to pay for his dinners. So there's a lot of competition. Maybe fifteen or twenty families got really rich, rich even by American standards. They're fine and can relax, but the middle people it's harder for. There is too much supply and less demand. Only a few Tibetans could be big businessmen. Most can't handle big time stuff. They do better with petty enterprises.

**Designs**

> Buyers come from far countries . . . then, thousands of miles away, these carpets will glow with soft colors, and fascinate future generations with their intricate, tantric symmetries which hold bold messages whose meaning is ever urgent and ever elusive. [ Michael Lobo, 1988: ?]

The anthropologist Christiaan Kleiger once wrote that Tibetan carpets, while incorporating new materials, had changed very little in production technique and design. Rather than abandoning "their aesthetic for the potentially lucrative catering to Western tastes," he wrote, "their designs 'are upheld as a badge of their identity." Kleiger (1983:13). In Dharamsala, close to the official guardians of Tibetan culture, for a time designs remained more static than in Nepal, where entrepreneurs more sucessfully responded to market demand.

Like many Western academics, Kleiger became personally involved in Tibetan cultural production, establishing the Central Asian Carpet Company in late 1978. He hired an India-based Tibetan to buy carpets from Dharamsala weavers and supervise "the production of custom designs

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that I would send him." Kleiger(1992:113). As in the case of *thangkas*, Westerners often directly or indirectly initiate the production and specify the design of goods that serve as badges of "Tibetan identity," and promote the exotic "otherness" of Tibetan culture. "From my own experience in marketing these rugs in the West," Klieger wrote, "I suggest that in order to sell a Tibetan rug, one often has to reinforce the image of 'the barbaric splendor of Shangri-la' in order to secure the sale" (ibid: 117). Klieger notes that many of the motifs seen on refugee carpets were never used in pre-occupation Tibet. In fact, the 'traditional' designs on early Dharamsala carpets, he discovered, were a sort of invented tradition. Kleiger(personal communication). One can now purchase carpets bearing images of the Potala, nomadic scenes, or "Tibet" written in Roman or Tibetan scripts. In order to sell Tibetan goods, then, one sells Tibet itself -- or a Western idea of it -- through designs which may or may not have signified Tibetan identity in the past, but which serve as trade marks in the contemporary marketplace, announcing Tibetan origin whatever their actual origin.

The earliest photographs of Tibetan carpets, dating from 1905-1910, reveal simply woven rugs, most of them with abstract designs (Denwood, 1974). Wealthy Tibetans sometimes commissioned carpets with symbols of the seasons for use during the yearly cycle. Some designs and colors were reserved for monastics, and divinities were and are rarely depicted (Kleiger, 1983). Medallion designs are the most frequently seen in early samples of Tibetan carpets (Denwood, 1974). There is a trend to representation in the 20th century. Contemporary carpets often incorporate motifs rarely seen in the past, such as the mythical snow lion, the garuda, phoenixes and dragons (ibid). Tibetans tend to prefer the colors which can only achieved with chemical dyes.

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My wife and I bought a very typical 3' by 6" carpet in Dharamsala, one which might be found in a refugee home. Three multicolored flower medallions are aligned vertically on a dark blue background. Moving outwards, about 8" from the edges, are two strips of contrasting lighter blue, then a white zig-zag pattern, and another two strips of light blue. Outside these borders are plant and flower motifs, and a final two strips of light blue about 1" from the edge. The carpet is bright, simple, and thick. It cost approximately U.S. $80 at the Co-operative's shop in McLeod Ganj. Kuloy (1985) estimated that one half of Tibetan rugs produced are of this more traditional design, with three medallions and multiple borders. There is, however, and increasing production of carpets designed solely for export.

In contrast to trends in Tibetan taste, carpets produced for foreign consumers are sometimes completely abstract, with geometric patterns more commonly associated with Native American or contemporary Western rugs, or with naturalistic motifs of non-Tibetan origin. Many foreign buyers desire a "traditional" or "ethnic" look. Rather than the saturated colors popular with Tibetans, these consumers prefer muted, pastel colors and earth tones, which they consider more "natural". Increasing numbers of carpets are produced with vegetable dyes to meet this demand. Since many Tibetans preferred chemical dyes even before exile, this indigenous cultural production has been altered to meet criteria of authenticity partially defined by outside consumers.

One afternoon Yangchen and I spoke with Pasang Gyelpo, the carpet designer for the Handicraft Co-op. He was working in a large studio with tables covered with carpet designs on graph paper. Each square, he said,

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represented a knot. Pasang was outlining designs in pencil, after which he would he would fill in the colors, using a palette of 32 paints. Pasang was 64 years old in 1993. A former thangka painter, he stopped painting the year before when his eyes began to fail. "If I can't do it well, it's very bad," he explained. "It's a big sin. Carpets are different from thangkas. Carpets I can do!"

Pasang's family were *du'chung* -- "small smoke"-- who rented their house and land, and paid no taxes. He began his thangka apprenticeship when he was 27 years old, studying for seven years until his teacher fled the Chinese occupation. Pasang left Tibet in 1960. After a brief stint as a coolie in Manali, he made his way to Dalhousie where he began designing carpets while painting thangkas privately on the side. When his mother became ill, he stayed home and painted exclusively. After her death Pasang came to Dharamsala. "I could go anywhere with my painting skills," he said.

Pasang learned his first designs from another painter in Dalhousie. "In Tibet we didn't do it this way. We copied old carpets." Several weavers also told me that they copied old carpets in the early days of exile, but now they followed designs-- sometimes sent from abroad--plotted on graph paper by full-time designers. This change alone may account for some of the innovations in carpet design. Sometimes Pasang still copies carpets. "I have no time to make new designs," he said. "I must finish orders!"

"A carpet with many details takes about 6 days for a 3' by 6' carpet," said Pasang. "With less detail it takes 3 to 4 days. Sometimes foreigners send designs on paper. Others send pictures and then I draw them." He

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pulled out a blueprint from a loose stack for an example. It had an abstract pattern with a half moon at each end.

"Injees don't make Tibetan designs. They're abstract and don't have animals. Sometimes their designs are like clothing designs. I never saw such designs. I don't understand them. I don't like them. We don't like vegetable colors. Tibetans like dark blue and chemical colors. Indians like Tibetan designs, but they call them 'Chinese'. They order the same colors as Tibetans, in chemical dyes." Pasang said he never knows where orders come from, but he can usually guess from the design.

Mr. Damdul, the co-op manager, later told me that they can "just use photographs" for designs these days. "In Tibet we didn't have such a system. It's very easy with the graph paper; we can copy designs exactly." Mr. Damdul said the co-op has a catalog of some 200 patterns, "mostly from traditional Tibetan designs." Colors can now be specified with coded cards.

Today Western consumers can even order carpets and other Tibetan handicrafts on the World Wide Web. One might surf to the "Homeless Yak" page and place orders, then jump through hypertext links to other sites offering information on Tibetan Buddhism and culture or Tibet support groups. Carl T. Chew advertises his Contemporary Carpet Center on the Web, and includes his Compuserve e-mail address for the ease of on-line consumers. Chew's page explains that his "love of textiles and his desire to create a new kind of work from his computer graphics led him to Kathmandu, Nepal, where in 1983 he began making rugs. He now collaborates with weavers in his own factory, the Contemporary Carpet Center, to produce these magical pieces." The site includes a rug sampler, articles about the carpets from Sunset, Architectural Digest and other

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magazines, and a 30 day money back guarantee. We are informed that "each rug is a limited edition artwork meant for the floor" and assured that "only adults are employed at the Contemporary Carpet Center."

Carpets are secular goods that rarely depict sacred symbols although there are some exceptions. The tiger is a symbol of power, courage, and strength in Central Asia (Fink, 1992). Flayed tiger skins are commonly painted in thangkas as the seats of deities. "Tiger rugs," carpets with a tiger skin pattern, were generally reserved as seats for lamas. They may have symbolized the lama's ability to tame mental impulses (Kuloy, 1985). Other tiger motifs, such as a tiger in a bamboo grove, were less restricted. Carpets with two crossed dorjes were also reserved for lama's seats or for wall hangings. Certain colors were also restricted: maroon, orange, and saffron were limited to the clergy, and imperial yellow was reserved for the Dalai Lama or his representatives (Klieger, 1983). Some design restrictions are loosening in exile. The Norbulingka institute sells many objects-- clothes, posters, pillows-- with the tiger skin motif. Mr. Damdul told me there is "a good market for the tiger design." When I heard that Upper TCV had some unusual or even sacred symbols on carpets, I decided to pay a visit to the salesroom.

**Another Postcard from TCV**

It's a humid but clear day in the later stages of the 1993 monsoon, so I decide to walk up to TCV to check out the carpets. I arrive covered in sweat, knock on the salesroom door, and introduce myself to "Norbu", a friendly young salesman who speaks English fluently. I ask a bit of his background, but he tells me he doesn't know where he was born or who his

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parents were. He's one of the TCV orphans, he tells me gently. "We were brought up like flowers."

Outside in the sun, Norbu's friend is designing carpets, sketching on gridded paper at a makeshift desk. A few students, their faces covered with what look like fencing masks, beat leftover wool and fabrics with long poles, softening them up for stuffing into pillows and mattresses. Norbu leads me into the shop, a room with high ceilings and a concrete floor. It's a riot of color, with carpets and small machine-made "thangkas" hanging on the walls alongside shoulder bags, jackets, and scarves. Norbu notices I'm eyeing the T-shirts. He says that TCV wanted to produce silk screened shirts, but this was considered "machine-made, and the Indian government wants us to make only hand-crafted items."

I ask about TCV's carpet factory. Norbu says there are about twenty weavers and seven cutters currently. All the weavers are women, earning about 500 Rs. a month. Tailors can make up to 800 Rs. a month, he says, and the thangka painters up to 2000 Rs. However, none of the TCV thangka painters I spoke with reported such high earnings, and one complained that the tailors made more. The higher quality carpets, accounting for some 60% of production, are mostly exported to Germany and France. Only a few are shipped to the United States or Britain, most frequently to TCV sponsors or Tibetophiles, Norbu believes. The remaining carpets are sold either here in the showroom or in other TCV shops. A standard 3' by 6' carpet goes for 2525 Rs., about U.S. $80. Buyers purchasing ten or more carpets get a 5-10% discount. "The last two years were very good. Two years ago business people bought almost all the carpets. Now there's a lot in stock; there's less sales this year. Not much promotion is done and there's a recession."

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The carpets are designed by a TCV painter. The wool generally comes from the Charitrust's Panipat center, although some comes from the Bir settlement in the Kangra valley. "We don't dye wool here. We used to, but it's too wet here and it's hard to dry the wool." Most of the carpets are of the standard size and quality, with 48,000 knots per square meter. The bulk of the showroom's profits, Norbu says, come from these common, quickly produced carpets. Most have naturalist Tibetan motifs, although I see a few with abstract, geometric patterns.

Norbu then points out a two by three meter carpet with 54,000 knots per square meter hanging on the wall. It depicts the Potala, the Dalai Lama's Lhasa palace. "Before we sold one for 15,000 rs. but we lost money! The design took so long to do and the weaving another half a year." He points to a similarly sized Kalachakra mandala carpet hanging nearby. Made with 74,400 knots per square meter, it took three weavers half a year to produce. Including transport it costs 80,000 Rs., about U.S. $2700. "We had three orders from Germany, two from France, one from Japan," Norbu says. "Tibetans can't afford it."

The Kalachakra, he explains, "is the highest mandala; it was certainly never [before] put on a carpet." I ask Norbu whether it's a problem that foreigners might throw this symbol on the floor and walk over it. A similar issue had apparently occurred in Nepal, when Tibetans were infuriated to learn that carpets with "Om Mani Padme Hum" woven into the border might be trampled on or put into bathrooms in the West. Tags were later added to explain the meaning of the mantra, and requesting that these carpets be hung on the wall (Forbes, 1989). Once a carpet is sold, however, producers lose control over its' use.

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Like many Tibetans, Norbu takes a pragmatic view. "I've heard that some use it on the ground. It's their property. Its just an object, it has no soul. But it's best to have it on a wall, so we can have a more positive attitude and better meditations."

This conversation somehow stimulates an unsolicited exegesis on Buddhism and Western women. "Women can't get enlightened," Norbu asserts, then hedges, acknowledging that Tara is enlightened even though she is female, although not exactly human. "Women cry at funerals, feel pain. Men are more detached. It is better to have a man's body for the final stage."

We're interrupted by two lively middle aged couples who stroll in and appraise the store. They're Bombay Jews who settled in Israel 35 years ago, and are back on vacation "touring the hill stations." Yesterday Dalhousie, today and tomorrow Dharamsala, then off to Shimla. They're looking for "silk carpets for the walls".

"Sorry," Norbu tells them, "we don't make those".

One buys a *damaru* (a small drum used in rituals) for 100 Rs., and another examines four cushion covers.

"These are made of fine brocade from Varanasi," says Norbu. "They're 260 Rs."

"Oh, this is too much!" exclaims one of the gentlemen. "Make a price!"

Norbu gently informs them that the TCV shop only has fixed prices, a fact many Indian customers find incredible. "No discount, no buying," states one of the portly gentlemen. Norbu explains that he can't give them any special rates, so they ask for the manager. The manager peers in the door, assesses the situation, and points to Norbu. "He's in charge of the

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salesroom." He leaves. The couples decide they'll buy a few anyway, and Norbu gets them interested in some cotton tea cozies with the Eight Auspicious symbols.

In the meantime, two English wholesalers have strolled in and are commenting on the carpets. "They're not as fine as Chinese and Persian ones," one tells me. "The knot count is less. They're a bit crude, but wear better. And they also resist staining. You can wash these without ruining them. With a Chinese carpet, if you stain it, washing damages the pile." At any rate, he tells me, unlike Indian shoppers, Westerners care about more than the "economics" of the market. What many seek are "ethical productions." I decide it's time to let Norbu concentrate on selling his ethical productions, and start the walk down the hill.

**Dyes and Degeneration**

There are two contradictory trends in the production of Tibetan carpets: one is a move to new materials, driven by productive efficiency, market availability, and indigenous preference; the other is a return to "natural" materials appealing to foreign consumers.

In the past, only a small number of dyes were available on the Tibetan market. The most important were madder, indigo from India, and lac (red insect dyes). These were supplemented and combined with natural materials from local sources, such as walnut for browns, rhubarb root for yellows, beer, tea, buckwheat, and yeast (Denwood, 1974; Ronge, 1978). By 1870, aniline dyes were commercially available in northern India and thereafter traded into Nepal and Tibet. David MacDonald, the British trade officer in Yatung, reported in the 1930's that most dyes were still of vegetable origin (Meyers, 1984).

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Until synthetic dyes became available, color variations in carpet design were necessarily subtle. In the 20th century, increasing trade with India allowed for expanded importation of cotton yarn and artificial dyes. By the 1950's cotton warps were the norm, and chemically dyed yarns more common. Klieger writes that Tibetans prefer bright, saturated colors which represent purity in Buddhist thought, while the dull whites, browns, and greys seen in the vegetable dyed carpets many Westerners prefer, symbolize pollution (Klieger, 1983). Arthur Leper offers a more mundane explanation, speculating that Tibetans desire bright colors that contrast with the monochromatic Tibetan landscape (Leper, 1983). Perhaps Tibetans simply found the novelty of chemical dyes appealing. It is naive to imagine that Tibetan culture remained completely isolated and static, and that innovations were always rejected, especially in the secular arts.

Simultaneous with new materials and designs come worries among Western Tibetophiles about the "degeneration" of Tibetan arts, and efforts to intercede in favor of "tradition." In the 1890's, the British political officer in Sikkim, Claude White, opened production schools at Gangtok and Lachung which banned the use of chemical dyes. From 1947 to 1952, Marco Pallis attempted to resurrect traditions in the Kalimpong weaving center, citing with approval White's ban (Meyers, 1984). In his book Peaks and Lamas (1940), recounting his Himalayan journeys of the 1930's, Pallis wrote that "a severe ban against the new dyes and an insistence that the traditional models should be faithfully followed would help to keep the craft in the straight path." This ban, he thought, should be enforced "under pain of confiscation" (1940:388).

Pallis combined Western chauvinism with an elitist cultural conservatism that rivaled any Tibetan xenophobe. He blamed artistic

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degeneration in Tibet on the "importation of anti-traditional objects from abroad, for the lure of the ready-made has everywhere been hard to withstand, especially for simple minds." He believed that Tibetan aristocrats should keep foreign articles out of their homes, since it was "their proper function to insist on the maintenance of artistic standards" (ibid: 385-387).

Especially disheartening to Pallis was the use of chemical dyes leading "in the direction of greater vividness and vulgarity." Among the arts, carpet weaving was in "the worst plight of all, for that trade has come entirely under the influence of the big importers into Europe and America, who demand of the makers both rapid delivery and frequent varying of designs, just for the sake of change." Designs, he thought, had come to merely "attempt to catch the eye . . . the patterns get larger every year and weird animals are preferred to plants as motifs. Vegetable dyes are abandoned for chemicals, largely because the latter will stand washing in caustic, to give a 'silky sheen' that is to say a hideous celluloid-like surface. . . . a single one of these rugs is capable of upsetting the color scheme of any room into which it happens to be installed." Carpets designed from photographs were an insult to artistic traditions. The new carpets, he wrote, "transcend the limits of ugliness; they deserve to be banned for moral poisons as surely as cocaine" (ibid: 386).

Such sentiments have continued with the growth of the contemporary industry. Production has been rationalized with factory production and standardized sizes and motifs, with the result, complains Kuloy, that post-1959 rugs are "uniformly boring and very poor mechanized images of the older rugs" (Kuloy, 1985: 23) Although chemical dyes have been in use for about one hundred years, Kuloy claims that before 1959 yarns were

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mostly of hand-spun Tibetan wool and often colored by hereditary dye masters.

Most post-occupation carpets were originally made with machine spun, chemically dyed yarn. Itan Mariz, the first major European importer of Tibetan carpets from Nepal, specified that he wanted thick, inexpensive carpets rather than fine, thin carpets. Thicker heddle rods and wool followed. Tibetan wool is coarse, hairy, lustrous, strong, springy, and takes vegetable dyes well, Denwood wrote approvingly (Denwood, 1974). Many carpets are now made with blends of Tibetan and New Zealand wool. Some with Indian wool which, according to Denwood, result in hard carpets lacking springiness. If synthetically dyed they are "dull in appearance" (ibid: 17). Contemporary designs, he wrote, are "very often devoid of the subtlety of and harmony of color which make the old Tibetan carpet such a desirable object" (ibid: 80).

Carpet producers have responded to these criticisms and are now producing carpets using traditional materials and processes. In Welcome Nepal, Paunch Raj Sharma calls the use of recycled wool a "sin." While he recognizes that it can reduce the costs of production and lower prices, he worries about the effects of competitive price cutting ruining the quality and reputation of Nepali carpets. He writes that Nepal "should mainly concentrate on traditional designs that gives the picture of Nepali carpet. Traditional design will always be selling. But when there is a demand for modern designs," he adds, "we should be flexible to meet the demand" (Sharma, 1993:13).

The Dalai Lama's Charitable Trust has also recognized the demand for '"natural" products, and now supplies many refugee weaving centers in India with hand-spun, vegetable dyed thread. Their "Silver Jubilee"

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pamphlet reported that "demand for machine-spun handknotted Woolen carpets has dropped drastically in recent years and its place has been taken by Natural dyed Hand-spun Woolen carpets." The failure to find a stable buyer for their carpets until 1987 was due, the pamphlet states, to their reliance on chemically-dyed thread until 1985. In that year the Charitrust established the Gurupura Village Hand Spinning and Weaving Centre. The "introduction of the traditional method of weaving carpets (i.e. hand spinning, hand knotting, and vegetable dyeing) and not solely relying on the mill-spun chemical dye is one of the most important contribution of the Trust in the upliftment of the socio-economic conditions of the Tibetan Refugees" (Charitrust, 1989:21). The Gurupura center blends New Zealand wool with wool produced by Tibetan refugee nomads in Ladakh. The Trust buys most of the nomad's production, at a better price than private merchants, thus supporting their pastoral economy. The Charitrust also aims to provide employment to the "rural population of the host country." In 1989, the Gurupura center employed approximately 2000 spinners in Tibetan settlements and Indian villages, mostly old women who received about 300 Rs. per month. "One of the most appealing characteristics of the entire process," states the pamphlet, "is the outcome of total participation of human resources in the most natural way." The wool is hand carded and spun, and the dyeing is "based entirely on traditional method" using "natural dyes of vegetable and stone origin."

The pamphlet reports that the use of traditional materials and methods allows weavers to increase their incomes "three or four times more." Designs are simpler and the hand spun wool is thicker, allowing for more rapid production. "The attraction to Indian cities has dwindled over the years," the Charitrust reports, "because they now earn

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satisfactory wages for weaving carpets. Many who had already left the carpet centers for reason of low wages have returned. It has become easier for the centres to recruit new weavers." If true, then such centers promote one of the chief aims of the CTA --the preservation of Tibetan identity through the maintenance of "homogenous settlements."

**Made in China?**

No Tibetan artistic production is aloof from cultural and political controversy, not even something as apparently mundane as carpet weaving and dyeing. Because bounded nation-states, ideally reflecting some presumably distinct cultural and ethnic essence, are the accepted units of global politics, Tibetan exiles and their Western supporters are at pains to differentiate all aspects of Tibetan culture from that of China. For them Tibet is naturally separate, just as to the People's Republic, Tibetan culture and society have been eternally under the influence of Big Brother Han, always part of the Chinese family. I found it entertaining and enlightening to sit in the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala, reading debates in various journals on the origin of various cultural motifs and on Tibet's historical relations with China and the nature of traditional Tibetan society.

In the early 1980's there was a series of exchanges in the Tibetan Review contesting the extent to which Tibetan carpet designs were influenced by non-Tibetans. Diana Meyers (1982) wrote that Turkestani and Central Asian elements were evident in Tibetan carpets, but that the most recognizable influence had been from China, though not necessarily from Chinese rugs. The "key" or thunder pattern on the border of many Tibetan carpets may have derived from Shang and Chou dynasty bronzes,

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she noted. The popular medallion carpets are often called *rgya-rum* , or Chinese carpet, in Tibetan, and the motif is seen on Han dynasty bronzes. However, she wrote, the three coin pattern may also be related to East Turkestani patterns, and some cloud and water motifs as well as the Auspicious symbols came to China from India.

Christiaan Kleiger responded a few months later, writing that one cannot explain Tibetan designs through diffusion alone; autonomous invention must be recognized. Kleiger wrote that Tibetan culture was quite resistant to outside influences, and that "Tibetan artistic representation has remained quite static throughout the centuries' Because refugees maintained traditional designs as a "badge of identity," he wrote, the industry was not catering to Western tastes, and thus differences in refugee rugs are primarily due to differences in "materials rather than technique and design" (Kleiger, 1983:12). Kleiger (personal communication) now believes that while the Dharamsala carpets of that period were indeed marketed as badges of identity, those badges were in fact constructed from modified or invented traditions.

In the same issue, Arthur Leeper countered that not enough is known about Tibetan material culture to state that it was "static." Tibetan society, he pointed out, was not as inward as many have claimed. Although European influences were nearly nonexistent, Tibet traded extensively with India, Nepal, and China. Leper recognized that Kathmandu carpet producers did indeed cater to outsiders. However, he sniffed, "I confess that I abhor them. I hold this body of rugs to be dishonest" (Leper, 1983:14-5).

Denwood's 1974 book, The Tibetan Carpet, argues that Chinese influences became significant only centuries after Tibetan carpet weaving

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had taken root. Granted, Tibetan carpets are similar in many ways to Chinese rugs, and some designs are clearly borrowed. However, Denwood points out that many motifs were imported from Middle Eastern and Central Asian cultures, and actual weaving techniques indicate their influence. The craft was most prominent in parts of Tibet far from China, and, he writes, predates the Chinese and possibly even the Indian industries. Borrowed Chinese motifs, he notes, usually derive from porcelains and bronzes rather than Chinese rugs. Denwood speculates that when the Tibetan political sphere expanded westward in the 7th century, the Tibetans brought the simple Southeast Asian backstrap loom with them. They then acquired the vertical loom from the West and Central Asian traditions. By the 11th century carpet weaving was an established "folk" craft. From the 18th century forward Chinese influences flooded into Tibet. In the twentieth century, he writes, commercialization has led to degeneration and "garish" designs. Today, despite the use of Tibetan identity to market carpets, no few would argue that designs are "traditional" or static (or ever were). Whatever the origin of carpet designs, production is now an international industry exceeding the control of Tibetan exile institutions or Western preservationists. Competition and innovation is leading to overproduction, poor quality, and the separation of the 'Tibetan identity' of carpets from the actual identity of the producers and designers.

In addition to Nepali and Western entrepreneurs infiltrating and influencing the carpet industry, the People's Republic also sees its export and tourist market potentials. Himal reported that a Nepali carpet company has entered a joint venture with the Lhasa Administration Bureau of National Handicrafts to design, produce and sell carpets. The initial investment totaled US $ 4.6 million, a not insignificant sum for craft

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production. The partners planned to have twelve factories operating in Tibet by 1997 (Patrakar,1993).

One afternoon my wife, JoAnn Vrilakas, interviewed a young Tibetan nun, a recent arrival, at Genden Choling, a nunnery in McLeod Ganj. JoAnn was surprised to discover the nun had worked in a carpet factory in Tibet.

"My father worked in construction and my mother was a housewife," she said. The family was poor, so "from the age of twelve I started going to weave carpets at a factory. I used to go early in the morning. I used to work in the factory until 11 or 12 at night." She remembered there were over one hundred women in the factory and eight boys. Two women and a boy did the cutting. The manager was a Tibetan woman who was very severe. They got a day off every other Sunday. Workers were not provided a lunch, and if they were sick they were lectured and fined. "It was a private factory, owned I think by Tibetans and Chinese together. We were paid by the rug."

Most of the rugs were sent to the West and Japan, the nun believed, and sometimes tourists bought them. "Tibetans never bought them," she said, "they didn't like the colors." Not knowing JoAnn could understand, she turned to my wife's translator and declared: "they looked like shit!"

As we have seen, productive relations in the various Tibetan crafts have led to differences in the degree of capitalist development -- and the alienation of artisans -- specific to each locale and art form. Tibetan carpets remain functional objects for their community of origin while they simultaneously advertise Tibetan culture internationally, support refugee institutions, and cater to the tastes of outside consumers. Non-Tibetans

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design many "Tibetan" carpets, while foreign consumers exert conflicting pressures for artistic and technical change as well as for the preservation of "traditional" production and motifs. Relatively unrestricted by social or religious contraints, the carpet industry in Nepal employs poorly paid non-Tibetan children, and the growing industry in China exploits Tibetan labor to produce carpets the weavers detest. The "authenticity" of Tibetan carpets is thus called into question.

Interviews conducted with Western travelers in Dharamsala reveal that authenticity for most consumers is defined by far less stringent criteria than those imagined by the would-be saviors of Tibetan culture. Many travelers desire only a suitable "souvenir" -- a good that carries memories by its' recognizable links (real or imagined) to a particular place and time, and by its' *difference* from other, more familiar goods. There is often little demand for any genuine continuity with artistic traditions. Many tourists, however, do express the desire that their goods are actually manufactured by Tibetans, ideally in homes or co-operative settings, for the purchase of Tibetan crafts is often considered a charitable or political act in support of poor refugees and "the Tibetan cause." It is here that the Tibetan carpet industry often falls short of even the most generous definitions of authenticity, as cultural production becomes economic and cultural alienation.

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# CHAPTER SIX

## TINKERS, TAILORS, AND TIBETAN CRAFTS

Changes in production, form, and meaning vary greatly between crafts industries both as a result of diverse indigenous values attributed to the goods and of the various ways in which these goods are now promoted as embodiments of Tibetan culture. This chapter will discuss the marketing of Tibetan arts and a reified Tibetan culture, describing some of the contradictory and ambivalent attempts by Tibetan institutions and foreign sympathisizers to simultaneously profit from, control, and curtail commoditization. Through describing the production and marketing of Tibetan metal crafts and tailored goods, in conjunction with the previous two chapters, this chapter will summarize the impacts of exile, tourism, and new external markets on the diversification of relations of production, exchange, and consumption for various Tibetan handicrafts. This chapter will also describe the differentiation of social status and wealth among craft artisans, tying this both to Tibetan notions of worth and to new opportunities and productive structures associated with tourism.

Production for tourism and external markets is not only an economic necessity, but plays significant political and cultural roles, stimulating both traditional and innovative production and advertising the Tibetan cause internationally. Overseeing the "preservation of tradition" in handicraft manufacture and other forms of cultural production authorizes exile elites and institutions as the representatives and rightful "owners" of a increasingly profitable Tibetan culture.

But the aims of preserving and promoting Tibetan culture has reified and commoditized it. Tibetan elites and institutions are in a contradictory

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position, at once attempting to foster a distinct identity and maintain control of cultural production, while positioning themselves to meet the demands of external markets. These contradictory forces have led to conflicts over the direction of cultural production and to the establishment of institutions such as the Norbulingka, described in this chapter, which aims both to salvage a hyperreal "authentic" Tibetan culture from the degenerative influence of the market, and appeal to a select segment of it.

"Tibetan" identity is now a self-conscious trademark, produced through the interaction of historically continuous cultural production with the new demands of transnational markets and external consumers. Some of these consumers have themselves become producers and promoters of "Tibetan" culture, through which they may promote their own personal and political agendas. As this chapter will illustrate, responsibility for design has sometimes shifted to non-Tibetans, and the market identity of some "Tibetan" goods has been separated from the identity of their producers. This chapter will describe how Tibetan motifs as "signifiers" have been ruptured from their indigenous referents. Invented traditions, such as the Losel dolls described below, advertise the Tibetan cause on a transnational cultural market that celebrates and profits from "difference" just as it obliterates it in a post-modern puree of mix and match ethnic goods and motifs.

**Metal Arts: Change and Degeneration?**

As with other arts, Tibetan metal smiths report that the quality of ritual objects such as butter lamps, bells, and statues has declined in exile. In Tibet, the finest bronzes were made with the "lost wax" or sand and clay methods of casting. Molds were used once and destroyed in the process of

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manufacture. In Dharamsala, most of the ritual items such as the bells, knives, cymbals purchased by tourists, as well as the small statues seen on every refugee altar, are inexpensive and rapidly produced with reusable molds or mechanical presses in Delhi, Rajpur, and Dehra Dun, often by Indians. Little fine statue work is carried out in Dharamsala.

Jewelry has also been transformed in exile. Many Tibetans in the People's Republic, as well as Buddhists in rural areas of the Himalayas, particularly women, continue to wear an abundance of ornamentation, including charm boxes (*gau* ), headpieces, and necklaces studded with amber, coral, and turquoise. Popular and medical traditions hold that various minerals and metals have positive influences on health and well being. Turquoise, for example, purifies the blood and protects the liver. Jewels are metaphors for purity. Although many Tibetans still hold these convictions, personal ornamentation has been greatly reduced in exile, and much of what is on sale to tourists is made by Indians or imported from Indonesia.

Tenzin Choedar, the current Namsa Chenmo (the "Great Tailor," described below) remembers that when the Chinese arrived:

> the old Tibetan families had their wealth confiscated, so people either gave their jewels away or even threw them into the river to keep themselves safe. At that time it had no value. They'd sell it to Nepalis in terms of baskets! Of course, the rich had a lot of jewels, but even nomads and poor had jewelry. And none of it was fake, it was real. It's difficult to get the same quality as in Tibet, but now the income level has risen and people are taking more interest in jewelry.

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The current Dalai Lama, like the 13th before him, discourages ostentation, and wealth is stored and displayed in more subtle, "modern," and profitable ways -- through religious merit making, consumer goods, education, and business investments.

The variety of Tibetan jewelry made in exile has declined tremendously. Smiths now concentrate on a few types of jewelry, some of it in a Westernized style. Before the occupation, Tibetan men often wore an earring on the left ear. Lay officials wore a *so-jing*, a pendant earring indicating rank (Yeshi, et. al. 1993). In exile, although many men wear heavy Tibetan silver or gold rings with turquoise, few men wear traditional earrings. Hip young men may sport fashionable Western style earrings, which does not always meet the approval of their elders. "In Tibet we had many different types of jewelry," remembers the Namsa Chenmo, "but nowadays only earrings, bracelets, rings. If you wear something on your head it's a joke! And it's very difficult to find people who know how to make these things."

In Dharamsala, a few master smiths from pre-occupation Tibet are passing on the tradition to students, but in a radically new context. The old smiths agree that artistic quality has declined as the hereditary specialization common before the occupation has given way to the generalized training in craft schools filled with the otherwise unemployed.

**Two Tibetan Smiths**

I spoke to the goldsmith, Tsering Champel, as he worked on a large *gau* -- a kind of portable altar that can hold relics, photos, prayers -- for a Swiss- Tibetan client. The men of his family had been goldsmiths in Lhasa for generations. In Tibet, Champel was not a member of the government

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*bzo khan*, but belonged to a *kyiduk* of metal artisans. Unlike the guild or union-like structure of the *bzo khan*, the *kyiduk* are voluntary self-help associations which survive in exile, many of them based on region of origin. These associations are mainly of a charitable function. They often hold annual picnics and sometimes perform religious services. Members pay dues (which may be invested to increase their value) and the*kyiduk* helps support them in times of crisis. Champel's *kyiduk* in Tibet performed no significant role in organizing production. He said he was not aware of any *kyiduk* for metal artisans in Dharamsala.

After an apprenticeship of ten years, Champel worked privately, specializing in gold jewelry. Most of his orders came from wealthy and noble clients, as poor Tibetans generally commissioned silver goods. He made many women's ornaments, *gau*, and men's earrings. Clients generally brought their own gold for him to work, although Champel traveled to Nepal several times to buy gold. Nepalis dominated the gold trade, he said. Payment was by the piece, usually in cash. In contrast to rural areas, Champel said, barter was rare in Lhasa. There were no shops selling jewelry," he said, "your family was known and you took orders." Sometimes Champel worked in aristocratic homes. "We were very well respected, well paid, and given food to eat while we worked." In the 1950's he was immersed in his work and paid little heed while Chinese intrusions grew in scope. "Suddenly," he said, "they were in power, and there was no work for goldsmiths. There was no time to look after ornaments. The aristocrats were in trouble."

A Nepali trader helped Champel escape into exile. He was sent to Dalhousie to work in a crafts center with two other smiths, making ornaments to raise money for the CTA. "There was no gold, only silver.

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We were paid a daily salary that was just enough to earn a living." He was later summoned to Dharamsala to work on the ornaments for statues being fashioned for the Tsuglakhang (main temple). Some of the more accomplished smiths in exile spent several years in the 1960's sculpting images of the Buddha, Padmasambhava, and an Avalokiteshvara which incorporates pieces of a similar image smuggled out of Tibet after the Red Guards trashed the Jokhang (Lhasa's central cathedral). Without enough skilled statue makers in exile, silver and gold smiths who had previously specialized in jewelry were recruited to fashion these images.

After the statues were completed, Champel returned to private work, specializing once again in jewelry and in ornamentation for the small, clothed statues of deities found on every Tibetan's altar. Champel's first clients were "rich" Tibetans who had relocated to Switzerland and Canada. Although they may not be wealthy by Western standards, their Western currency goes a long way in India, and Swiss and North American Tibetans are important sources of patronage for skilled artisans.

"Jewelry has changed," Champel said. "Gold is expensive, and most clients cannot afford much. Traditional jewelry was large and impressive,"to show the strength of the family." Many objects that were once pure gold are now gilded. A *gau* made in Tibet, he said, might contain twenty-seven "tolas" of gold. In India he might only use six or seven. The tools and techniques employed in exile, however, are basically the same as in Tibet. Instead of a yak skin bellows, most smiths use a mechanical wind-up bellows. For soldering, smiths generally use kerosene torches, and a few use gas. Clients still bring in their own gold and turquoise. As in Tibet, materials are weighed carefully. Everything must be accounted for in the end product. Most turquoise is bought through

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wholesalers in Jaipur. This rather poor quality turquoise costs 8-9 Rs./gm. It is sometimes powdered and mixed with other materials. "New" turquoise, sometimes from Tibet, is unweathered, bright blue, and smooth. It costs 15 Rs./gm. "Old" turquoise of a fine green shade costs 30-50 Rs./ gm.

Goldsmiths are well paid, said Champel. The ornate *gau* he was working on would take him twelve to fifteen days to complete. He would charge 2000 Rs. for labor. "Very few young people have the patience for this work. You need to practice and use your hands all day. I advised my son to become a goldsmith but it is easier to work in silver, so he is a silversmith. Young goldsmiths only know how to make simple jewelry, not the complicated *gau*."

Pema Dorje began his apprenticeship in Kham at the age of eleven on the urgings of his father, who was not a smith, but who advised that if he learned metal crafts well he could earn a good income. Pema lived with his master for seven years, after which he was invited to work in Lhasa at the Potala and Norbulingka workshops. Leaving Tibet in 1959, he labored on the roads for several months, but eventually was employed by the King of Sikkim, making *drilbu* (ritual bells), spoons, ashtrays, candlesticks, and tea stands, many of them "gifts and souvenirs for Western guests."

Pema Dorje did not learn statue making in Tibet. When he was young, he said, "I wasn't interested and didn't have the time." He first worked on statues in Dharamsala, helping fashion the Tsuglakhang images at the request of the Dalai Lama. When the task was completed, the Dalai Lama advised that because the great tradition of metal crafts was degenerating, he should help preserve the tradition. Pema Dorje taught at

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the Center for Tibetan Arts and Crafts near Lower TCV in Dharamsala for twelve years.

His students were mostly orphans and newcomers. Some of them trained with him for over ten years, he told me. Today there are six artisans in the metal crafts section of the Centre, all of them male. They work at least six hours per day for 50 Rs. Several of the students told me that they knew they could earn more privately, but wished to "repay the government" for raising and training them. Like other CTA institutions, the Centre provides security, if not affluence.

Although smiths in Tibet generally specialized in particular objects -- bells, statues, jewelry -- students at the Centre are given a general training. "The training is like in Tibet, and the materials are basically the same, except for the bellows. We don't have yak skin bellows!" Pema made sure his students learned to engrave well because, he said, "after this all other work is easy." For the first year and a half the students learn design, then begin engraving on brass before moving on to silver. Most of the orders the Centre receives are for *thang tok* (knobs that adorn the rods supporting thangka brocades). Students also make butter lamps, needed on every altar, although not all refugees can afford engraved silver lamps. After nine years the students begin working in gold and making statues. Almost all the clients are Tibetan. Some of their products are sold in the TCV shop in McLeod Ganj.

Like other pre-occupation artisans, Pema Dorje complained that the work done by his students was "less refined" than in Tibet. Recently, however, he believes there is a renewed concern for quality.

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**New Smiths, New Patrons, New Goods**

Jampa Samten, the son of Tsering Champel, is a silversmith who works privately in a small shop at Yong Ling school. As a youth, he was sent to Denmark and Norway, where he learned English and motor mechanics. Over the years he moved between various settlements and has had a diverse career. After the death of his mother, he began working with his father, eventually making silver thangka knobs. He then attended the Centre for Tibetan Arts and Crafts for several years. "It was very difficult, and rather embarrassing. The others were so young. I was the oldest and had to be very careful."

After Jampa was married, he found the pay at the Centre too paltry, so began working privately. He now makes ritual objects such as water bowls, butter lamps, mandalas, *gau,* as well as silver spoons. For a woman's' gold bangle, he charges 300 Rs. for labor. For a silver bangle he charges 150 Rs. "For a quick income gold is the best!" he said, but gold is softer and takes more patience and care. Working with precious metals can be risky because the finsihed object must contain precisely the amount originally given by the client. "Someone gives me ten grams of gold, I must return ten grams -- no excuses!" With his wife working at the Charitrust shop, Jampa does a lot of housework and shopping, so his work is always being interrupted. "Then I lose small pieces of gold," he explained, so he prefers to work with silver.

Most of his clients, particularly for ritual objects, are Tibetan. As we spoke, Jampa brought out a large silver butter lamp he had just finished. It contained 1 kilo 270 gms. of silver, took him about a month to complete, and would earn him 5,400 Rs. The client was a Tibetan who owns two shops in Nepal. Jampa has also had a few "traditional" orders

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from Westerners. Champa's designs "are all traditional. . . . If the design is intricate, I go slow and charge more. If the design is simple, I charge less but it is faster. So it doesn't really matter what kind of design it is. There are some silversmiths who make totally new designs for tourists. One I heard makes belt buckles. One time an American woman wanted ten tie-tacks with no designs, just a small bit of turquoise in the middle. . . . I have one friend who goes to Goa and Ladakh and has orders from tourists and makes a lot of money. These designs I find very difficult."

I asked him about the six statues on his altar. They were made by Indians in Delhi. Refugees often buy them unadorned, commission a smith to ornament them, have a tailor clothe them, and then bring them to a lama for consecration. A *sok-shing* , a stick on which is written "Om Ah Hum," is inserted along the vertical axis, and the body is filled with mantras and medicinal pills. The bottom is then sealed and the face painted. As with thangkas, this consecration invites the presence of the deity into the image. Keeping unconsecrated statues is considered inauspicious, and profiting on their sale as souvenirs is sinful. Westerners, unless they are Buddhist practitioners who have adopted Tibetan practices, almost always buy unpainted, unadorned, unconsecrated statues.

Jampa recognizes that few fine statues are made in exile, and that most ritual objects sold locally are of inferior quality. "These things are made in Delhi. They imitate the design and shape but still don't look so good. Tibetans take things to Indians who copy and cast metal objects and sell for a cheap price. The metals are inferior, but then everyone can have these things."

Jampa rarely makes *dorje* (*rdo rje;* skrt.*vajra* ). *Dorje* are small ritual scepters of a figure eight shape. In certain Tantric rituals, the *dorje*

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is held in the right hand and symbolizes skillful means, while the *drilbu*, a ritual bell symbolizing discriminating awareness, is held in the left hand. Jampa has cast silver *dorje*, but this is a very expensive process. In the Centre for Tibetan Arts and Crafts, *dorje* are made from copper and brass. Jampa does not often work with these metals, for they must be heated to a higher temperature than silver and gold, and his workshop is very small. Sometimes he fashions tiny silver *drilbu* and *dorje* which are hung on rosaries. Once he received an order from a Westerner for silver *dorje* of Tibetan design, but much larger than normal. "These are difficult orders," Jampa said. "They also ordered very small things, so small it was hard to put traditional designs on them! The big *dorje* were very nice to look at, but strange. I don't know why they wanted this."

Nearly all the *drilbu* and *dorje* in McLeod Ganj shops are brass, of a standardized design, and made in Tibetan workshops in Dehra Dun and Rajpur, sometimes by Indian employees. Mireille Helffner (1985) constructed a typology of *drilbu* by examining fifty examples in museum collections. Comparing the combination of various elements in the handle and body, she distinguished eight types of handle and eleven types of body. I surveyed ten shops in McLeod in August 1993, and found only three varieties of *drilbu*. Helffner also describes various types of *dorje*, with either three, five, or nine prongs at each end. Nearly all those on sale in McLeod are of the five prong type. While form has been standardized, size may be altered. Some shops, such as the Indian owned Momentos India, offered tiny "dorje"as key chain

Metal crafts are illustrative of conflicting forces of continuity and innovation. As with other Tibetan arts, the CTA, the resurgent monasteries, and the refugee community provide a substantial internal

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market for traditional metal goods. New centers of patronage and training have been established, and production techniques have been preserved to a large degree.

Those artistic changes that have occurred reflect the political and economic forces impinging on the refugees. Jewelry has been simplified and cheapened as the refugees were impoverished, socially reorganized, and "modernized." With the destruction of the political and economic structures supporting the old aristocracy, new ideas of social status and appropriate display have taken hold, and the current Dalai Lama discourages ostentatious adornment. The heavy jewelry of the past will probably never be revived for mundane use. However, as refugee incomes rise and new students master the metal crafts, there appears to be a revival of an elite market in smaller jewelry and in ritual objects, such as butter lamps and charm boxes, which produce merit and protection, display wealth, and assert identity and faith.

At the same time, there is also pressure in another direction. The availability of cheap Indian labor, the desirability of providing goods that any refugee can afford, and the growth of an expanded market of external consumers provide incentives to increase the speed of production, decrease the price, and standardize goods. Inexpensive, nearly identical ritual objects such as *dorje* and *drilbu* are mass manufactured, often by non-Tibetans, and sold as functioning ritual objects to the internal market as well as to foreigners as souvenirs, decorations, New Age fetishes, and in the case of the author, paperweights. Some forms have been appropriated and completely resized as completely secular "tourist arts."

A split market has developed in metal crafts, with higher quality, lower volume production of what Graburn (1984) calls "traditional

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embedded" goods on the one hand, and the production of lower quality, higher volume "souvenir novelty" goods on the other. At the high/traditional end of the spectrum, producers are generally indigenous artisans, while at the low/modified end producers are often non-Tibetans.

Distinctions of this type however, are not universally applicable. Individual Tibetan smiths may engage in both types of production simultaneously. External consumers often demand traditional forms for their souvenirs, while Tibetans may only be able to afford the low-end mass produced variety of "functional/embedded" arts. Formal innovations of low- end ritual goods are limited by the spiritual meanings directly tied to specific forms, as well as by the forms role as signifiers of Tibetan origin (an identity that many foreigners wish to consume). Thus, some mass produced and standardized goods, such as *drilbu*, may function ritually for the "internal" audience (and for those outsiders who have partially adopted "internal" cultural practices) while simultaneously functioning as souvenir commodities.

**Caste, Money, and Upward Mobility**

In pre-occupation Tibet, smiths were considered of low *rik* (race, origin). As throughout South Asia, this was particularly true of ironsmiths. There were various rationalizations for their low position. Ironsmiths produced weapons and agricultural tools implicated in the taking of life, a sin in Buddhism whether that life be human or animal. Tibetans held that the earth gods are disturbed by mining, but Ronge notes that it was not, in fact, smiths who mined and processed ore. Ronge speculates that gold and silver smiths, while not held with the same contempt as ironsmiths, were often suspected of amalgamating the gold and

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silver with which they were entrusted, a serious offense since the price of a good was determined as much by the value of the metals within it as by the skill with which it was produced (Ronge, 1978). Ronge notes there was regional variation in the treatment of smiths, both in pre-occupation Tibet and in exile. In the settlements of North India, she observes, there is little discrimination towards smiths, and she points out that many smiths have been quite successful, particularly those who employ Indians in serial production for the tourist market. Ronge reports that old ideas of the low *rik* of smiths are dying out.

This is true to some extent. Although as far as I know, there is no active policy of affirmative action, or any social movement to eliminate caste, the CTA does not recognize *rik* as a basis for differences in exile citizenship or in entitlements. The schools and the (Indian) army are "melting pots" in which differences of *rik* and region are largely ignored. The monasteries, while sometimes organized along regional lines, do not recognize *rik*. The abbot of Namgyal told me that discriminatory social practices contradict Buddhist doctrine, which does not recognize caste.

Still, among the older generation particularly, concepts of *rik* associated with certain occupations survive, and are particularly significant in the choice of marriage partners. A 53 year old woman form the D'ingri region said that while she expected her son to have a "love marriage," she hoped that he would choose "a girl with a little education and good *rik*. No potters, smiths, or killers of animals. Statue makers are not as bad as ironsmiths, but they are still not good. Iron making is bad because they make things like guns and knives that can kill people. Plows also kill things."

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Lasang Tsering, one of the founders of the Amnye Machen Institute for secular Tibetan studies, told me that:

> the older people, especially those in the settlements [are] very hard in their attitudes for marriage and those things. I knew a family, some schoolmates . . . one of our friends was from a low background, and when we visited this family, the old lady always had a separate cup for him. Nobody else used it. It was always washed and kept separately. She couldn't tell him not to come, because we always came together. But she made sure that he didn't sit near the pillow. It was like: "You better know your place, you sit here at the end of the bed, here is your separate cup. You are welcome here because of them."

Such notions survive among some of the "Newcomers" as well. A young friend of mine from rural Kham often mentioned that "statue makers are bad," although he could not explain why. Statue makers, gold, and silver smiths still feel the need to emphasize their difference from ironsmiths, pointing out that they produce beautiful ornaments and objects of devotion. Said one silversmith, "those who work in iron and aluminum are of bad *rik*, but silver and gold smiths are appreciated." Many smiths thus emphasize what one actually makes, rather than one's "origins."

Attitudes are changing as the refugees adopt both a preservation ideology, which values the maintenance of traditional crafts, and a bourgeois democratic ideology valorizing individual choice and merit. Gold and silver smiths in exile are less frequently following a hereditary vocation than in the past. Taking up a craft is generally an economic decision, or the acceptance of whatever opportunity the CTA provides.

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Young smiths claim that notions of *rik* are irrelevant in the choice of vocation or a marriage partner.

Thangka painting, while highly respected and well-paid, is unlikely to make artisans wealthy. Production is individualized and slow, and has not (yet?) been defined as an elite "art" that can fetch very high prices on the Western market. Those crafts -- such as carpets -- that allow for some degree of mass production in factory like settings are more likely to generate significant profits. Metal crafts would appear to fall between these extremes. A few entrepreneurs (in settlements other than Dharamsala) have enriched themselves in the metal arts through standardizing manufacture, employing Indian labor, and marketing to external as well as internal consumers. In Dharamsala, most private smiths work alone or with a family member or apprentice, and are generally of modest means.

Many smiths hope their children will get a good education and perhaps work for the government or go into business. Taking up a craft is often considered a fall-back option. Jampa Samten's career as a silversmith provided a "middle level" income. "There are so many doing business," he said. "Sweaters, shops, gold and silver . . . . some stay in the middle, others get rich. Hotel people do good business." To get rich from crafts, Jampa thought, you had to have people working under you.

One smith, Kelsang, stands out as an exception. Kelsang demonstrates that exile and tourism have opened up new possibilities for taking up crafts, new opportunities for profitable investment, and new avenues to upward mobility.

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Kelsang invented himself as a smith, hired others to work under him. and invested his profits in a hotel. He is now one of Dharamsala's nouveau riches, his status inflated through social and religious donations. I spoke with Kelsang one evening in his workshop on the bottom floor of his hotel. A few employees were working alongside him as we spoke, and began passing a bottle of whiskey around as the working day came to an end.

Although some of Kelsang's kin worked in brass, his father was a trader, and Kelsang is largely a self-trained artisan. "I learned goldsmith work by myself," he told me, "using my mind! I do all sorts of types of work: carpentry, planning buildings, tailor work. It is a common saying among Tibetans here, if Kelsang can't make it, no one can!" For a time, Kelsang made gold teeth, a skill he says he picked up from watching experienced smiths and dentists.

Kelsang's family left Tibet rather easily, before the 1959 uprising. "My father had a vision while reading a text that the Chinese would come. [Leaving] was like a holiday trip." After crossing into Nepal, he and his father were employed by the Swiss Red Cross to make cow bells from old tin roofs. After his father died, he said, the Swiss were "like parents to me." They came to his aid several times in his varied career, and Kelsang expressed his gratitude frequently during our interview.

For a time Kelsang fashioned Tibetan silver spoons with turquoise that were exported to Switzerland. Later he was advanced a bit of cash and started a small wool spinning business in Kathmandu using the "cheap labor of old women who had just arrived from Tibet." For a few months the business looked promising, but when prices dropped he went bankrupt. The Swiss brought him to the handicraft center in Jawalakhel, and he was given facilities to make spoons and other "things for Injees." The pay, he

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said, was just enough to live. "At that time if you had a full stomach you were satisfied." Kelsang stared copying "things in shops in Kathmandu. They were cheap materials but sold for a good price." He said he had several chances to go to the West, but turned them down so he could send his brothers and sisters to school and "stay close to His Holiness. Of course today, anyone would grab such a chance!"

Kelsang stayed at Jawalakhel for several years, working and drinking a lot of *chang* (Tibetan barley beer). Eventually, a "rich man" he drank with gave him enough money to go to India to see the Dalai Lama. With no passport, Kelsang played cat and mouse with the police on five attempts to cross the border, finally entering India on a train full of ticketless Tibetans.

"The ticket collector at Lucknow asked us to leave, but no one knew Hindi or English, so we only put our hands in prayer and said 'Dalai Lama! Dharamsala! Dalai Lama!' Everyone was crying, even men. They put us out and the police tried to interrogate us, but no one could communicate. After a few days a car was reserved for us and we were sent to Pathankot. There we were given food and put on buses to Dharamsala." Kelsang arrived in Dharamsala "around 1966 or 1967. We had nothing, and I made a tent roof out of burlap bags. The first night it rained very hard and the whole family crowded onto one mattress under the bags. The next morning everything was soaked. The mattress was like a bun soaked in tea!"

Many Tibetans were working on the roads, but "I was too lazy to do that! There was no money for kerosene, so we collected firewood for cooking. I had an idea to make stoves out of butter tins." The refugees

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found them useful, and Kelsang was able to sell them for three times the price of the materials. "It was easy!"

Like many refugees, Kelsang eventually entered the sweater trade. "I had a lot of strange experiences, " he said. "I had to tell a lot of lies and there was a lot of hard bargaining, sometimes leading into fights." Other Tibetans were jealous of his profits, he said, and Kelsang soon wanted to get out of the business and start something new. After two years he sold all his sweaters for 2500 Rs. "This was a good amount in those days, and I thought to get into some independent business." He left for Delhi and began making Tibetan jewelry. "At that time very few people knew how to do Tibetan designs, so I became very popular. I had a gift, a skill, and worked very hard to support the whole family, often working until three or four in the morning. My friend said 'You don't even have the time to take a pee-- you need to put a pipe on it!'"

It was getting late as Kelsang reminisced. One of his workers left for the evening, and Kelsang stopped to talk with a Western couple who had commissioned two rings. They had ordered a gold ring with a topaz setting for the woman, turquoise and coral for the man. Kelsang told me he would engrave "K.S." for Kelsang *Sershok* ( goldsmith) on the inside. "This guarantees they are pure and honest." As the couple left, Kelsang told them "I hope you stay together with your rings for one hundred years. We'll pray for this!" He then offered some free advice on keeping a relationship healthy.

"Thank you, Lama Kelsang!" laughed the young man on his way out.

Kelsang invited me back the following week to finish his story. During the next interview, I kept an ear on a conversation between Kunga,

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one of Kelsang's smiths, and a hotel guest, a tall American woman wearing a very tight white and black net shirt.

"Where were you born?" she asked. "Tibet?"

" No, someplace just like Tibet. Ladakh."

"Wow, you've led such a romantic life!"

Kelsang continued. Having starting his own family, and concerned about the future, he invested his profits in a hotel in Dharamsala. "It is better to invest in a hotel than to lend money to sweater sellers or put money in the bank. If I die the family can have the hotel and live with that."

He started small, with two or three rooms, slowly building around his house. Soon he had ten rooms, and employed both Tibetan and young Nepali and Indian workers. His jewelry business also prospered, and he began taking orders from Westerners, some of them clients of his guesthouse. "I started using gas torches, which I never saw in Tibet, but I heard they had them in the West. Now I am thinking of making a heating system for the hotel."

It was eight in the evening, and Kelsang told me it he wanted to end the interview early. The next time, he said, he wished to tell me of his "contributions and initiatives in the community." Tibetan Buddhist belief demands that objects and services be commissioned for the accumulation of merit. The production of devotional objects and monuments establish merit making "machines" that continuously amass virtue for the individual who commissioned them, but also spread benefits to the community at large, and evetually to all sentient beings (Chapela, 1992). It is somewhat analogous to "trickle down" theory, in which individual profit automatically enriches society at large. Kelsang's economic success in

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crafts and tourism has allowed him to sponsor devotional projects that provide local employment and enhance his status. Although there is some gossip and jealousy, Kelsang has become something of a big shot.

The next time we visited his hotel, Kelsang served tea to my wife and me in his living room as he continued watching Star TV, Rupert Murdoch's satellite network. Several children scampered about his rooms. He told me in some detail about his sponsorship of various education projects, buildings, and especially his expansion of the stupa in the middle of the McLeod Ganj market, "which accumulates merit for the whole community." I had heard several refugees refer to Kelsang as the "owner of the stupa," although it stands on municipal land. Kelsang told me he had to fight the opposition of Indian bureaucrats, and was once threatened with imprisonment. Building was interrupted several times, and when it was completed, he was told that if he didn't tear it down, Municipal laborers would.

"I said I would take pictures and advertise this, so go ahead and destroy it! Because of His Holiness people are coming here and in the long run it is for the benefit of your people." Since then, he said, he has had no complaints, and he pays for improvements whenever he has the money.

After the last of our interviews, Kelsang ushered my wife and me into his prayer room, where he had a silver prayer wheel spinning near 39 statues in wood cases, including a large Shakyamuni Buddha and 21 Drolma (skrt. Tara). These statues were cast in Nepal, Kelsang said, but he had personally gilded and ornamented them. Two identical framed photos of the young Dalai Lama contrasted with a small triptych of Shiva, Durga, and Vishnu. "Our religion comes from India, " he explained. "They must have some meaning." I counted 30 silver butter lamps. One of

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them, he pointed out, was a "unique design I did myself." It was brass with silver ornamentation and a gilded bowl. Lining the walls were 125 silver offering bowls, their water colored with saffron.

It was the most ornate private room I had seen in Dharamsala. I thought to myself that tourist dollars are being transformed into materialized merit, and will keep Tibetan artisans busy for the foreseeable future.

**Tailors: From Brocades to Backpacks**

When functional ritual objects such as thangkas and metal crafts are sometimes sold to foreign consumers, the internal market and the religious significance of their motifs appear to limit technical and artistic innovation. Secular production, however, may be radically transformed, as the example of Tibetan carpet weaving has demonstrated, and the developments in tailoring described below will reiterate.

Those who profess the desire to preserve traditional crafts are sometimes most responsible for change.

The Namsa Chenmo (great master of clothes) was the head of the government tailoring *bzo khan* ("guild") in Lhasa. In the fall of 1993, I interviewed Gyeten Namgyal, the 83 year old former Namsa Chenmo, in his rooms at Namgyal Monastery. His son, a monk, sprawled across a bed listening, and occasionally helped his father remember details or display examples of his work. Like many master craftsmen, Gyeten Namgyal is very proud of his skills and the respect it afforded him in the old society.

Gyeten Namgyal was born into an aristocratic family that served Demo Rinpoche, the regent for the 13th Dalai Lama during his minority.

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After the Dalai Lama took control of the state, the regent was arrested for conspiring to kill him with black magic (Goldstein, 1989). Demo's *labrang* (personal estate) was confiscated and some of his supporters jailed. Gyeten Namgyal's grandfather died soon after, in 1898, and his grandmother directed his father to learn tailoring.

Gyeten Namgyal was born in 1912. He was taught to sew from the age of eight, and soon accompanied his father to work on commissions outside the home. He often made tents used on picnics and outings, and eventually learned to make appliqué thangkas. In those days, he recalled, harsh punishment and humiliation were part of the training. At the age of 12, he joined the government *bzo khan* . Tailors were tested after their apprenticeship, and the best entered the *bzo khan.* There were about 130 *bzo khan* tailors of some 700 total in Lhasa. These tailors, Gyeten said proudly, were very respected, and wore a yellow hat displaying their status as government workers. The five top tailors were the "Chenmo," and the very best was given the title "Namsa Chenmo" and directly served the Dalai Lama. Under him were two Chenmo and several lesser tailors. "If a tailor was very good in some other city," Gyeten said, "he might be called Chenmo, but this was not the same as in Lhasa!"

The salary, Gyeten said, had been stable for so long that it was very low, so the tailors protested, and the government taxed the private tailors to pay those in the *bzo khan.* All tailors needed the permission of the *bzo khan* to work in Lhasa. "Those that worked privately made more money," Gyeten remembered, "but those in the guild had respect and a good reputation." They were also paid in wheat and other goods. When they were not busy with government orders, they could take private commissions which were generally paid in cash.

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Another tailor master told me that private work was normally conducted in the home of the client. Tailors would stay two to three days, but sometimes up to two weeks. The present Dharamsala Namsa Chenmo, Tenzin Choeden, said proudly that "tailors had very high respect! Not much different than the other craftsmen. If we went to people's house we were given the best room and food." Although they were not paid as much as thangka painters, who normally worked in their own homes, tailors received food in their clients' homes.

Gyeten Namgyal was appointed Namsa Chenmo when the former master had a conflict with the Kashag (government cabinet) around the time of the present Dalai Lama's installment. He was only 22 years old. "This kind of opportunity at so young an age has never happened before in the history of Tibet!" Gyeten said. "When I was young, I could do anything."

As Namsa Chenmo, he made many fine embroidered thangkas including one made of hundreds of meters of high quality Chinese silk brocade. It took sixty tailors three months to complete. The thangka was displayed on the thirtieth day of the second month of the Tibetan calendar. "This thangka originated in the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama. I made the last one! It's still at the Potala but the Chinese won't display it." At this point in the interview, his son unrolled a beautiful embroidered thangka of Sakyamuni Buddha. I noted that at the bottom, Gyeten Namgyal had stitched in his name and age.

During the rebellion in March, 1959, Gyeten went to the Norbulingka where thousands of Tibetans had gathered to protect the Dalai Lama. Hearing that there would be a long life ceremony on around the 18th of March, he thought the Dalai Lama would not leave until then, and

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went to stay with his mother in Lhasa. When he returned to the Norbulingka, the Dalai Lama had already escaped. After the rebellion was suppressed, Gyeten was arrested and Chinese officials encouraged the poor to beat him. He was hit on the face and back and was soon covered in blood. Then he was stripped, and left for dead.

He survived, and when a Chinese officer discovered he had been the Namsa Chenmo, he was given work in a sewing center in prison, where he often spent eighteen hours a day sewing for the officers. He was released in 1962, but had to "wear the black hat of a reactionary." He was watched constantly, and performed menial jobs, laboring in the fields or cleaning toilets for little or no pay. In 1969, he joined a sewing co-operative. Although some of the other tailors there had been his apprentices, and he was given "the important work," he earned very little, laboring "under pressure from Chinese officials and collaborating noble families."

After Mao's death in 1976, restrictions were eased and the reactionary hats abolished. He was able to interact more freely and began taking religious commissions once again. In 1980, fearing that his "son would grow up bad in China," he obtained visas to visit India for pilgrimage, and now lives near His Holiness.

Gyeten Namgyal has only made a few thangkas since he arrived in exile. "Not a single real master tailor is left except for me," he said. "They have all died or were left in Tibet. In exile they are not enthusiastic and are lazy in a sense. So it's difficult to have the quality we had in Tibet. . . . The times have changed. In Tibet we talked about the quality of the work. Here we talk about how much you earn."

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Tenzin Choedar, the present Namsa Chenmo, was one of Gyeten Namgyal's apprentices. He teaches 15 students at Namgyal Monastery. The training period now is four years, but many do not last that long. Working for the Dalai Lama does not occupy them full time, so they also work for the monastery, take private orders now and then, and sometimes make souvenirs for important Western visitors.

"The clothes for his Holiness were very different in the past," Tenzin Chodar said. "Everything was in brocade, but now nothing. We have lost the sense of brocade and jewelry and aristocratic charm. These days that is just an antique costume. Some old lamas might wear these brocades on some occasions, but His Holiness and his tutors, since 1959, they do no wear these clothes which display wealth. The aristocrats used to wear things you see now at TIPA operas, but now it is just costumes. Nowadays people do not have so much jewelry, and those outfits really need the jewelry! TIPA costumes -- we don't use real silks and jewelry, it's just to keep the image alive. Whatever we had has been crushed by the Chinese."

The recruitment, training, techniques, and products of Tibetan tailors have been completely transformed in exile. CTA tailors continue to fashion (modified) Tibetan clothes and other traditional items, but they also produce backpacks and other goods marketed to Western travelers. Some tailors are now engaged almost entirely in the production of new goods with "Tibetan motifs" -- designed by Westerners -- for the export market. Such production supports CTA cultural and social institutions, and advertises the Tibetan cause internationally, but it has turned many Tibetan tailors into somewhat alienated pieceworkers newly regimented by deadlines and production targets.

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Forty-five students were at work in the tailoring section at Upper TCV when I conducted interviews there in July, 1993. The students, 75% of them female, begin their training by sewing school uniforms, then move on to monastic robes, chubas (Tibetan dresses and men's shirts), and thangka brocades. Their teacher, Lhakchung, had been a member of the Gyantse government guild in old Tibet, and contrasted his training to that of his students.

Lhakchung's parents were farmers who had worried that he was ill suited to agricultural labor, so they brought him to a tailor master with whom he lived for six years with three other students. "There was no system of payment for the master. My parents' approached him with *chang* (barley beer) and farm products. They sent food. For three years we were not paid, then after that we began to earn. Before we left him, we could bring a *kata* (a white scarf) and request permission to leave. I left him after six years and joined the guild. The guild members were the best, the most experienced. The main purpose of the guild was to work for the nobles and government, but also to help one another. Even the tailors who were not members paid fees and were looked after if they were sick. Two to three times a month we worked for the government, otherwise we worked privately. I would go to the home of a family and work for several days, or even a few weeks. Poor families invited only a few tailors, but rich ones might invite fourteen or fifteen. We were paid a fixed price per day and given food and tea. What experienced tailors earned was considered a good salary."

At TCV the students are paid pocket money for the first year, and in the second through fourth years begin earning "according to how much they work." After the fourth year "they are given a sewing machine,

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scissors, and ironing board and can go home or open a tailor shop. Sometimes they stay and work here, or work for the Charitable trust of His Holiness." Those that stay at TCV earn 50% of the profits from their goods, and earn form 300 to 600 Rs. a month. "Private tailors can earn more. . . . In Tibet, if someone was brought up as a tailor, he was a tailor until he died. But here, twenty or thirty percent don't remain tailors. They go into petty business or help at home or just lose interest and do something else."

The retired TCV master, Pema Wangyal, agreed that the tailor's career is not what it once was. There is no *bzo khan* or *kyiduk* of tailors in Dharamsala. The schools train the students, but many do not stay long enough to become very skilled. "It takes a long time to become a tailor, a full seven years to become really confident. But these days there are so many tailors in town. There are a lot of Newcomers who study only two years and can only stitch across and don't know the value of the material. They waste a lot."

"In Tibet," he remembered, "almost every tailor was the child of a tailor. In India, no one who is well off is interested in this work. Only bad students become tailors." Wangyal told me he had two children in the United States. "They are not interested in tailoring. Because of the changing world I want them to take an interest in studies. A lot of young Tibetans here have the image of a tailor as just able to support themselves. But one who studies can support themselves and do something for society."

The students at TCV now make new products like bags and purses that are sold in the TCV shop. "I am interested in new designs," said Wangyal. "I look at books, postcards. But I feel very lazy when I actually work. The old designs I know by memory. It is easier to teach from

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experience." He has, however, copied a few designs he saw on sale to tourists in McLeod Ganj shops. Lhakchung told me that the one of the most profitable items sold in the TCV were Tibetan jackets that had been modified for the tourist market.

"In Tibet the collar and body were almost the same," he said, "but the sleeves have changed. The Injees came, and young Tibetans said it wasn't comfortable. Sponsors would come and discuss this, so I changed it. This kind of jacket was mostly worn by women. . . . These jackets are now for men and women. They are mostly ordered by the West and we ship them."

The Handicraft co-op in McLeod Ganj has a small tailoring section across the street from the carpet factory. On the day my friend introduced me to one of the head tailors, Lhakpa Tsering, a man in his early thirties. There were eleven men and women on sewing machines making cloth door covers. (These covers are a decorated curtain, generally made of white cloth, with blue and yellow appliqué). Mr. Tsering's father was a tailor in the D'ingri region, and he learned to sew by hand working with his father making woolen garments and Tibetan boots. Although he designed some of the co-op's most popular items, Lhakpa Tsering earned the same salary, 26 Rs. per day, as the other tailors. Tsering has designed Western jackets and vests with Tibetan decorative motifs, as well as day packs, handbags, and passport bags. Sometimes the co-op recycles materials from old Tibetan *chuba* (dresses). "They are of thicker, better quality wool than local Indian or New Zealand wool," he explained. He showed me a backpack the co-op was making, an "ethnic" good of the type that could just as easily have come from a tourist market in Nepal or even Peru. It was a black Indian-wool bag with a string cinch at the top, two small pockets in front, and

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multicolored stripes along the top and bottom. Sometimes they are decorated using the material from *pangden* (married women's aprons). Mr. Tsering the showed me passport bags selling for 50 Rs. that "only Injees buy," and money belts fashioned out of "Bhutanese" fabric (machine made in Amritsar). The most popular item, he said, was a shoulder bag made with *pangden* material and fastened with imported zippers. "You use Indian zippers one or two times and they are finished!" he laughed. The co-op also makes coats that resemble Tibetan clothes, he said, 'but no there is no male or female design; they are the same." The buttons are wooden and are "Tibetan style. Indians make them."

In addition to innovative new products, tailors in exile produce "traditional" goods that have changed considerably. One tailor laughed when he told me that "the shape has changed and the designs are very different, but still we call them Tibetan!" Women's chubas, said Lhakchung "have changed completely. Men's chubas are very much the same." This difference, a reversal of the more common situation in which "Fourth World" women generally dress more traditionally than men, is an exception that proves the rule. Men don chuba on special occasions, often over Western shirts and pants. For many women, however, the chuba remains everyday wear.

"The chuba we make here didn't exist in Tibet at all," said Lhakchung. "In Tibet, they were usually heavy wool and completely open to one side." They were like a heavy coat but, he said, "I heard that they could blow up in the wind, so it was less convenient! Only old women wear them. The new ones we started in 1961. They are influenced by comfort."

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Refugee women certainly prefer them. It is a lot warmer in India, and the new chuba are made with cotton or synthetic blends, resembling ankle-length jumpers that tie in the back. As I spoke with Lhakpa Tsering, my Tibetan tutor jumped in to observe that the new chuba "make a more beautiful body! I had an old one from my mother," she said. "We had no new clothes and I wanted to go see His Holiness. It was so heavy and black I couldn't walk. I cried when I put it on."

Techniques and materials have also changed, but not for the better according to the old tailors. The old masters are no longer carefully sewing for aristocrats, but overseeing young tailors fashioning school uniforms and tourist souvenirs. Sewing machines have increased the speed of production while reducing the quality. Gyeten Namgyal complained about the workmanship on thangka brocades and clothing for devotional statues. "I find many mistakes in the thangka shops with the brocades and with the statue's clothing.," he said. "I offered [to a particular group] to teach them for free, but they won't listen and just do it their way because it's quick."

Lhakchung also claimed that quality had declined:

> Brocade was much better in Tibet. We worked with it by hand. Here it is done by machine. The designs are almost exactly the same, but the material is not as good. In Tibet we used brocade from Mongolia, China, and Varanasi, but here it all from Varanasi. Before it was all silk, but now they mix in all sorts of things and claim it is silk. Here we use foot-driven machines for sewing. In Tibet it was very rare to have a machine. If there were twenty guild members, maybe four or five had machines. But hand stitching was stronger.

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Pema Wangyal agreed. "Quality was much better in Tibet. People knew the designs and the stitches, and could see even a small mistake. Here there are too many orders and we don't have time to check the work."

**Sewing Tibetan Culture Far and Wide**

Ethnic crafts are a key source of income for many landless refugee communities. Traditional artisanship-- skilled, slow, high quality-- while sometimes offering relatively high returns to artisans, limits the scale of production. Fortunately for entrepreneurs, ethnic crafts need have little actual continuity with any indigenous artistic traditions to function as signifiers of identity on the world market.

New commodities not only generate income, but sometimes educate consumers about a community and its political struggles. Consumers benefit as well: the purchase of something for oneself is transformed into a charitable and socially responsible act. Simmel (1950) long ago predicted that expending time on causes would be replaced by spending money. It's more convenient.

In 1991, the CTA's Handicraft Development Board entered a partnership with the Washington based for-profit dZi Corporation. According to the CTA's Integrated Development Plan:

> the product development strategy is to upgrade and adapt existing Tibetan crafts to reinterpret traditional Tibetan motifs into new products suitable for Western markets without losing their meaning and traditional value. dZi's marketing program thus emphasized the story of the Tibetan artisans to encourage product development."

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> Retailing T-shirts, wind chimes, coats, bags and other new goods included "educational tagging . . . a secondary result of this approach is that consumers also learn about Tibetan culture. [Planning Council, 1992: 98]

The CTA and dZi was assisted by SHARTE, a Bombay based NGO, in the development of new goods. In April 1993, I spoke with JoAnn Martini, a dZi Corporation marketer and designer, who was leading one of two annual workshops in Dharamsala to train tailors in the production of garments for the dZi line.

Ms. Martini told me the tailors were somewhat pressed to meet production deadlines. Success had exceeded expectations. The garments had appeared in numerous mail-order catalogues, and dZi had participated in three American trade shows the previous year, selling the entire inventory of 4350 hats, 732 sweaters, 660 belts, 180 winter bags, and 1356 vests and jackets. Like many Westerners who work with the CTA, however, Martini's professional expectations conflicted with those of the Tibetans. She felt that expansion was limited by conditions in Dharamsala.

The tailors were mostly from the Centre for Tibetan Arts and Crafts. "The work is simple, low level stuff," she said. "Retirees can do it. We're cutting down the number of different designs to increase production. The problem is that the CTA is always transferring people, and trainees move from one place to another, so there's always new faces. The demand is there, but because of the lifestyle here, they can't work in the crazy pace we're used to. It puts a big strain on people." Martini noted that Indian labor would be cheaper, "but we are committed to the Tibetan cause. On the other hand, we have to stay in business." She thought the CTA

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government wage scale was "rigid." The tailors needed to be paid by the piece, she said, "because no matter how skilled, they need incentives."

We turned to the subject of design. I was told that SHARTE and dZi wished to be "sensitive" to the Western market. Tibetan "elements" would be retained, but garments had to conform to Western styles and sizes. dZi would remain open to Tibetan input and values, however. "For example," Martini said, "I wanted to market the wood blocks for printing prayer flags. We were told they couldn't sell those even though I loved the calligraphy on them."

The biggest seller of the Winter line was the "Shaman coat." This was a heavy brown wool coat made with embroidered flowers and "Bhutanese" fabric. It had what she characterized as a "Southwesty feel." Many of the jackets and bags being made used "yarta" fabric made by Tibetans in Dehra Dun. The refugees had learned to make this fabric in Bhutan (before leaving in 1984 when those who refused citizenship were expelled). The biggest market for the Shaman coat is 30-50 year old women in the Midwestern United States. There is also a more "feminine version," said Martini, a "Shaman Jacket" with beads off the shoulder.

My friend, an American woman, interrupted the interview.

"OK, so Tibetans are making Western clothes. How Tibetan is that?!"

"Well, you find this [Tibetan] stuff charming in India, but who's gonna buy this in the Midwest? But, like wrap skirts are popular, so we took the top off a traditional chuba and now have a wrap skirt."

Ms. Martini demonstrated by wrapping a black skirt around herself. It looked good, but not particularly Tibetan. She explained that "authentic"

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*design* was a "lower priority," but they wanted to keep the *production* process traditional.

"Buyers in the U.S. come to look for unique garments, not whether it's Indian or Indonesian," she noted. "They're always looking for something new. It's flattering that they are drawn to the look first, not to the charity case. But then with tags and explanation, some get interested and are quite supportive."

Ms. Martini gave me one of the tags that accompany their goods. It explained that the design on the cloths had been "inspired by patterns found on the robes of deities and saints in Tibetan 'thangkas' or Buddhist paintings," along with instructions for care. On the back it read in part: "Our products are almost exclusively designed and produced by Tibetan refugee artisans. . . . By purchasing items that are authentically made by Tibetan refugee artisans, you help to support their families and to preserve their culture in exile."

The Losel Doll project is perhaps the type case of a "post-modern" use of Tibetan crafts -- new goods invented and consumed by foreigners to represent "traditional culture," advertise the refugee cause, and make a few bucks besides. Kim Yeshi, a Westerner married to Kalon Kelsang Yeshi (then the CTA Minister of Culture) started the project to earn money for the Drepung Loseling monastic college in Karnataka. In 1991, she wrote, twelve monks were living together adapting skills in tailoring, woodcarving, and ritual butter sculpture to fashion dolls with clay heads on frame bodies, dressed in Tibetan regional and occupational costumes. Like Cabbage Patch dolls, each doll carries an "authentication card" with its name and number in the series.

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The dolls were sold and exhibited at the American Museum of Natural History in New York in the Fall of 1991 as part of the "Year of Tibet." Tiffany's also displayed the dolls on Fifth Avenue. At the museum, the dolls were arranged to depict an aristocratic picnic, an opera, the Lhasa market, and monastic dancing. Four monks from Drepung Loseling worked on the dolls as part of the display. The museum added Tibetan artifacts from its collection and photographs from the Jacques Marchais Center for Tibetan Art to provide viewers with a historical and social context for the invented tradition being created before their eyes.

Not everyone was pleased with this exhibit. Aas mentioned in the Introduction, in 1991, I spoke with an involved staff member at the museum. This curator made it clear that "she" was expressing personal opinion, not speaking for the museum. She had found the Westerners involved in the Year of Tibet "extremely unprofessional, arrogant, and difficult, as well as ignorant." Events were badly planned, there were last minute changes, and "too much complaining."

She discussed three problems with the exhibit which neatly sum up the feelings of many uncomfortable with the use of invented traditions to make claims about cultural preservation, and critical of the intertwining of refugee politics with commerce and the status games of the rich and famous in the West.

"First of all," she said, "the museum has a fine collection, one of the best in the world, but in the Year of Tibet, we settle for commercial tourist art! It's kitschy and I find it offensive. I have no problem with modified crafts but it's being presented as what monks do. A Westerner invented this!

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"Secondly, it's a sales ploy for [a particular person's] business. This business sold things in the museum shop and in windows at Tiffany's. They distributed fliers. There was a fight over that."

She remarked the she was very sympathetic to the Tibetan cause, and had no problem with the monk artisans who were used as "living exhibits, though they didn't seem to mind." However, she continued, the "Save Tibet crowd" was exploiting the museum for it's own political and economic purposes. She went to a party thrown by Richard Gere, a celebrity Tibetophile, and found it a "combination of Kathmandu and the Hamptons. . . . Everyone was just too busy hobnobbing. It would have been more persuasive to show Tibetan culture as it was rather than use the museum for a political platform and to advertise goods."

**Tibetworld**

> I really don't like to see this culture getting boxed up. For show. It's not even really for Westerners, it's ideally for *rich* Westerners! For embassy types, for rich Westerners who, maybe, can't take McLeod Ganj. . . . There are enough Disneylands in this world! -- Jamyang Norbu

The Norbulingka in Tibet was the Dalai Lama's "summer" residence. A bit outside old Lhasa, it was a secluded palace surrounded by beautiful gardens. In the Kangra valley, a few miles from Dharamsala, a new Norbulingka is being created. It is also a garden retreat, but it will serve more than the Dalai Lama. According to Me-long, the English newsletter of the CTA's Department of Religion and Culture, the Norbulingka will

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"bring together creative elements, whether in the arts, literature, or philosophy,' both to preserve and to ensure a "positive evolution" of Tibetan culture (Me-long, Spring 1993:13). The Norbulingka will host a residence for the Dalai Lama, a cafe and shop for guests, and quarters for staff and resident students. It will include a temple and both a Centre for Higher Learning, where both Tibetan and foreign students will study Tibetan language, literature, and philosophy, and a Centre for Arts. The Norbulingka also operates a guest house in McLeod Ganj, Chonor House. Like the Norbulingka, it is furnished with many products from the artisan workshops, some of which are on sale. Chonor House will house "special visitors" of the CTA and the Dalai Lama, as well as host conferences and meetings.

According to a CTA document I obtained, the objectives of the Norbulingka include the usual goals of preservation and employment, but also seeks to raise "the Tibetans' appreciation of their art to the level that existed before their exile," as well as instilling in artisans "a sense of quality and re-establish[ing] the work ethic which existed before exile in India" (Department of Religion and Culture, n.d.:2). The document justified the construction of the Norbulingka, which will replace or replicate many of the cultural institutions previously in operation, with an overview of "The State of Art in Exile." This overview emphasized that the present social environment is not conducive to the preservation of artistic quality. It noted the destruction of art in Tibet, the difficulties of making a living as an artisan in exile, and the declining number of master artisans. It also makes an argument that tourism has led to a degeneration of art. Young people in exile, it observes, "are exposed only to the poorest

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examples of Tibetan art, or bad copies from the 'art of the bazaar.'" Attempts to market crafts to the West, it observes, are limited because:

> products do no comply with the taste of an international market. The style, quality and colours simply do no appeal. These products are barely good enough to sell and come very cheap. Poorly paid craftsmen scrimp in their work and for four or five months during the winter abandon their crafts to sell sweaters in the streets of large Indian towns. The result of this is an unreliable and insufficient production that makes any improvement in quality impossible. [ibid.: 5]

The Norbulingka aims both to "preserve" Tibetan arts and direct a positive "evolution" to appeal to an international market. While thangka production will remain largely along traditional lines, the crafts Centre aims to support itself and the Institute at large with "Norling" export crafts. This line of goods include such items as scarves with cloud patterns inspired by thangkas, belts that "harmoniously blend traditional Tibetan design with a modern look," tiger print canvas bags, evening purses with the Eternal Knot appliquéed on silk, woodblock printed greeting cards, address books, and cushion covers (Melong, 1993:18). Many of Norling's products are aimed at more affluent consumers than the young backpackers who frequent McLeod Ganj. Appliqué handbags, for example, were selling for $140.

The Norbulingka complex itself is a fairyland hybrid of Tibetan, Japanese, and Western design and Indian materials and construction. Tibetan architectural embellishments, murals, and furniture have been

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fashioned by Tibetan artisans, while the heavy labor was contracted out to Indians. The grounds were designed by a Japanese, which is quite evident. The writer Jamyang Norbu commented: "Somehow it doesn't strike me as very true. There's something very Hollywood about it. Lost Horizon and all, all those artificial ponds and streams. You can just picture the Zen master walking over the half-moon bridges. We never had that in Tibet!"

The construction of the complex a distance outside Dharamsala is due not only to the price and availability of land there, but also because it shields the Norbulingka from the tourist throngs and the McLeod Ganj market, providing a controlled environment in which to train a new generation of full time artisans. Almost all the artisans in the crafts sections are Newcomers. When I first toured the Norbulingka in February 1993, an American designer told me that it was difficult get Tibetans born in India to work there. The Newcomers had the skills and the work ethic, she said, whereas India born refugees, if they had any interest in crafts, were only interested in high status thangka painting. They want money and they like to hang out with Westerners.

I spoke with Lobsang Kunga, the head tailor at the Norbulingka, who had eight men and nine women working under him. He was paid 65 Rs. a day, while the "students" started at 31-34 Rs. per day, and some earned up to 50 Rs. a day (nearly twice what the handicraft co-op tailors receive). "There's no one in Tibet that doesn't know how to sew," said Kunga. "But they say they know tailoring just to get the jobs, even if they don't. Many of the students are rude, rough -- from Kham. It was a problem in the beginning to try to tell them how to correct mistakes. They would get angry, almost fight, but now it's better. " In the Norbulingka

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artisans can't drink, smoke, gamble, and must report to work on time. "It's very helpful to have this discipline. It helps get things done on time."

During the interview the tailors were embroidering for belts and bags, all of which, Kunga thought, would be exported to the West. Many goods are assembled in various stages in the different crafts sections at the Norbulingka, and some elements are sub-contracted to other companies. For example prototypes for brass fittings for handbags and belt buckles were cast by the Norbulingka's one metal worker, then mass produced in Dehra Dun by a Tibetan company (employing Indian labor?). Embroidery for the bags was designed by Kim Yeshi and the thangka master Tenpa Choepel, who drew them on paper for the tailors to copy. The bags and belts, Kunga thought, were finally assembled in Delhi. I asked Kunga how much he thought the bags would ultimately cost retail. "I have no idea," he said. "Everything is decided by the Religious office and Kim Yeshi. Mostly Westerners will buy them."

Like most Newcomers and orphans granted training, jobs, and housing by the CTA, many of the artisans at the Norbulingka expressed gratitude to the CTA and His Holiness. Unlike the thangka students, however, those in the tailoring section were not always enthusiastic about the work itself.

One young man from Kham told me had received no schooling in Tibet. His parents had done a bit of tailoring so he already had some skill and was given a position at the Norbulingka when he arrived. "In Tibet there are no opportunities for Tibetans. There is no freedom, lots of suffering, no work. "He told me he wanted to see His Holiness, so he escaped Tibet without first telling his family. He had since written but received no reply. He didn't know where the embroidery was destined.

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"Probably for sale, but I don't know. All I know is I have to work." He told me he planned to stay at the Norbulingka "until we get freedom. The work is all right. This is the altarnative I have. I have no skills and it's not so hard."

Kim Yeshi, the Western wife of Kalon Kelsang Yeshi, was one of the pivotal organizing forces behind the Norbulingka, and designed many of the goods marketed by Norling. I asked her a question on the minds of a number of Western and Tibetan critics of the project: why should the CTA invest so heavily in a large, ornate complex in India when the ultimate objective was to return to Tibet?

"I feel it is very important to have connections outside Tibet," she answered. "It's important to be aesthetically pleasing, and to keep open our relations with India." She explained that the Norbulingka would remain the property of the CTA after a return to Tibet, and might have practical functions later on. "The weather on the Plains is so difficult, it's an ideal place for meetings. If this was cheap and temporary we couldn't do that." She also thought that visitors would continue to come to see where the Dalai Lama had spent his exile. I then asked if the center was not replicating the functions of the library. Already the thangka school in the Tibetan Library of Works and Archives had closed, and some grumbled that the Norbulingka was taking over. "I don't feel we are a rival to the library," she said. "The emphasis is different. We will have a much more intensive learning environment." While the library engages many casual tourists who drop in for a class or two, the Norbulingka will provide serious scholars and students the chance for immersion away from the distractions of McLeod Ganj.

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Like most CTA projects, much of the funding for the construction of the Norbulingka came though foreign donation. The new Norbulingka and Chonor House are in part designed to impress, advertise, and sell to well-heeled guests. Ms. Yeshi also hoped that the Norling products could "make arts and crafts self-sufficient and support a Center for Learning which can't support itself." Yeshi said that "a patron is needed to keep up a standard. This [old patronage] system needs to start again. Everything was so junky. The quality was going down. People are willing to pay [more]. . . . It's also a way to advertise to people abroad with a high standard and to attract people with more means to help us. . . . With the rupee devalued it is more interesting to get dollars."

The Norbulingka attempts to subsidize the preservation (or construction) of a certain version of Tibetan culture (that appeals to foreigners) by redirecting production from the lower end tourist market nearby to a higher end export market. By moving production away from McLeod Ganj, inventing new goods designed by and for non-Tibetans, and emphasizing the export market, it further separates producers from the site of exchange and consumption, and partially represents an attempt by "official" elements of the community (who may not be Tibetan) to control the direction and pace of cultural change.

The Norbulingka illustrates the multiple and contradictory paths in the evolution of Tibetan craft production and the status of artisans in exile. Traditional arts are preserved through marketing radically modified crafts. The "quality" of Tibetan culture is threatened by external consumers but also salvaged through foreign intervention and sponsorship. The cultural industries of Dharamsala are key to the struggle to preserve a distinct identity while awaiting a return to the homeland, yet the Tibetans

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are forced to sink roots in India and integrate with the transnational economy.

**The Multiple Lives of Free Floating Tibetan Crafts: A Summary**

The case of Tibetan handicrafts demonstrates, once again, the inadequacy of unilineal theories of capitalist development and unified models of the world economic system (Cook and Binford, 1986; Nash, 1981, 1984, 1993). As with craft production elsewhere, non-capitalist relations of production exist alongside capitalist relations, even when they are linked to an overall capitalist market (Tice, 1995). In Dharamsala private and co-operative production centers, historically continuous or innovative crafts and techniques, and internal, intermediate, and external markets co-exist.

Although I have described many changes due to new external markets, ritually significant arts remain relatively "traditional" in form and technique in Dharamsala. This is in part due to social sanctions limiting commoditization, reinforced locally by the presence of the Dalai Lama and the CTA, as well as by the demands of the internal and intermediate audience (of Western Tibetophiles) who demand "authentic" goods. Tibetans in these arts can earn a good income, and retain relatively high status. The commission system largely maintains face to face contact between producer and consumer, and guarantees relatively secure returns to artisans. It limits the scope of production and the role of middlemen, and thus of capitalist differentiation. However, some artisans in the metal crafts have moved toward standardized production or have invested their craft earnings in more lucrative businesses, becoming petty capitalists.

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Secular arts such as carpet weaving and most tailoring are less constrained by formal requirements and have undergone the most innovation. Artisans in these industries may be transformed into alienated piece workers who produce motifs they do not understand for external markets. These artisans must adjust to new time and production disciplines alien to their previous lives. When these arts are directed to export markets, producers are distanced from consumers to an even greater degree than in tourism, where consumers may sometimes witness production. International vendors and designers gain influence over local buyers and shopkeepers. Returns for entrepreneurs in these industries are risky but can be quite high, while wages for artisans are uniformly low. Entrepreneurs in these crafts may become true capitalists, as they have in Nepal, exploiting the cheap labor of children, single mothers, and old women. Using the labor of ethnic others is most palatable and can be rationalized as providing opportunities to the needy.

Dharamsala is a somewhat unique case, with its social welfare and religious institutions, its co-operatives and schools, Western "witnesses" to Tibetan cultural production, and a significant internal market. These factors have thus far limited the kind of capitalist evolution seen in the Nepalese carpet industry. However, if tourism continues to grow and the CTA attempts to encourage "independence" through private industry and expanding export production, capitalist differentiation may increase. The Norbulingka appears to be replicating the more general split in Tibetan crafts between high volume, lower price production of significantly modified or novel goods, and higher quality, lower volume production of traditional, often devotional, arts. As will be discussed in chapter, this split

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divides producers into artists, who are generally indigenous males, and artisans, who are primarily female and may be non-Tibetan as well.

The status and role of individual artisans of Tibetan crafts has shifted in association with relations of production, design, and marketing specific to each craft. The Norbulingka and other CTA centers serve as sources of production and patronage reminiscent of the old Tibetan government *bzo khan*. As in pre-occupation Tibet, private artisans earn more than those working for the administration. Recruitment is no longer of the most skilled artisans, but of those most in need of employment. The status and income of secular artisans is generally low, and even those in the more highly regarded devotional arts do not earn as much as petty capitalists and traders. New opportunities in education and business draw talented young Tibetans to other vocations, and the arts may become the province of the unskilled, orphans, and Newcomers. Older artisans uniformly complain that Indian born refugees do not have the discipline required to maintain artistic quality. It is considered "patriotic" to help preserve Tibetan culture, but it is also patriotic to advertise Tibetan culture -- and make a good living besides -- selling rather than producing it (Kleiger, 1992).

Jules-Rossette (1984) criticized the myth that "tourist art" is necessarily mass produced, its producers anonymous and alienated laborers. Individual artisans, she demonstrated, may become "image makers" for their communities, assisting the survival of group identity. Sally Price (1989) has written that although "primitive art" remains anonymous for Western collectors, for whom it represents the "timeless traditions" of the Other, skilled artists are well known in their community. However, Jules-Rossette warned, too much success may lead to a loss of indigenous control, and ethnic others may begin producing copies.

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Master artisans were always well known in Tibetan communities, but works of art were not generally signed or certified. This has changed to a degree in exile, both because of a new "individualism" associated with the capitalist democracy the Tibetans are attempting creating in exile, but also as a guarantee of authenticity, a new requirement of the transnational market. Ironically, it seems individual or workshop identity become significant just as producers and consumers are further alienated. In the lower end, secular crafts, artisans are increasingly anonymous, and the "image makers" and producers may be non-Tibetans. Nonetheless, the goods represent the community to the world market.

Commoditization radically recontextualizes cultural forms as consumers are spatially and culturally distanced from producers (Appadurai, 1986). Objects and motifs -- Buddhist symbols, clothing, ritual goods -- function as signifiers of Tibetan culture just as they are grafted onto foreign objects and thrown into surreal combination with other goods on the contemporary mix-n'-match ethnic crafts market. Eventually, culturally identifying motifs and objects may become completely separated from the identity of their producers, completing their journey from culturally embedded "use values" to pure "exchange values" and free-floating signifiers. Authenticity, nostalgia, innovation, and kitsch become indistinguishable.

The Planet Earth catalogue advertised Norling's Tibetan Tiger Dolls in its Holiday, 1995 issue. The dolls, it claimed, are "emissaries of Tibet's endangered culture, dressed in antique costume," which includes a "Free Tibet" patch. "Mother tiger and removable cub from Tibet's Kham forest are handmade in cotton by refugee artisans. Profits benefit the Norbulingka Institute of the Tibetan government, which resides in exile"

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(1995:18). The catalogue also advertises a "Tibetan-Design Rug" which allows us to "set foot in the forbidden world of Tibet." The rug "incorporates the fascinating geometric design and sacred symbols of the Dalai lama's ancient homeland." The rug, however, is not a refugee wool carpet, but "woven of pure cotton in traditional Dhurrie style by India's artisans . . . "(ibid.:30). The following year, the catalogue continues its "Tibetan" offerings with a "Tibetan Red Vest" from Nepal, a Western style vest in black and red with printed hands and *dorje*. A few pages later are found goods form the old Soviet Union, as well "actual standard issue garments worn in China. 100% cotton shirt is stamped with Chinese characters that read, 'Produce Safely'" (1996:50).

I will not presume to judge whether investments in dZi or the Norbulingka are "right" for the CTA, or pass judgment on the aesthetic value of Norling's dolls and other goods. In a strictly economic sense, such moves may not only be of overall positive benefit, but absolutely vital for the continued viability of an expanding refugee community. However, the Norbulingka and dZi arouse questions of "authenticity," which I define in terms of autonomy and the significance of cultural production for those it is supposed to represent.

It may be Western academics like myself who are most troubled by these issues, perhaps due to a residual romanticism regarding the "authentic" Other-as-wholly-Other. Kleiger (1992) has written that long-distance patronage allows Tibetans to profit from the interest and sponsorship of ethnic others while maintaining local cultural autonomy, much as when Tibetan Buddhist institutions sought the patronage of Mongol and Manchu elites. However, as tourism grows and production expands for the export market, this autonomy appears threatened. Most

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Tibetans, however, expressed little concern about Westerners "controlling" cultural production, even when I pushed in the hopes of eliciting a critique. Understandably, most are far more interested in what is occurring in the People's Republic of China. A few, however, are concerned by the simultaneous commoditization and museumification of Tibetan culture, worried that it will die among the next generation except as a sort of nostalgic self-adornment. The writer Jamyang Norbu commented:

> I sort of feel they're moving in the wrong direction. . . . We can't just have Tibetan dolls. This will be how we are seen, you know, as dolls, with the lama, the geshe, the nomad. . . . OK, a few old people, for sentimental reasons, will like it, but the younger generation loses interest in their own culture if they have no stake in it. Then they move to the United States. . . . The preservation thing needs to be thought out. We have to preserve in order to, not in some lifeless form, but with some sort of movement. The culture needs to able to revive itself from time to time. You know with preservation, well I've gotten to the point where I'm bitching all the time. People who know nothing about the arts, people who are not qualified to come anywhere near it, are taking over, just because they love to run things, it's power!

Cultural production is always entangled in relations of power, and in contests over meaning and value. Tibetan refugees must resolve for themselves to what extent they are willing to turn themselves into dolls for Westerners, and to what extent they are willing to shape their cultural productions to the demands of external markets.

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Like the written sign that escapes authorial control, material signs also escape the control of their producers, especially as consumers are distanced from producers. Here in fact lies the appeal of tourist arts -- the plasticity of their motifs and meanings facilitate their passage across geographic and cultural boundaries. Nevertheless, it is possible to "fix" some meaning in the "social life" of handicrafts if we ground our investigations in the lives of producers and the political and economic implications of commoditization, rather than indulging exclusively our fascination with the endless play of their signification.

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# CHAPTER SEVEN
# EXCHANGES I: TIBETAN MERCHANTS

> . . . though there is a regular mercantile class, still almost all the people from time to time engage in commerce. For the Tibetan is a born trader. [Charles Bell, 1928:125]

The degree to which expanded involvement in capitalist markets by crafts producing communities leads to commoditization and class differentiation is highly variable, linked to the wider national and ethnic terrain in which these communities operate, as well as to internal cultural values and conflicts. Relocation and loss of agricultural resources and taxes as the economic bases of power for Tibetan monastic and state institutions has led to a reliance on innovative cultural productions and tourism. This redirection of economic activities has generated new relations of production and exchange, both communal and individual, and new class, gender, and ethnic structures. Ironically, many refugees fleeing the "socialism" of the People's Republic benefit from the CTA's extensive welfare system and have entered quasi-collective production units in exile. A major arena of *private* enterprise is petty trade, a source not only of income, but an avenue of upward mobility, independence from the CTA, and the assertion of cultural identity.

This chapter describes the expansion of the merchant class in exile, the creation of new economic niches, and the Tibetan "spirit of capitalism." It also initiates the description, continued in chapters Eight and Nine, of intertwined class, ethnic, and gender differentiation in part structured by the tourism industry.

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The growing merchant class results and depends upon the commoditization of Tibetan culture. Although this class expresses an individualistic ideology, it is also constrained by community values and institutions which limit the exchange of religious goods, the very goods that most identify the Tibetans transnationally and appeal to foreign consumers. However, despite social and religious limits to accumulation and class differentiation, many Tibetan merchants manage to capitalize on Tibetan crafts and ethnic identity, at the same time manipulating diverse new streams of Western and Indian goods and consumers to their advantage.

**The Expansion of the Merchant Class in Exile**

The British observer, Charles Bell, described pre-occupation Tibetan society as falling "mainly into two classes: the landed gentry on the one side, the peasantry and shepherds on the other. The trading community stands between the two, forming a middle class with middle-class aims, but they have so far little power. There is no strong middle class" (Bell, 1968 [1928]:109). Although there were few important markets except in large cities, trade was extensive and linked agricultural regions to one another and to the pastoral population, as well as to China and to South Asia through the transHimalaya trade. The monasteries were heavily engaged in trade. The government taxed tea, salt, rice and wool, with officials often taking payment in kind at major trading posts (Chapela, 1992). Tibet exported livestock, salt, wool, medicinal herbs, musk and hides, and imported tea, silk, rice, cotton and fruit. Dyestuffs, turquoise, gold, and coral were also imported. Bell observed that:

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> the traders, however, though lacking influence at present, leave their country in greater numbers each year and go further afield. Accordingly the wealth of the mercantile community can hardly fail to increase. Meanwhile the Tibetan Government is expanding its sphere of operation and needs an expanding revenue. It may well be, therefore, that those who have the money will grow in power and influence. [ibid.:109]

Money, remember many refugees, had long been an avenue for social advancement. With it, one could display one's success by commissioning devotional art that enhanced religious merit, in addition to encrusting one's body with showy jewelry. Wealth allowed persons of low station to marry into families of good *rik,* and perhaps to hide one's family origins. Trade was a key avenue for this mobility (Wiley, 1986).

Contrary to early accounts that claimed that the ranks of the refugees were primarily constituted of aristocrats and monastic hierarchs -- an impression partially derived from interviews with the more educated and gregarious refugees -- all the former strata are represented in exile (Forbes, 1989; Kleiger, 1992; von Haimendorf, 1990). Although spiritual incarnations continue to be accorded reverence and privilege and members of the Dalai Lama's family hold many positions of influence, many ordinary refugees are ignorant of their familial or lineage ranking, and the largely hereditary strata of pre-occupation Tibetan are not officially recognized by the CTA. Government service is opened to all with the competence and motivation. Members of all the former classes and institutions, including the monasteries, have adapted to exile in part though trading Indian and Tibetan goods to Indians and Westerners, with the result

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that the once small Tibetan merchant middle class is a majority in some settlements. Tibetan mercantile success is partially due to previous experience in the trans-Himalayan trade. The refugees share the general "flair" of Tibetan peoples for "merging into local ethnoscapes" and markets (Watkins, 1996:11). Tibetan mercantilism is a continuation and expansion of traditional lifeways adapted to a new environment, and remains a source of social advancement. One elderly nun observed that those interested in security join the government and send their children to the Tibetan schools; those who want money become traders and send their children to private schools.

According to the CTA's Planning Council (1992) about one third of surveyed refugees in India work in agricultural settlements and 10% are engaged in handicrafts as a "primary" occupation. 32% were occupied in sweater selling or other trade, with 15% migrating annually. In some settlements, particularly those with no agricultural holdings, participation in migratory trade may reach 60%. According to "rough estimates" by the Panning Council (1993), of some 5,800 Tibetans in Dharamsala, 1000 men engaged in sweater selling as their primary occupation, and 1500 engaged in trade. 1500 women engaged in sweater selling, and 500 in trade as their primary occupation.

The CTA, which aims to preserve construct and preserve a unified Tibetan ethnic and national identity, is ambivalent about the participation of so many Tibetans in trading enterprises that draws them out of the settlements and into prolonged contact with outsiders. The Planning Council's Integrated Development Report states that:

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> the strains of population growth, the decreasing yield from the soil and lack of adequate employment opportunities and attractions, especially for the educated young people, more and more settlers have tended to depend on sweater selling, other petty business and employment outside the settlements, threatening to undermine the very purpose for which these settlements were established. [1992:5]

It continues, noting:

> [sweater selling] is perhaps the largest source of cash income for the community, it takes away a large number of able bodied people from the settlements to urban areas where they live under unhygienic conditions -- often just footpaths of crowded bazaars. The youth who spend a few months every year in the cities also come back with undesirable habits and find life in the settlements slow by comparison. [ibid:72]

During the winter months, Dharamsala empties out and many children are taken out of school. Tsering Topgyal of the Planning council told me that the CTA's new Revolving Fund, which aims to extend money to private entrepreneurs in order to diversify the refugee economy, is reluctant to invest money in sweater selling. In this trade, he said, "the only skills that are learned are bribing Indian policemen. What will they do when we go to Tibet?" However, because some Tibetans assume they will not stay in India forever, and recognize the tenuous nature of their holdings in foreign nations, they are reluctant to invest in risky enterprises

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in India based on fixed capital. Furthermore, sweater selling can be lucrative, much more so than artisan production.

In the early years of exile, a number of Tibetan women knit sweaters by hand. The current sweater trade is overwhelmingly in factory-produced sweaters, most of them synthetic. Tibetans generally buy the sweaters in Ludhiana, the largest knitwear center in India, often on credit extended by Indian manufacturers and wholesalers. One typical merchant, who sells sweaters three months of the year with her husband, told me she buys about 60-70,000 Rs. of sweaters each year. She then sells them in Allahbad in a small stall rented for 350 Rs. a month.

"It's not a business that's enjoyable," she told me. "You get up at 5:00 in the morning and shout and watch. The place is known for thieves and you stay up to midnight on many nights."

One evening during the 1993 monsoon, I spoke with "Jamyang," a young Tibetan who engaged in the sweater trade before going to University. In his large family, one sister works for the government, one brother is a monk, two younger siblings are in school, and another sister runs the family's small shop in McLeod Ganj. She sometimes travels to Delhi and other cities with family members to buy the inexpensive Indian electronic goods, clothes, and trinkets they sell. Their mother does housework, while their father, he said, "does pujas and some business now and then."

"We have all done business, except the monk brother," he said. "We are actually not interested in business, but we have to do it. I actually want to study my whole life, but maybe I have no chance, unless karma favors." Jamynag now sometimes serves as a translator for Western religious scholars.

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Like many Tibetans, Jamyang's parents worked on the roads for several years when they first arrived India. They saved a bit of money, and started making wool sweaters and mattresses. It was hard work and not particularly profitable. They eventually took out loans from Tibetan friends and got into the sweater trade. Jamyang remembered that when they stated buying sweaters in Ludhiana they stayed in "rude hotels," often sleeping on the floor. "Now sometimes I stay with Rinpoches in Five star hotels. It's so funny to me, life's ups and downs!"

Jamyang traveled with his parents to various Indian states, and in 1981 went to Kashmir to sell to villagers there. "People treated me well, gave me food and tea. People were very nice in the villages, but I was afraid. I had all these sweaters and I'm so small! If I sold three or four sweaters, I would then go to the movies. Then my parent get angry, and I would lie!" The business was hard. "People are often rude, and sometimes we had to fight. But if you fight too much you'll lose -- you're not in your own country."

The profits, however, were good, and the family has risen -- with some help from Western sponsors -- from laborers and petty commodity producers into the Tibetan merchant middle class. Although the family of seven lives in three rooms, they now have an Indian servant, a television, and a refrigerator.

**The Market in McLeod Ganj**

Many of those successful in the sweater trade have opened crafts, clothing, and trinket shops in McLeod Ganj, renting them at very low rates from the CTA, which leases the land from the Municipal Committee. Other refugees, with less resources or not willing to lay out a large initial

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investment, operate open air stalls. The Tibetans quickly mastered the South Asian and tourist markets, and many refugees are now engaged in marketing the products of contemporary Tibetan handicraft centers as well as Indian-made copies of Tibetan crafts and petty goods -- many "pirated" knock-offs of Western brands -- such as sneakers, watches, and jeans purchased from Indian wholesalers or smugglers. Although some merchants are small capitalists, commissioning goods from Tibetan and Indian artisans, low paid women knitters, for example, most shopkeepers buy from traveling merchants --Tibetan, Indian, and Western -- and travel extensively themselves, buying and selling goods in Delhi, in Ladakh, and on winter pilgrimages to Bodhgaya.

One family I spoke with operated a small shop they opened from money saved form the sweater trade and a loan from Namgyal monastery. They sold watches and electronic goods, cheap trinkets, and clothes purchased in Ludhiana and Delhi. It was difficult for them to turn a profit, they said, after paying taxes, transport costs, and bribes to Indian officials to let them bring restricted Western goods to Dharamsala. They often lost money on the Indian manufactures. "They aren't very good," the young son told me. "They're often fake, with defects. Indians are the number one copiers!" Such shops depend almost entirely for their sales entirely on Indian tourists, known for their hard bargaining.

Because of limited space but much competition, and with the town relatively empty of tourists during the winter and monsoon months, demand fluctuates tremendously and the scale of most of these petty trading enterprises remains small. With some fifty or more stalls and shops open during the high season, there is lot of repetition on the market. As one young merchant told me, "there is a problem with duplication. As soon as

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you have something new, it's all over town." The profit margins for western style goods are usually fairly small -- sometimes only 2 or 3 to 15 rupees per item. The stall operators generally have small inventories as well, so, as one elderly man said, "this business is just enough to get by and eat." However, as one shopkeeper noted, it provides local employment, independence, and flexibility.

For many, trade is a supplement to other work, a continuation of the multiple economic activities of households in Tibet. My research assistant's landlord, for example, has a tiny stall he operates in good weather, turning over a nice profit whenever he sells one of the few fine objects he offers. He pulled out a purse when I spoke with him, boasting "this purse must be 200 years old!", a claim I doubted. He also had old necklaces of coral and amber on display, and told me that people brought him their antiques to sell when they needed money. "People who trust me come -- they don't just give it to anyone to sell!"

It is increasingly expensive to open shops. One woman told me that in the early 1970's she had opened her shop of an initial outlay of about 40,000 Rs., money she received by selling precious dZi stones her family had brought from Tibet. But as another merchant exclaimed, "Nowadays you must invest about 100,000 Rs.!" Thus, class differentiation may increase as those who began trade early continue to rise economically, while Newcomers, for example, are at a disadvantage.

**Postcard from a Pilgrim**

One afternoon I spoke with a 27 year old monk from Kham who had spread some goods out on the steps of a closed Tibetan crafts shop. The monk was on pilgrimage "to see Bodhgaya and to see His Holiness."

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He had exited Tibet without a visa and paid off border guards, so he had very little money. He was now supporting his travels by selling a few things obtained from the Gyuto monastery in Arunachal Pradesh, from other Newcomers, and from an old Tibetan woman in Dharamsala. If he made enough money he hoped to continue his pilgrimage to the holy sites in Nepal before returning home. I asked him if it was appropriate for a monk on pilgrimage to do such business. "When you have no money, there's no alternative; you have to live!" Commenting on the Westerners he has seen since leaving Tibet, he said softly: "They look very happy with no problems. When I see them I think of all our suffering in Tibet."

The monk was selling a typically varied array of goods that reflects the diverse cultural streams into and out of Dharamsala. He was offering:

1 sleeping bag
1 pair of used blue jeans
1 American flag T-shirt
1 sleeveless T-shirt
2 red cotton tank tops
1 silk vest
7 brightly colored synthetic blankets
2 synthetic polyester coats
2 Gyuto woven bags
2 nylon windbreakers
1 piece of Bhutanese cotton fabric
1 leather bag with a Grateful Dead insignia
4 brightly dyed Tibetan carpets

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**The Crafts Market**

Market vendors may be regarded as culture brokers, serving as communication links between buyers and producers, and simultaneously as an exploitive bourgeoisie, middlemen profiting from the separation of producers and consumers (Graburn, 1984; Jules-Rossette, 1984; Steiner, 1990). The petty merchants of Dharamsala play such roles in a minor way. I found the merchants in Dharamsala quite open as to the source of their "Tibetan" crafts. There are numerous competitors and possible business partners, including traveling Indian merchants as well as Westerners who sell crafts and jewelry to support their travels or religious studies. There is also competition from the CTA's production centers and shops. Buyers in Dharamsala may select from a variety of outlets, including -- if they have the time -- commissioning crafts directly from local artisans. Local mercantile profit margins are relatively low. Wealth is accumulated in greater measure when profits are invested in petty capitalist enterprises and/or used to expand businesses beyond Dharamsala, often through kin networks in Nepal, Tibet, and the West, taking advantage of exchange rates and differentials in the local costs of production to retail prices abroad.

When the Tibetans first arrived in Nepal and India, their assets were limited to what they had managed to carry over the mountain passes. Desperate, and ignorant of the monetary value of their heirlooms, many sold priceless antiques and precious gems for a pittance. The most valuable goods are often pulled into the commodity sphere through what Steiner (1990) calls "extractive bargaining." In this exchange the middleman lures valuable and culturally significant objects into the commodity sphere by taking advantage of economic desperation and/or the seller's ignorance of exchange values on the wider market. In reselling the object, the

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middleman may then take advantage of the consumers' ignorance of local values. Thus extractive bargaining and resale is often tied to ethnic difference, with the merchant bridging cultural gaps and taking advantage of a foot in each world. Refugees, with only those assets they can carry or produce -- often "ethnic goods" -- are likely to be targeted by the extractive bargaining of merchants and bargain and novelty hunting travelers. A Western retailer of ethnic and New Age goods, on a sweep through Asia in search of goods for her store in Cincinnati, advised me that Thailand was a particularly good place to do business. "Northern Thailand is just so culturally rich. You know, there's a lot of refugees there -- Cambodians, tribals, Chinese. So there's a lot of stuff there."

Tibetan refugees were victims of extractive bargaining on a massive scale when they left Tibet in poverty, hawking their family valuables to pay for food. Having assimilated to and largely mastered the growing market in their goods, they now sometimes engage themselves in extractive bargaining with poorer refugees, newcomers, pilgrims, and members of Tibetan Buddhist communities -- such as Zanskaris or rural Ladakhis -- that are only now being penetrated by tourism and foreign consumers. However, the scale and profitability of extractive bargaining is limited by cultural kinship and spiritual values that limit the sale of sacred items like thangkas, as well as the diminishing number of antiques, their rising price, and the dominance in Dharamsala of low-budget consumers.

Today, genuine antiques are difficult to locate, and sell for considerable sums. This stimulates new production as the demand of Tibetan crafts continues to grow. While some of the better supplied shops in Dharamsala offer a few antiques, Tibetan objects brought by pilgrims or Newcomers, and goods bought from Ladakhis or Zanskaris, much of the

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"Tibetan" crafts for sale are actually manufactured to order in small Tibetan and Indian workshops in Delhi or Rajpur.

Karma introduced me to a middle aged merchant who told me that when she started her business, most of her inventory was purchased from Tibetans. "Injees bought them all, and also Tibetans from the West. It was a good business." However, she continued, "their things are finished now, so mostly we buy from Indians. They make new creations out of Tibetan taste." She said the Indians could "make things look old," but that genuine antiques were hard to find and very expensive.

As the merchant offered butter tea, I noticed a large ornate teapot on the shelf. It had been made in a workshop in Delhi. She had bought it for 1800 Rs., and was selling it for 2200 Rs. She also had some beautiful fabrics from Rajasthan hanging along the door. These are another rather upscale item, and she was selling them for 1800-2500 Rs. "Tibetans never buy these, only Injees," she said.

My translator added: "This is very fashionable now."

A young Western couple was eyeing the fabrics admiringly, but gulped with wide-eyed surprise when they heard the price, and left quickly. Meanwhile two young Tibetan nuns looked at prayer beads, focusing on the plastic versions that cost 20 Rs. The merchant offered an array of rosaries, some wood, some glass, some bone. "Injees buy the expensive ones, and Japanese, " she said. The two nuns watched me with interest as I scribbled notes, giggling and turning away when I glanced at them.

"Nothing is made here by Tibetans, except a few thangka knobs and some Rangzen ["Freedom"] bracelets."

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My translator Karma and I went on to another shop, where we were again served butter tea by an elderly woman. I asked about some metal bracelets she had on display. "I'm not sure if these are really Tibetan," she said. "I never saw them in Tibet. Tibetans don't buy them very often. Injees buy them, or Indians from good families and Tibetans doing business abroad."

Among the items in her shop were teapots, offering bowls, metal and glass jewelry boxes, "Bhutanese" fabric vests from Delhi, prayer beads from Amritsar and Bodhgaya, woven bags and scarves from Varanasi, sandalwood bowls from Saranpur, incense from Tibetan factories in Delhi and Dharamsala, and wool hats and shawls from Nepal or knitted by local Indians.

"Nothing is made by Tibetans," she said.

Some 20% of her profits come from rings and earrings, most of them made in Jaipur, an Indian jewelry center, or in Indonesia. Like most such shops, she also sells heavy Tibetan rings (or made from "white metal" alloy) and turquoise (or turquoise powder with binders). She buys most of her jewelry in Delhi or from Western travelers. "The Hippies in the '70s used to sell clothes but not anymore," she explained, now many bring Indonesian rings and earrings which circulate widely on the market. "There is lots of petty Injee business." She estimated a profit margin of about 30% from jewelry, which compared favorably with her winter sweater business.

This merchant also had a few dZi stones for sale. dZis are agates that had been painted with an alkali and fired. Centuries ago, dZis were either imported into Tibet or the technology was lost. They were either found or passed on within families. Various legends describe the stones'

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supernatural origins and protective influence. They are most valuable if they are unbroken, shiny with a good color, and especially if they have a "nine-eyed" pattern. dZi stones that are broken or have an incomplete design may still fetch a high price on the current market. They were already expensive in the early part of the century; a nine eyed dZi was sold for 1000 Rs. in 1933 (Ebbinghouse and Winsten, 1982).

The shopkeeper mused about a three-eyed dZi. "Some time ago I could sell it for 150,000 Rs. ($5000), now maybe 400,000 Rs. if it had good color and no defects!" She had sold one three years prior for 120,000 Rs., but now thought she could get two or three times that. "To do a dZi business you need a lot of money, then you can make a lot of money also. Tibetans buy these. If Injees ask they are shocked at the prices!"

Driving up prices is the fact that "wealthy" Swiss of North American Tibetans and some foreigners have been buying them up. "Many people from Taiwan buy dZi stones," said the merchant, "so now they are very rare and expensive. They have been taken forever and now Tibetans can't find them!"

One afternoon, Karma introduced me to his friend, Tashi, a 27 year old merchant. Tashi's parents are basically retired, his oldest brother is a monk, and his other siblings are in school, so Tashi is responsible for the family business. He runs a tidy and well-stocked shop with large glass windows, favorably located on a corner near the bus stand. Tashi told he thought the family pulled in some 100,000 Rs. ($33,000) a year from the shop. The family does not need to engage in secondary enterprises. In the winter months, instead of selling sweaters, they go on pilgrimage and pray.

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As I began to survey his inventory, he interrupted the interview to attend to some Western customers. A scraggly young British man was blowing into every flute in the store, trying to find one with a good tone.

"They don't make them sound good by design, you know," he complained.

Two young American women were clanging on some "singing bowls."

"The sound rises and then passes away-- so it's good to remind you," one explained seriously to the other.

The two didn't have enough cash on them to buy a particular bowl, so Tashi told them he'd hold it for them and gave them his card. Then he demonstrated how to play the bowls, stroking the rims and making them vibrate in a soothing hum.

"They're more than 60 years old," he said, "from Ladakh. They're made out of seven metals. First they were made to eat from, but people discovered it makes a good sound, to help the mind. Healers use them now." The women seemed impressed, and Tashi turned his attention back to me.

Most of his sales are to Westerners. Tibetans, he told me, generally buy ritual items such as bells and prayer beads for personal use, Indians buy decorations, and "Injees buy everything."

Tashi's shop is about 10 by 18 feet. Above the door hangs a photograph of the Dalai Lama with Nehru and Indira Gandhi. There is a large wood and glass counter with postcards on top and jewelry and gems inside. On one wall hang coats and vests, on the other woven bags and machine made "thangkas." Wooden Indian flutes lean against a corner. "They are popular to try out, not to buy," he said.

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Tashi sells coral and amber Tibetan necklaces, as well as loose beads of coral, amber, imitation amber, glass, metal and wood. He also offers fake dZis and agates for between 2000 and 6000 Rs. His collection of rings and earrings comes from Tibet, Nepal, Delhi, and Indonesia. He travels on business to Nepal, but also buys from Western travelers and people going to and from Tibet. Tashi sells many sizes of *gau*. Many Tibetan have photos of the Dalai Lama in their charm boxes, but Tashi showed me one from Tibet of real silver and turquoise which he said had been used to keep precious ornaments. He was also selling a heavy Ladakhi headdress of thick cotton and wool with a *gau* on top, studded with turquoise, coral, and cowry shells.

Tashi has garments made to order by local Tibetans and Indians. He told me he gets ideas by "looking around at what's here and mixing Western styles with Tibetan touches." He designs jackets and vests, some made with Bhutanese fabric, and sells Afghani hats and locally made Tibetan hats with fur flaps, Tibetan chuba clasps and buckles, and Western-style belts.

As I took stock of his shop, I was increasingly struck by the variety of crafts on sale, and by the post-modern juxtapositions running riot. On various shelves were old Ladakhi and Tibetan teapots, wooden Tibetan teapots with silver linings, Tibetan knives, chillums (for smoking hashish) of porcelain and aluminum, boxes made from old coins, old Tibetan paper and metal money, old locks, ivory bracelets, Nagaland "tribal" jewelry of cowry shells, glass beads, and stones, rough Indian "Jungli" sculpture, a bronze Ganesh . . .

In one window was proof that the Tibetans are truly marketing themselves in a contemporary fashion. There were paintings in the velvet

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Elvis tradition: kitschy portraits of elderly Tibetans fingering prayer beads and spinning prayer wheels. Tashi also had many cassette tapes for sale, including TIPA recordings, Tibetan children's' songs, monastery chants, "modern Tibetan music" with traditional songs accompanied by synthesizer and drum machines. He also offered "Top 20" Hindi Pop, Jimmy Hendrix, the Beatles, New Age music including Deuter's "Nirvana Road," and a Julio Inglesia tape.

A well-dressed Englishman walked in and announced: "I specialize in *ritual* objects."

"This is my export bell," answered Tashi, taking out a standard *drilbu*, and mentioned that wholesale buyers were entitled to a 15% discount. The Englishman looked around and saw numerous prayer wheels, *dorje*, and inexpensive thangka knobs. Tashi was also selling many ritual musical instruments, including a pair of copper and alloy long horns (*dung chen*), a trumpet (*kang-ling*) made from a human femur, and some large cymbals in addition to the ubiquitous, small, mass manufactured cymbals popular as souvenirs and *damaru* (hand held ritual drums) made by local Indians.

Higher end goods included a three-dimensional silver mandala, made by a local Tibetan smith, on sale for 20,000 Rs. "A rich Tibetan from Europe is buying it," said Tashi. There were also some conch shells "brought from Tibet," a Tibetan silver butter lamp (15,000 Rs.), and a *sa kapala*, a ritual bowl carved from the top of a human skull.

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**Selling the Sacred**

> If business knows no limits, it will ultimately be a loss.
> -- Khache Phalu [Norbu, 1987: 28]

> When the Buddha was alive, he said these things shouldn't be sold. Now times have changed. The sun and moon haven't changed but people have changed. Now everything is sold. It's not good. -- Kelsang Dorje, Tibetan sculptor

> Doing business and thinking with the mind, "I have to support several sentient beings," then it becomes part of [Buddhist] practice. Marpa got enlightened staying in society. You can get nirvana doing business too! --Tibetan merchant

Arjun Appadurai has observed that "dealings with strangers might provide contexts for the commoditization of things that are otherwise protected from commoditization" (1986:15). In the case of Tibetan arts, the presence of new foreign consumers and dealers has combined with Chinese plundering, the dislocations of exile, and the desperate economic situation that many refugees face to place priceless sacred objects on the market. Sacred forms are also appropriated by outsiders. Kleiger discovered ritual Tantric daggers (*phur-pa* ) sold as powerful letter openers for New Agers, and one catalogue advertised earrings in the shape of prayer wheels that "sanctify your ears and the eyes of others" (Kleiger, 1996).

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We should be careful to avoid knee-jerk condemnations of "cultural imperialism" when sacred goods are commoditized. Ethnic communities employ diverse strategies for managing relations between religious and economic spheres. McKean (1989) believes tourism has produced an "economic dualism" in Bali. There, artists produce both for an internal, sacred market and the external, secular market -- both for the gods and for tourists. Fred Myers (1992) reports that Australian aboriginees admit that while money is a principal motivation to paint, sacred paintings remain far more than mere commodities. Navaho sandpaintings placed on the commercial market are modified slightly to differentiate them from sacred sandpaintings.

Distinctions between sacred and secular production are not so clear in Tibetan societies. There is no sanction against the reproduction of sacred images per se; in fact such reproduction generates merit if it remains in accord with canonical rules. Thangkas sold to Westerners are not altered; to alter them is either a mistake or a sin (Bentor, 1993). In Tibet, business and Buddhism have always been intertwined, and monasteries doubled as banks and trading companies. Nevertheless, profiteering on sacred objects was limited by social and religious sanctions, and by the commission system for many ritual crafts. Before 1959, Tibetans differentiated *rin*, the "price" paid for non-religious commodities, from *lu-yon*, a "donation" that produced religious merit (Dawa Norbu, personal communication).

The monasteries in exile provide tourist goods and services, and as we have seen, thangkas were exchanged for money well before the development of a tourist market for Tibetan crafts. The arrival of new foreign consumers has intensified the material links between cosmic and

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economic transactual orders, blurring the difference between donation and price. The often noted needs for cultural preservation and that "artists and monks must eat too" have loosened restrictions on producing and selling sacred goods for the external market.

For some Tibetans, there is little notion that commoditizing objects such as ritual knives (*phur-pa*), *drilbu*, or *dorje* is problematic. One morning, my wife and I went to the home of an old Nyingma lama for a Mo (a divination using dice). I asked the lama if I'd get a good academic position some day. On finding that "there is no path," he suggested I put up prayer flags to help my chances. (I'm still waiting for their full effect). At one point, the lama took out a *dorje* which looked like the type any tourist could purchase in a McLeod Ganj shop. I asked him where he got it, and he told me that he simply bought one off the shelf in town. I asked if there was a problem with such things being sold on the market.

"No."

I asked if it might be a problem that Westerners bought them as souvenirs without understanding their significance.

"No problem."

The lama then pulled a larger, silver *dorje* from Tibet out of a cloth bag. He told me it was very old. I asked if it had more power than the one he bought in the store.

"No."

I was coming to the conclusion that it was simply my own "spiritual materialism" that had led me to attach significance to differences in things. The old lama then told he thought maybe old objects from Tibet did indeed have more power, possibly because of the purer motivation of the artist, and because they were made correctly. However, he felt the sale of these

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objects in stores was not only not a problem, but might help spread the Dharma to the West. I heard this idea repeated by many Tibetans, merchants and monks. One merchant told me that she preferred not to sell *dorje* and *drilbu*, but that a wholesaler had told her that His Holiness thought that it was virtuous, that it would spread the Dharma. "This man forced me to sell them in my shop!" she claimed.

Kopytoff has written that "the exchange function of every economy appears to have a built-in force that drives the exchange system toward the greatest degree of commoditization that the exchange technology permits." (Kopytoff, 1986:87). In exile, increased monetization and entry into international art, tourist, and spiritual markets has facilitated the commoditization of all aspects of Tibetan culture. Kopytoff also recognizes counter forces of "culture and the individual, with their drive to discriminate, classify, compare, and sacralize" (bid: 87).

Annette Weiner observes that the cultural "density" of objects -- a cultural construction associated with the object's links to famous people, history, sacredness, aesthetic and economic values -- may limit commoditization. "Dense objects," she writes, "circulate exceedingly slowly in comparison to less dense ones" (1994:394). Antique and consecrated objects are more "dense" than objects made in exile, particularly if mass-produced by non-Tibetans. One could construct a "hierarchy of density," with objects considered wholly inalienable at one end, and objects that are fully commoditized at the other. A thangka commissioned at the death of a parent would lie at the dense end of the spectrum, and a factory produced carpet at the other. Non-consecrated ritual objects would seem to lie somewhere in the middle, and attitudes about their sale are ambiguous. While most private shops sold *drilbu* and

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*dorje*, two shops opened in 1993 by Nyingma monasteries did not. Thangkas and statues, new and old, have an innate density because they are depictions of deities that are in a sense alive, particularly if consecrated, and are carriers of spiritual power.

Arjun Appadurai has written that political and religious elites generally reserve for themselves the right to fix meanings and "enclave" sacralized objects, while merchants "tend to be social representatives of unfettered equivalence" and exchange (Appadurai, 1986:33). In Dharamsala, the presence of the Dalai Lama and the exile administration is a key factor in limiting the development of a Kathmandu-like market in thangkas and statues. Contrary to Appadurai's generalization, while many Tibetan merchants mentioned that while selling sacred objects would bring in a nice profit, the threat of rebirth in the hell realms was enough to dissuade. Said one Tibetan merchant: "the number one best profits come from old thangkas, old religious texts. Even if I was starving I wouldn't do it! I'd prefer a laborer's job to that!"

In Dharamsala, despite the large number of local artisans, thangkas and statues are on sale in only a very few shops, primarily in outlets for craft schools and co-operatives. Of the two Nyingma sect shops that opened just before I left Dharamsala, one sold "thangkas," but only nonconsecrated, machine-embroidered pieces from Amdo. Small, cheap, and less fragile than painted thangkas, these items are clearly "tourist art", not generally considered "authentic" by Tibetans or knowledgeable foreign consumers. The Handicraft Association shop sold secular paintings -- animals, landscapes, dancers-- which the saleswoman was quick to point out were not "real" thangkas. "The lamas say we must not sell thangkas. This is very bad," she explained.

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Non-Tibetans are not as constrained. Westerners, even Buddhist practitioners, usually do not hold the same notions about selling thangkas. One Dharma student who bought two thangkas in Kathmandu told me that it was alright to sell them with the proper motivation: "I had intended to sell them to finance my stay here," he said. (He ended up giving them away to other western practitioners). Indian merchants generally have no reservations about selling thangkas.

**Postcard from Delhi: Aug. 1-8, 1993**

Tired of haggling with the motor-rickshaw drivers. They're even more open about trying to rip-off us Westerners than I remember. God the dust and smog suck here, and JoAnn's sick. We're losing it. Starting to abuse the taxi drivers just like real Indians. I guess we've adapted.

Did look at a fair number of statues and "thangkas." In one Kashmiri's shop in Connaught Place, there were a bunch of really atrocious ones, the iconometrics all wrong, and the painting quite crude -- for 1500-3000 Rs.! They were, the salesman claimed, "Old, from Tibet!" I asked him where exactly, and he said "Lhasa". I tried asking more about them, and he back peddled from his original claim that he himself went to Tibet to buy them. It's his brother who actually goes. "He goes every month!" So of course he wasn't around to ask about these wonderful specimens.

Went to six places selling thangkas, and without fail they claimed the thangkas were "from Tibet" and "old". And all were of very poor quality, with ratty brocades (old, you see!). The thangkas in the Government Emporium were a bit better, though not much, and the prices were high.

One man in a pricey Haus Khaz shop tried to push some bells and *dorje* on me. He insisted I listen to the bells -- "the sound of meditation,

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the music of peace." They were undoubtedly from Tibet. On further questioning, he said they "might" be from Nepal. One guy in the shop in the Imperial hotel was quite open, said his things were from Nepal and India, and admitted that his statues were done quickly and were of poor quality. He did good business anyway-- rich clients who aren't going to knock themselves out locating anything better.

As tourism expands, it is possible that more Indians will cross the established ethnic division of labor and sell Tibetan crafts. At Momentos India -- the only crafts shop run by an Indian in McLeod Ganj -- consecrated thangkas are on sale alongside Buddhist and Hindu statues, jewelry, and assorted knick-knacks. The Punjabi-born proprietor sells paintings by local artists as well as "old thangkas" from Zanskar, Spiti, and Kinnaur. "We have some people who do a little business. They go door to door there looking for old things, then they give a price. And we have some painters who are doing thangkas for money. Sometimes they ask too much for our tourists to buy. . . . I must buy from many artists, I cannot rely on just a few -- one thangka can take one month."

After he has marked up the price 25%, his best thangkas sell for 5,000 to 7000 Rs. The older ones cost more, and are marked up the same amount, but since they cost him more to buy, they generate about the same profit. Unlike most Indian dealers, all his items have firmly fixed prices. While adept at talking up the high quality of his merchandise -- he always treated me like a potential customer -- he refuses to bargain.

While we were speaking, several old Ladakhi men on pilgrimage examined some of this older thangkas. One bowed and touched the crown of his head to the bottom of a Manjusri before he leaves.

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"Tibetans have never told me not to sell thangkas. I've never had problems."

Taking a page from Derrida, we might deconstruct the binary contrast "sacred/profane," and the privileging of the former term, by observing that a sacred sphere is always already dependent on the existence of a profane sphere from which it is distinguished. The dichotomy between a sacred object and a commodity is never sharper than when the sacred is already commoditized. Merchants profit by claiming their commodities are not commodities. An authentic sacred object, particularly an antique, is all the more valuable on the market; the "denser" the object, the higher the price.

As demand expands, selling ritual objects, even thangkas, may prove irresistible to Tibetans in Dharamsala. Otherwise business will be lost to Indians and Westerners, who do not face social restrictions on the sale of Tibetan goods. More rigid distinctions between "sacred arts" and "tourist arts" may be constructed. Bentor (1993) writes that because Tibetans in Kathmandu do not consider non-consecrated, "incorrect" thangkas sacred, they are able to rationalize their sale as neutral "decorations."

One centrally located shop run by a group of Tibetan tailors, all Newcomers, has numerous thangkas on sale. In addition to manufacturing various traditional and invented fabric items, these tailors frame thangkas with brocade and hang them in rows of thirty and forty from the low ceiling above their sewing machines. The thangkas, prices affixed to the brocade, give the shop the appearance of a large clothing closet of festival wear. The thangkas, I was told, are ordered "from the government" [the

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now defunct Library school and TCV ]. "The best are from the Library--it's cheaper than ordering from private painters." A "medium quality" brocade costs the shop about 1300 Rs. in materials. If the thangka sells for 3800-4000 Rs., they figure they'll clear about 300-400 Rs. per thangka after factoring in a day of labor for sewing the brocade.

The shop also sells machine made "thangkas" from Amdo (North East Tibet). The thangka master Sangay Yeshi told me "there is not a single one you can say is good." They are bought almost entirely by Westerners. The image costs the shop 35 Rs., the brocade about 125 Rs., and they sell for 250-300 Rs.-- a much higher profit ratio than painted thangkas.

The tailors seemed surprised when I asked about the lamas' attitudes towards selling thangkas. After considering a moment, one offered: "Well, selling old thangkas is very bad. Old thangkas that are blessed are powerful. The new ones are not blessed and not filled with power. The image is the same, but if it's blessed then its an object of refuge."

I read a story by Samphel (1980) in Lotus Fields, a literary magazine for young Tibetan writers. "The Last Idol," is the story of a Kathmandu exile, "the quintessential product of Tibetan business instinct," who "realized from the very beginning the simple truth that someone who made lots of money, no matter who, could buy the good things of life, including a substantial measure of social respectability." The merchant becomes rich by selling "antiques to enthralled western customers, " and displays all the outward signs of the nouveau riche Tibetan. In the back of his shop, he keeps an inner room with "priceless idols" for connoisseurs. When business is brisk he winds his prayer beads up his arm and "with a

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renewed burst of Om Mani Padme Hum issuing from his pious, quivering lips, deals out the idols while making quick mental calculations." After years of good business, the back room is nearly empty, and a German man arrives to buy the last idol. Satisfied with this final transaction, the merchant drinks and expounds to his family about his early adventures as a youthful patriot, and condemns today's irreligious youth.

That night, Samphel imagines, the merchant dreams of *Shin-je Choegyal* -- Yama, the Lord of Death -- weighing good and evil deeds. Yama addresses him: "You, the seller of gods . . . you are worshipping gods and selling them too . . . you have sold your world, you have sold your values. You are the destroyer of your own culture. You shall suffer in both life and death."

The merchant awakes screaming, and rushes to pray. "But which god would listen to his prayers?" His altar was empty, for he had sold all his gods (Samphel, 1980:16-20).

## Petty Enterprise and the Spirit of Capitalism

> We [Tibetans] are so greedy. We don't know limits. Not like American people. Tibetans only spend for themselves, not for others, for schools or hospitals. Now some people are talking about this and we feel shame. We should be more like American people; they have things but they know limits. -- Tibetan merchant

The CTA worries about the Tibetans' reliance on a narrow variety of crafts, trade, and services which are vulnerable to fluctuations in demand. According to the Planning Council's Integrated Development

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Report, there is an 18% unemployment rate in the settlements. "Job opportunities in the settlements are very scarce. Many young people in particular, who are often well educated, are unable to find any meaningful work employment in the settlements" (1992: 86). Newcomers emigrating since the PRC's liberalization's -- 10, 416 between 1979 and 1991 -- have also swelled the numbers of unemployed.

The Planning Council hopes it can stimulate an expansion of more diverse private enterprises. According to its Integrated Development Plan, in the early years of exile, "private enterprises were neither viable, nor were they encouraged as they were seen as potential competitors to the co-operatives and societies." Now, however, they see a "considerable potential" for growth (ibid.: 82). The Reception Center for new refugees was planning to provide lump sums of 1500 to 3000 Rs. for those wanting to do business, and a Revolving Loan Fund was established to provide loans for private enterprises. It was anticipated that no loans would be extended in Dharamsala for hotels, restaurants, or the sweater trade. The CTA also "seeks to inculcate fundamental economic concepts like inflation, demand and supply, investment and return, and market forces among ordinary Tibetans" (ibid.:110). In other words, inculcate the spirit of rationalized capitalism. Many merchants, I found, rarely kept reliable accounts. Several older merchants told me they never kept records. "I never calculate the profits, how much every day, " said one. "Whatever we earn, we eat [spend on consumption] or give at the temple. Probably rich people keep records."

Ekvall (1964) claimed that the accumulation of wealth was not a primary motivation of most Tibetans. He believed that the bases of capitalist development in pre-occupation Tibetan were weak. Surpluses

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were not invested in expanding production, and savings were only retained against scarcity. Ekvall wrote that "most industries are begun on an 'ad hoc' basis and are enlarged slowly by using the profits" (1964:192). There were no real private financial institutions, and religious and government institutions discouraged private enterprise through maintaining trade an lending monopolies Taxes, in kind and cash, and religious donation were regular drains on accumulation of capital. The accumulation of surpluses by the monasteries were not channeled into productive enterprises. The basic aims of Tibetans, Ekvall believed, were religious. It was the accumulation of merit, not wealth, that was inexhaustible.

Other observers, such as Aziz (1978), characterize Tibetans as quite materialistic. The private accumulation of merit, moreover, is analogous to the private accumulation of wealth, a point made by many observers of "individualistic" Himalayan Buddhist peoples (Ortner, 1989; Samuel, 1992; Watkins, 1996). Even Ekvall recognized an intense sense of property rights. "The rights of the individual in the share of collective enterprise," he wrote, "is jealously maintained" (Ekvall, 1964:152) an observation that remains true in the crafts industries of Dharamsala. Freed of the old semi-feudal, agro-pastoral system, Tibetans adapt very well to capitalist economies, as the carpet industry in Nepal demonstrates. The loss of their homeland, agricultural resources, and fixed assets has forced the Tibetans into transnational circuits of exchange as petty commodity producers and merchants. This shift, as we will see in the next chapter, has vaulted some them of them from the status of poor laborers to a petty bourgeoisie whose quality of life surpasses that of the surrounding host populations.

As discussed in previous chapters the market in Dharamsala is dominated by craft schools and co-operatives run by exile institutions.

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Tibetans are limited by Indian law in the amount of land they may obtain, and production outside the sphere of "Tibetan culture" may run into direct competition with Indian enterprises. Most private entrepreneurs in Dharamsala remain petty traders. They are very much like the Kuna merchant households of Panama described by Tice (1995). There, the accumulation of a degree of wealth has not become an accumulation of any great degree of power. Because land in San Blas cannot be bought or sold, merchants invest in their businesses, in consumer goods, and in their children's education, much as do the Tibetan merchants of Dharamsala.

Scott Cook has concluded that petty commodity production and trade in encourages a "petty-bourgeois" creed, in which success is seen as a result of hard work and enterprise, while discontent is focused on corruption and other obstacles to advancement rather than the system itself. The petty bourgeois mentality is evident in Dharamsala, where wealth and poverty, when not attributed to karma, are seen as the results of individual effort. Thus, many Tibetans believe that they have pulled themselves up by their bootstraps. By comparison, many say, the Indians continue to suffer from their lack of character.

This petty bourgeois outlook ignores the advantages the Tibetans have obtained by commoditizing their ethnic difference and winning a privileged niche in global markets. The promotion of ethnic difference globally has led to local ethnic competition and conflict, the subject of the next chapter.

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# CHAPTER EIGHT

# EXCHANGES II: INDIANS AND THE ETHNIC DIVISION OF LABOR

Tourism is a form of ethnic relations, one that both relies on and promotes cultural differences, and often precipitates a ethnic division of labor. This chapter analyzes cultural production, exchange, and consumption in Dharamsala as ethnically differentiating, describing the conflicts and accommodations between Tibetans and Indians. Because the Tibetans have achieved a special place in the Western imagination -- one that translates into considerable business opportunities and charitable support -- despite their status as stateless and landless refugees they have managed to largely avoid the type of ethnic division of labor found in many other tourism industries, one that exploits "Fourth World" people to the advantage of national majorities.

Van den Berghe, for example, has described an industry in which social class largely coincides with ethnic membership, and where a "trading minority" may constitute an exploitative "bourgeoisie" in relation to a peasant minority (Van den Berghe, 1980; 1992). Having examined tourism in Cuzco and San Cristobal de las Casas, Van den Berghe distinguishes three roles in tourist industries: tourist, touree, and middleman. Tourists are generally from the First World, or are from the elite of the Second and Third Worlds. Tourists form a sort of super ethnicity, generally employ a lingua franca (often English), and are relatively privileged. Tourees, are at the bottom of the hierarchy, are often Fourth world peoples and minorities. Middlemen, writes van den Berghe, usually belong to dominant ethnic groups that control the polity and economy of the host country, such as ladinos in Mexico or Peru. Sometimes tourists or upwardly mobile

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Sometimes tourists or upwardly mobile tourees become middlemen, but usually they are members of the local bourgeoisie who speak the national language -- a facility in both national and international lingua francas is a general requirement. Middlemen possess knowledge of both local and foreign cultures, and know how to obtain official permissions, meet regulations, and place bribes. Middlemen may also be the only individuals with access to sufficient capital to operate at the higher levels of the tourism industry. Van den Berghe believes that despite this ethnic hierarchy in San Christobal de las Casas, tourism industry, there has been a generalized economic trickle down, and an elevation of the status of Indians. The overall impact, he writes, is positive, but localized and cannot be taken as characteristic of tourism in general.

The tourism industry in Dharamsala is also ethnically stratified, but in a different manner than that described by van den Berghe, reflecting the unique relation of the Tibetans to transnational tourism and to their surrounding host population. In Dharamsala, Middlemen may be members of the majority (Indians), the trading minority (Tibetans) or even tourists (Westerners). Local Tibetan middlemen might be considered an "exploitive bourgeoisie." These are the Tibetan entrepreneurs and merchants who employ Indian servants (usually children) or Newcomers and other poor members of their community. These middlemen (who may actually be middlewomen) belong to the same community as the tourees, and both of them are members of a refugee minority. To an extent perhaps unique to communities that are favored subjects of the tourist gaze (as well as social scientific research and international development work) many members of the international First World "Injee ethnicity" become

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middlemen, either for personal profit or in collaboration with the local touree community.

The Tibetan administration has attempted to limit direct competition between the refugees and host communities, and new economic opportunities have opened to Indians with the means to take advantage of them. An ethnic division of labor has developed in which Tibetans operate most of the craft industries and shops, stalls selling Western clothes and trinkets, and small restaurants and hotels. During the period of my fieldwork, only one Indian shop sold Tibetan crafts. In 1993, a Nepali woman who began selling Nepalese statues was discouraged, although not threatened. Many Tibetans expressed dismay at the arrival of some Kashmiri crafts dealers, known for their aggressive sales techniques. As one hotelier complained, "if it gets too crowded it [tourism] will collapse. Now we're getting Kashmiris touting goods. This will change the feel."

The Indians, who hold the local agricultural land, operate most of the groceries shops and monopolize the taxi union and most of the phone and travel services. More recently, relatively large Indian "luxury" hotels have been built, hoping to attract the affluent Indian tourists who had largely ignored Dharamsala previously. Although some Indians have profited from the tourist trade, many are also left out, and resentment is rising in the face of a Tibetan middle class that is doing better than much of the surrounding population. Although young, educated members of both the Indian and Tibetan communities speak English -- the lingua franca of the Indian tourism industry -- and affluent Indians have greater access to Indian capital and bureaucratic favor, Tibetans benefit from the ethnic favoritism of the tourists. Sympathy, interest, gifts, and long-term

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sponsorships overwhelmingly flow to the Tibetans, while Indians are subjected to negative stereotyping.

## Opportunities for Indians

> Dharamsala has nothing! No good agriculture, no big industry. When we go, they'll be nothing. Everything will collapse. The Indians here can only cut down all the trees and grow corn. If we aren't here, there's nothing. -- Tibetan Doctor

Gaddi pastoralists still can be seen herding sheep and goats in the mountains above Dharamsala, and the Kangra valley affords relatively rich irrigated agricultural land. However, with urban development, population growth, environmental degradation, and forest regulations which have made obtaining forage more difficult, there has been a general trend away from herding and agricultural employment in the Kangra district (Baker, 1996; Saberwal, 1996). In lower Dharamsala, there is a fair amount of petty industry including a tea factory, welding booths, saw mills, motor garages, furniture and cabinet workshops, and transport. Dharamsala is the Kangra district seat, and various bureaucratic opportunities are open. Longtime Anglo-Indian resident Kim Butterworth characterized government work, police, and postal employment as the "classic aims" of former shepherds.

One significant employment source, the slate mines above Bhagsunath, was scheduled to be closed sometime after the period of my fieldwork. The income from the mines was fairly good by local standards, some 80 Rs. per day, although the work was dangerous and there were

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many injuries and deaths over the years. Many local Indian businessmen were pushing for closure, as the mines present an eyesore, making Dharamsala a less attractive option for Indian tourists than other hill stations. They believe the loss of jobs will be more than overcome by increased tourism. One Indian hotelier told me that despite the resistance of the mine contractors, "the mines are bad for tourism and bad for the environment and they will be closed. A nearby village closed the slate mines and 1000 went unemployed but they all got jobs. I've got three people here working from the mines and the Himalaya Queen does too. They'll have no problem getting jobs."

In 1978, Kleiger still saw Tibetans engaged in construction and road work. By 1987, he writes, they had been replaced by Indian laborers (Kleiger, 1992). The Tibetans use many local contractors, and their presence has raised wages for laborers. Elsewhere in the region in 1993 laborers were paid about 30 Rs. a day in 1993, but in McLeod Ganj it was generally 40 Rs. per day. Thus, some workers prefer to work for the Tibetans, and they have attracted skilled labor which is in short supply, as well as unskilled "coolie" labor. An example of "trickle down" from Tibetan construction projects is the proposal of the CTA Planning Council to construct six public latrines (Form PPI Project Proposal 1995-2000). They hoped to raise some 20,000 Rs. from the community, but the bulk of required funds would presumably come from foreign donors. The plan called for hiring for a month period:

| | |
|---|---|
| Indians or Tibetans: | Engineer @ 4000 Rs/month |
| | Supervisor @1300 Rs/month |
| | 2 carpenters @ 80 Rs/ day |

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Indians: 7 laborers @ 40 Rs/day
2 mistris (masons) @ 80 Rs/ day

The project would also hire a truck, and pay out some 131,020 Rs. to buy iron, sand, timber, cement, bricks, and stones.

Tibetan restaurants and hotels provide a market for local farmers. Food prices have been pushed up, which impacts on poor consumers. Electricity and water have fixed price levels ( although because of corruption, people often have to pay to have pipes reconnected). The shortage of suitable spaces for hotels and other businesses catering to tourists have dramatically pushed up land prices, although not to the levels of more frequented hill stations such as Manali. According to Mr. Nowrojee, who has operated McLeod Ganj's longest continuous enterprise, land prices were at their lowest in 1960, when an acre land sold for about 300 Rs. Now it can reach 600, 000 per acre for a good construction site. The McLeod market area is very expensive. In lower Dharamsala prices are lower, but people prefer to open shops up in McLeod Ganj. One Tibetan hotelier told me that such price increases also impacted negatively on ordinary Tibetans. The price for rented houses and rooms have skyrocketed, he said, in part because Westerners can afford to pay 1000 Rs. for a room that might have been rented to locals for 150 Rs. a few years prior. If the Tibetans leave these prices will collapse, he predicted, since "50% of the tourist traffic will stop coming."

Mr. Nowrojee told me with some disapproval that many Gaddis had surplus land which they are now selling for fast money. They open shops, hotels, some buy taxis, and generally neglect the land." He and other observers believe this is short-sighted in light of a possible decline in

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tourism. "There is less farming now," he said, "and people don't want to do manual labor with the new opportunities."

I spoke with Ajit Kumar, the General Secretary of the Taxi Union, in the restaurant owned by his family. In the late 1970's, he told me, there were only two or three buses a day arriving in McLeod Ganj and there were few taxis. "Now there is a bus every half hour and 48 taxis!" he said.

The taxi business really took off around 1984. Most clients are Westerners and affluent Tibetans who'd rather ride in a Maruti van than climb the long, steep roads between McLeod Ganj and the CTA complex or the lower Dharamsala bazaar. Business is growing rapidly, Kumar said, and the number of taxis had doubled in a year. "We must impose restrictions. No more for one year!"

The union was founded in 1991 with the aim of making the business "more respectable," Kumar said. There was no way to complain about problems and to regulate competition. "Now we have a central office, taxi numbers, official rates, receipts, and less price competition. People and drivers go in order." Indeed, the anarchy that buffets many transport seeking tourists elsewhere in India is missing, although there remains the problem of drivers drinking on the job, and driving at high speeds down the narrow, twisting roads.

Like many attempts to "order" the tourism industry, the beneficiaries of the union are primarily those with means. The "Union" was formed by taxi owners, while the drivers are generally employees. Taxis cost at least 130,000 Rs, Kumar told me. Owners usually pay out about 25% from their own pockets, and use bank loans for the remaining 75%, with 15%

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interest on the loans. New drivers earn about 800 Rs. a month, senior drivers about 1100 Rs. Although there used to be one Tibetan owned taxi, Mr. Kumar noted, only Indians seem to get the loans. All Union members and drivers are Indian.

"If the government pays attention [to the tourist infrastructure] then there will be no problem," Mr. Kumar predicted. "We could have 100 taxis if we have enough sites. Now there is not enough places to see." Mr. Kumar's' family opened the Ashok restaurant in1983 near the Handicraft Co-op. He told me there were no other Indian restaurants in McLeod Ganj at the time. Although most of his customers are Westerners, Kumar thought Indian tourism was increasing, and was he thinking about opening a hotel in Bhagsunath. "There is no question of competition here," he said, "there are not enough rooms for all the customers!"

**Welcome to Dharamsala**

> McLeod Ganj has attracted the hippie community and represents Kathmandu on a small scale with its cheap hotels and little Tibetan-run restaurants with all the old favorites like banana pancakes. In fact, most visitors tend to stay in McLeod Ganj where the Tibetan community has tended to take over the hospitality business . . .
>
> -- South Asian Handbook (Bradnock, 1991: 457)

The hotel and restaurant business is an arena of direct competition between Tibetans and Indians, although here too there is an ethnic division in the market.

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Most of the small restaurants in McLeod Ganj are owned by Tibetans, attracting Westerners and Tibetans with such menu items as Tibetan mo-mos (dumplings), meat with rice or noodles, sodas, Nescafe, and hot lemon or ginger water. Many offer Western style goods -- cakes, breads, pizza. Few of them have liquor licenses. These small restaurants are started with savings from the craft or sweater trades, loans from kin, and sometimes with the help of Western sponsors. One Tibetan restaurateur started with a loan of 5000 Rs. in 1980, and help from a Czech woman and her American husband. They washed dishes and taught him to bake Western-style cakes and bread. "Most [other Tibetan restaurants] were just doing Mo-mos, and I was the first to do Injee food." This Tibetan restauranteur now relies on his own expertise, and employs young Indians as kitchen help. Today, many estimate that 100,000 Rs. are needed to open a restaurant.

The few Indian restaurants in McLeod Ganj are generally more upscale and specialize in Indian food in addition to "Chinese" and "Continental" offerings. Most of them have licenses to serve beer and liquor. One Indian café, the Chocolate Log, offered Western style breakfasts and baked goods. It is very popular with Western travelers, who could eat hash browns and omelets, and sip coffee or milkshakes on a patio with sweeping views of the mountains and the Kangra valley below. A few Tibetans expressed resentment that Indians should cut into "their" natural market. One Tibetan friend told my wife: "We need a Tibetan Chocolate Log!"

Kleiger counted three hotels serving Westerners in 1978, and nine by 1987 (Kleiger, 1992). In August, 1993, I counted 27 hotels in McLeod Ganj, with some 350 rooms and 4 dormitories. These were all Tibetan

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owned except for the state-run Bhagsu hotel and several new upscale Indian hotels. Above McLeod Ganj is the Tushita retreat center, with space for about 60 seekers at a time. Down the hill, the Tibetan Library complex had 101 residential rooms, including 30 occupied by Westerners, most of them researchers or Dharma students.

In the high season the hotels in McLeod Ganj fill up, and Indian hotels pick up the spillover. In lower Dharamsala, I counted 15 Indian hotels and 3 Tibetan hotels with 148 rooms and 4 dormitories. Most Western travelers are of the low-budget, backpacker variety and seek proximity to the Tibetans, the McLeod Ganj market, and other travelers. They prefer the small, inexpensive Tibetan hotels. Indians may be somewhat out of place in these hotels. (An American volunteer complained to the management of a Tibetan hotel to "Stop putting Indian tourists up here!" when our visiting Indian friends lodged in room nearby).

The Shangri-la is a typical small Tibetan guesthouse. Naljor Samten helps run it for his sister, who also owns a small shop directly across the street. They rent the land the hotel sits on for 5000 Rs. a month. Mr. Samten estimated overhead costs at another 5000 Rs. a month. The Shangri-la has a small restaurant offering the usual mo-mos, cakes, and drinks, and eight rooms that went for 50 Rs apiece in 1993. There were seven employees at the time: three family members and four young Indians." The cooks earn 600-800 Rs. a month, and the Indian kids earn about 400 Rs." Mr. Samten told me they were doing good business. The hotel was always full in the hot season and during the Dalai Lama's teachings in the Spring, with about 50% occupancy during the winter and monsoon months. Clients were "mainly Injees, and lots of Israelis -- they want to see Tibetans." But, he continued, "I don't see any long term future

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for small hotels like this. Before we were getting hippies and Dharma students, looking for the basics only. Now we have newer generation of travelers, who want more luxuries. They'll want attached baths, TV's. It's too crowded and expensive. Now only rich Swiss Tibetans will be able to open hotels."

Larger hotels have been opened by Tibetans with success in other enterprises, such as Kelsang, the silversmith, or Yeshi Donden, a doctor of Tibetan medicine with a large Indian clientele. The CTA and monastic institutions have also entered the competition. The Loseling Guest House, owned by Drepung monastery's Loseling *tatsang* (college), was opened in February, 1991. Appealing to mid-level travelers who want a shower, the guesthouse has 17 rooms and 2 dormitories. Rooms rent for between 125 and 220 Rs. Customers are primarily Westerners, with a few Tibetans and an occasional Indian. The manager, a monk, told me that "we get decent tourists; many women who find it safe and secure." The Loseling is staffed by monks who rotate up from the monastery in south India. Theoretically, they work half days, study the remainder. They receive no salary but room and board and some pocket money. They often can be seen watching STAR TV in the lobby.

The most upscale Tibetan hotel is the Hotel Tibet, with attached restaurant and bar, launched by the CTA in 1979 with rooms running up to 500 Rs. in 1993. Most clients are foreigners and affluent Tibetans. It employs 35 Tibetans and five Indians. The Tibetan managers earn 3500 Rs. a month, bartenders 1900 Rs., and waiters up to 780 a month plus tips. These wages are better than those of CTA staff workers and far more than most artisans. The Hotel Tibet, the manager told me, is part of chain with

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guesthouses in Sikkim, Calcutta, and Kathmandu, and another planned for Delhi. "If Tibet is freed, we'll keep this," he said.

The Kangra valley is sometimes referred to as the "Dev bhoomi" or Valley of the Gods. It boasts several pilgrimage sites, including the Jawalamukhi mandir, where burn seven natural gas flames. Despite such sites and the respite from the heat Dharamsala can offer, Indian tourism is relatively undeveloped. Few Indians are drawn to Dharamsala to study Buddhism or Tibetan culture, and the tourist infrastructure lacked the amenities attractive to affluent Indians. Now Indian entrepreneurs are attempting to provide the comforts expected and develop "natural" attractions to compete with other Hill stations. Outside investment and package tours are entering the market.

The state-run Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation operates two hotels, the Dhauladhar in lower Dharamsala, and the Bhagsu in McLeod Ganj. The Dhauladhar, boasting luxury suites running 1000 Rs a night, has about an 80% Indian clientele. All the employees are Indians. The manager told me that "business is very good but foreigners prefer McLeod. They leave after one night and go up there. But we have wall to wall carpets, television in each room, hot showers in each room. Indian tourists prefer to stay down in this hotel." After poking around the Dhauladhar, I hiked for 45 minutes up the steep road past the CTA and library complex at Gankyi to McLeod Ganj and the Bhagsu. There I was immediately ushered into the manager's office. He was wearing an impeccable black wool suit and tie, and began by informing me that the Bhagsu was the "pioneer hotel" in the area.

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"The private [Indian hotels] only want to earn, not to spend!" he said. "They only came after they saw we were profiting. We pushed ahead. The private man won't take risks!"

The Bhagsu is a bit cheaper than the Dhauladhar, it's "VIP" rooms go for 800 Rs night. It's employees are all Himachalis. The manager estimated that about 40% of it's total business in 1992 were Indians on package tours or pilgrimage. During the high season, he said, some 70% of his clients are Indians escaping the heat, while in the off season most of the guests are Westerners. The average stay is two or three days, but some Western researchers, journalists, and patients receiving Tibetan medical treatment stay for weeks or months at a time.

Our interview was interrupted several times by a middle aged Indian couple and their teen-aged daughter. The Indian gentleman, wearing shorts and a matching T-shirt, was booking a jeep tour of the area, and seemed extremely nervous about it. The daughter ignored her parents, coolly reading a newspaper behind sunglasses. When the gentleman left for the restroom, his wife whispered to the manager: "He has lost his mother--very stress you see, sir."

The manager nodded understandingly, worked out their concerns, and sent them off laughing. As they exited, he called out an open window: "If you have any problem, come see me straight away!" Turning his attention back to me, he insisted I take tea, and continued.

"Business is very good and has increased manyfold. The most important thing is we are running not just a hotel, a building, but a resort with roller skating, a big garden, walks in the forest. When on holiday in a hill station you don't want to stay in a five star hotel, but to take tea in nature!"

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I asked him about the possibility of the Tibetans leaving.

"If the Dalai Lama leaves, there will only be a 15-20% reduction. The Hill stations have their own life. If the Tibetans leave, we will still be here. I feel the expansion can never be stopped. It's a law of nature."

Much of his confidence relied on improved transport and on long delayed plans to develop the natural attractions above McLeod Ganj, plans which included closing the slate mines around the Bhagsunath waterfall, cleaning up Dal lake, and building a 2.5 km. ropeway from Dharamkot to Triund ridge.

Just below the Bhagsu are the Surya, the Himalayan Queen, and the Nataraj, brand new hotels catering to affluent Indians and Westerners. Many of their clients are on package tours arranged though agencies in Delhi, Thomas Cook, or Geographical Tours in Israel. These hotels strive for a certain glamour, with mirrors and ceilings and some Bombay designer's idea of "Oriental" decor in the restaurants and bars. On Saturday nights, the Surya hosts a dance with a live band. Westerners, young Tibetan men, and a few Newcomer women take the dance floor, surrounded by observing Indian men.

The hotels' ownership is theoretically Himachali. One of the owners is originally from nearby Palampur, although he now lives in Delhi. Most of the employees are Indians, although a few Tibetans work in positions of visibility, as receptionists, waiters, and bartenders. All the managers emphasized that the success of these enterprises depended on further tourism development. While the hotels are full in the hot season, March through early July, during the monsoon and in the winter they only have a 10-30% booking. "The customers do not stay for more than 2 nights," said one employee. "It's just a transit point between Shimla and Dalhousie."

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The manager of the Nataraj expressed concern that McLeod Ganj boasts "no entertainment, no big gardens, no big shopping -- the only advantage is His Holiness. So people only stay one night. There is no hope unless Dal lake is developed." Another imagined the tremendous benefits of the ropeway to Triund. "You can be having coffee in McLeod Ganj and 15 minutes you are basking in nature!"

Construction of the ropeway had bogged down in red tape and problems with contractors. Perhaps, mused Ajit Kumar of the taxi union, a good road up to the snowline was a more realistic option. "Westerners don't like this, but the Indians want it," he said. "They go to Manali and pay thousands of rupees a night! The Westerners don't pay! The rich Indians used to go elsewhere, they want luxury. All the Indians will come if we have a ropeway. Look at Shimla, at Musoorie -- all Indian tourists, always busy!

Problems with the infrastructure and environmental degradation are both a concern and dismissed as an obstacle to further development by Indian entrepreneurs. "There are no good paths to the waterfall," Kumar continued. "Railings should be built. Dal lake -- it's just shit there. When people are asking us where it is we are hesitant to tell them. We call it 'Dull Lake.' We need to clean the water."

Water in McLeod Ganj runs in open air pipes in and along the streets. They often leak, making the streets muddy and pot-holed. The sewers are open, and often clog until the rains flush them out. Kumar mentioned that when the Handicraft center flushes its drains "there's shit in the road." Government action to improve the sewage system only followed the private initiative of local business and civic organizations such as the Indo-Tibetan McLeod Ganj Development Association. However, many

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Indian and Tibetan merchants complain that these organizations generally "do nothing," and there is not sufficient co-operation between the two communities. Mr. Kumar and others complain that the regional government pays more attention to lower Dharamsala, with it's population of Indian voters, than to McLeod Ganj, "despite our potential here."

Mr. Kumar recognized some of the environmental problems associated with growth. The introduction of plastic bags had combined with a general increase in solid wastes to mar the natural beauty of the area. Plastic is now collecting in all the local streams. Several attempts have been made to remedy the problem, including the construction of garbage dumpsites periodically emptied by trucks. A few volunteer clean-ups included the participation of Western travelers and environmental researchers. But thus far these are only temporary solutions for a growing problem.

A number of Western travelers, particularly those favoring hashish, prefer the cheap guesthouses that are cropping up in the nearby Indian villages of Dharamkot and Bhagsunath. Some land owners are selling to Indian entrepreneurs with the means to convert their farms into cafés and guesthouses, while others host Westerners in their homes. "In [the tourist] season in Dharamkot there is a Westerner paying 15 to 50 Rs. in every house," observed one Indian merchant. The increase in resident and guest population has increased the animal population needed to provide milk, butter, and eggs. Villagers sometimes use wood fuel to keep their Western guests warm. This has led to further deforestation and harder work for women as fodder becomes scarcer. "The forests are dead or dying," complained one trekking entrepreneur. "The Forest Department people don't care -- they just want to join the Rotary Club!" Villagers and

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construction contractors have been digging up sand for cement. "Last year there was a story in the Tribune with photographs of people hugging trees where the land was eroding away," said Mr. Kumar, "so it was stopped, but it is going on again. When it was only for houses it was Okay, but when it is for businesses then it is a big problem." During construction of the new Indian hotels in McLeod Ganj, large rocks were rolled indiscriminately downhill into the woods below, damaging countless trees, and their perch over a steep bluff looks ominously susceptible to landslides and earthquakes.

"People go around building codes," said one Indian merchant. "The price of land has gone up because of the hotels. . . . People with money will buy land here and pay any price. Those in the middle cannot even think of opening a shop or a hotel. For just a shop you are needing 100,00 Rs!"

The growing opportunities have begun to attract outside interests capable of paying the inflated land prices and developing larger hotels, including, it is rumored, interests investing money earned in prostitution and drugs.

**Hazy Postcards from the Hash economy**

> Five years before we had so many problems with drugs, there was open use in the restaurants. But now it is more hidden and not such a problem because the police told the restaurants to stop it. So now in McLeod we see signs in the restaurants. But there still is a drug business. This is the biggest problem. -- Indian Hotelier

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**January 22**

Went to Bhagsunath, a cold ghost town these days; only locals hanging out and most of the shops and cafés closed. I want to get a handle on the hashish economy, which has increased with tourism. Drug money seems to circulate back into other tourist enterprises. It seems to be a near monopoly of young Indian men, sometimes in conjunction with Westerners. I interviewed the French wife of "Joey," an Indian hash dealer from out of town who hangs around a lot. Turns out she's an ex-anthro student! She sounded quite angry, doesn't feel accepted here, hates most Indian men. Expressed concerned about tourism and the effects on the economy. Surprise, surprise: she buys ethnic goods for sale abroad. While we talked on her verandah some people stared as they passed. I imagine they were wondering what Joey's wife was doing alone with another man.

Joey is off in Goa -- many hash dealers do a lot of winter business there, catering to the affluent Europeans who fly in and out, as well the hippie types who drift there for some winter sun.

**Feb. 13**

Joey says a kilo of hash costs 6000-7000 Rs. for good stuff (or 2000 for crap). He gets 100 one tola fingers out of that, each going for 100-130 Rs, so he makes maybe 4000 Rs. profit, minus paying the taxi for the runner to/from Manali. I remember Kim Butterworth told me the hash economy here is small, especially compared to Manali which has big fields for growing. Manali is the place for hash, but in season, Joey says a kg. of good hash can go in less than a week here. Low season, it sometimes takes two months.

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Joey told me about how some of his hippie friends fund their low-cost, drug rich lifestyle in India. One of his Italian friends, for example, buys silk in Varanasi and Rajasthan and sells it in Italy for a huge markup. A Tibetan silversmith recently made (or touched up?) a few statues -- which should be filled with blessings, medicinal pills, etc. -- that some Injees crammed with hashish and smuggled into Europe. Now that couldn't be considered a proper use of deities!

**March 26**

Went to Bhagsu this morning. Joey was sitting on the verandah of the Trimurti cafe. A young German couple moved away when he lit up a hash cigarette. What's-his-name, the weasel faced sitar teacher, asked the German guy sarcastically: "What's up, Maharaja?" No reply. A young Dutch woman came up to Joey and asked for a few hits. Below, several Nepalis, Gorkhas in full dress uniform, walked back from the temple and army memorial to their jeep and a gleaming black Ambassador sedan. I followed Joey and the Dutch woman back to his "business room." He pulled out a big block of Manali hash, and then showed me a bunch of opium. He said he doesn't smoke it, only eats a bit with a glass of tea

"You eat little ball when you have stomach problem," he said. He speaks English like you'd imagined a Russian gangster. Definitely sounds cool. "You go to sleep no problem, like medicine." I declined the healing.

I saw he had necklaces hanging in an alcove cut into the mud wall. Lots of loose stones and beads about. I asked him about the stones. "Good business . . . . clean business, no problems, you know?" He

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wants to get out of drugs and into the stones, but he needs a license, so first he'll sell small time, quietly, and see how it goes. Then maybe do some real trading. He buys everything in Jaipur, and these days turns over about 4000 Rs. a month in stones. About half of that is profit, he said. His clients are all Westerners.

Walking back to McLeod, "Krishna," an Indian baker-cum-dope-dealer called out from his makeshift café as I passed and asked me to write some letters for him. Inside, he gave me a letter he wanted to answer. It was dated Feb. 1990, from an Englishman with a return address of Poste Restante in Bangkok! The letter informed Krishna that "Charlie" was "still interested in what we talked about in Goa. I can send you a ticket and some money." I told Krishna that I thought it was a bit too late for a reply, so he started rummaging through an aluminum chest, through tattered and chaotic papers -- most of which he can't read -- and found an old address book with two addresses for the guy in London. He chose one and I wrote what he dictated, something like:

> Hello my friend Charlie. I am OK. Are you still interested in what we talked about? I am fine and hope you are too. I got caught in Goa and had to pay 40,000 Rs to get off and that is why I didn't send you the "things." But everything is good now. If you are still interested send me a letter. I haven't recieved any letter or money. Everything is OK. Write to me here at my address. Krishna.

That accomplished, he then had me write to Peter in Amsterdam:

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Hello, this is your friend Krishna. I am good. I hope you enjoy life in your country. I had a problem in Goa but now everything is OK. I didn't receive any letter from you. I want to send you something now. Please write to me. I also wanted to send you a pipe, but haven't found a good one. Raki is still in Goa and I live with her there. I am here now [with his wife]. I found some land in Bhagsunath for our project, and also some in my home village. My family is good. My father is good. Bom Shankar, Krishna.

Hash money -- from Westerners -- sometimes circulates back into stones -- sold to Westerners -- or is invested in small cafes and guesthouses -- to service Westerners. Krishna hits me up to invest in his planned hotel every time I see him. He doesn't buy it when I tell him I'm a "poor student." I'm an American and I have enough to fly to India and live here, as he says, "without working." I'm rich.

**July (day?) 1993**

The monsoon seems to be here. Rain, rain, rain. Spent a night in Bhagsunath; being a tourist, Hindu-baba variety. A new hotel is going up. Construction is just getting under way. Joey tells me he heard the owner is a woman who made money as a Bombay Madame. She bought five kanal (six kanal = approximately one acre) of roadside land some years ago for 35,000 Rs. /kanal. It now sells for some 100,000-150,000 per kanal (In Manali, Joey says, its going for 250,000 Rs./kanal). Joey wants to buy one kanal for 50,000 Rs. way up the hill in Dharamkot. He said he'll spend another 150,000 Rs. to build a "nice house, big house. I have connection, you know, to construction man. Big man here; father power man.""

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I asked Joey about the construction guy and his father. Apparently they're Gaddis, and started out poor. The father was kicked out of his family, but bought several houses when land was very cheap. Joey says, for example, when the Paradise Hotel nearby started, land was going for maybe 500 Rs/kanal. The father made some money in the mines, bought a jeep, got into construction just as the Tibetans and tourism increased the demand. Bought a truck, and now has two taxis. Right place, right time, right decisions. "They do Tibetan building, " said Joey in that gangster tone. "But they no act rich. They not forget. They working still."

Joey says he started coming to Dharamsala when he was a kid and has worked the hash biz for 16 years. Now he's saved up enough money to buy some land and a house without borrowing from anybody.

"Need it for when old. I see so much change. Too much change! After buying house, no work hard. Money follow money -- if you want to earn, you must spend."

After breakfast, Joey's "big construction man" was going into town in one of his taxis. I scrambled into my flea and scorpion ridden room, gathered my stuff, and dashed through the rain to his Maruti van. He was also giving a ride to that Tibetan monk often seen tooling around on a motorcycle. Saffron robes and crash helmet. We dropped the monk off at the Hotel Tibet. As we pulled away, sluicing through the brown water coursing down the streets, the driver said he didn't know which monastery the monk was from, but that "he must have a good sponsor! Nice watch, television." Turns out they're doing business. "He's building a big house," the driver explained. He braked suddenly in front of the bank and threw a big wad of money to his friend standing at the door.

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**August 9**

Passed by Krishna's. He had a friend in there who subcontracts a slate mine in Bhagsu. He has eight workers laboring for 50 Rs. a day. He told me he sends 500 Rs. a month to his family in Delhi and keeps the rest of his profits. It pays for a nice house, a little land, food and clothes, "no extra." The two hit me up for a 50,000 "credit" to set up 5 or 6 cottages to rent to Westerners in Bhagsu. "I'll always keep a room for you" Krishna assured me. Maybe next lifetime.

**August 20**

Steve and I went into Bhagsu to get haircuts. Steve is a Harvard religious studies student working on his dissertation. He lives in the researcher complex at the Library on the floor below us. I don't need a haircut so badly, but Steve's looking a lot like Bozo the Clown these days. In Bhagsu a European hairdresser (married to an Indian man) makes a living giving cuts and baking cakes. She charges 50 Rs. for Injees, and 5 or 10 Rs. for local boys. Afterwards, we had tea and coffee in Joey's room and looked at his stones.

I noticed he had posters of the Dalai Lama, Krishna, and of the infant Shiva on the walls. The baby Shiva perked my interest, and I asked if this was a traditional representation, like those of the infant Krishna. Shiva was chubby with luscious red kiss-me lips

"No, no, this is some artist idea! Shiva didn't look like this when he was born. He was God, not born with woman like Krishna and Rama." This got Rocky started on the local Shiva legends. "This place is Shiva's land, but Shiva is everything, everywhere."

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The conversation moved on to the subject of a Gaddi who had a European wife. His wife left him, probably because of his mental problems. He had electric shock therapy. Joey said it was from "smoking too much. Not charras. Brown -- brown sugar [heroin]. He smoke with Western junky people all the time."

The construction contractor, who owns the building, walked in. A barrel chested man with a thick mustache and constant smile, he's a hale fellow well met if ever there was one. Joey tells me he comes from a "big family, strong family. His father not look old. Big like him." I asked him about his business with the Tibetans. He does a lot of it, but apparently it doesn't make him like them any better.

"In school, I always fight with them," he said, "and they never talk to me. Now, I do business, and now: 'Oh, Ji, Ji,' all the time." He has many "friends" among the Tibetans, but no "real friends" except one old, poor monk. He gestured to his heart. "He has good inside. Not all Tibetans are bad. One time four Tibetan came from Delhi and stole one radio and passport from a Westerner at the Shiva café. I told some [local] Tibetan boys and they beat them and gave them to the police."

Joey started in on Tibetan greed. "They get western people up to Tushita; they have much money, they give even one lakh Rs [100,000]. Pretty soon, no money, just 'Om Mani Padme Hum'," said Joey laughing, gesturing as if he was turning a prayer wheel. "Tibetans always say Indians bad, Indians this, they steal, but Tibetans don't work like we, they just sit and take their father money. We need to work!

"Even the wealthy ones get Western sponsors, he griped. "This is my country, I say you can go! They invest here, but they must leave it. Like they come, they must go!"

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**Tibetan Merchants and Indian Labor**

> Through the grace of His Holiness, even if Tibetans are very poor, we will work hard and send our children to school, not like the Indians.
> -- Tibetan Merchant

Tibetan, Indian, or Western merchants can sometimes take advantage of extremely favorable exchange rates, selling goods in the West for many times the South Asian price of production. Local merchants can sometimes take advantage of connections with kin or with travelers and Western resident to sell goods in Europe or the United States for many times their local retail price. High profits depend on keeping sale prices well above the cost of local labor and materials. Cheap labor rebounds to the advantage of Western travelers, who find goods and services in Dharamsala a bargain. Depending on one's perspective, entrepreneurs either offer desperately needed income or exploit the weakest members of the Indian and Tibetan communities.

I asked one Tibetan shop keeper, a retired soldier, about the sweaters he had on display. These sweaters are quite distinct from the Indian factory-made sweaters peddled by Tibetan merchants in the winter. Considered "Tibetan sweaters" by many Westerners, these rough wool sweaters are usually knit by Indian women. While Tibetans prefer synthetics, Westerns like the naturally dyed wool (grays sell well) and "Tibetan designs" with messages like "Free Tibet." "Injees and some Indians buy them. Injees like big sizes," the shopkeeper said.

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The shopkeeper told me he buys the wool at 140-160 Rs per sweater. and pays Indian knitters 80 Rs. per sweater. The sweaters retail from 300 to 500 Rs., earning him 80 to 250 Rs. per sweater. Retail prices had gone up recently, he said, because the price of wool had increased, and also because so many Injee customers were coming around. The price of labor had also risen. Tibetan women weren't willing to knit anymore. "If I ask them to do it, they laugh, or ask a very high price!"

Indian children are employed by many middle class Tibetans as domestic help and in restaurants and hotels, freeing family members for trade or school. Both boys and girls are employed, although my impression was that there are more male servants. I was told that most domestic servants earned 50-100 Rs. per month plus room and board, while some children who worked in businesses earned up to 400 Rs. per month. Many of the children are from Bihar, either found while the Tibetans are on pilgrimage and/or peddling sweaters, or though friends and family of current servants. I asked Jamyang Norbu and Lasang Tsering, two Tibetan intellectuals, about wages in Tibetan restaurants. Were they so low, I wondered, that Tibetans wouldn't accept them? Mr. Tsering answered:

> No, no, no, it's not the wages. First of all, Tibetans of that age have the opportunity to go to school, so they are not looking for that sort of job. There are others who haven't had the education, but the hotel owners find it far easier to deal with Indians because the expectations are less, and the relationship is more business-like than, for instance, [with] some Tibetan. [With a Tibetan] you know him, his family, and

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if things go wrong, you can't throw him out. If he's late you can't say anything. So afterwards . . .

"They'll know the family secrets!" laughed Norbu.

"[With] Indian employees," continued Tsering, "it's easier to maintain the strict business relationship. The pay is not low; the pay is good, with tips, etc., by local standards. It's a privilege."

"Is it usually the child who is paid or the family?" I asked.

For waiters and things like that, who are local, well, if they are adults they are paid directly. But with the house jobs, they usually have an arrangement where the family clothes them, feeds them, gives them whatever pocket money, but whatever salary has been agreed goes directly to the family. So it is also with the many Bihari children you see around baby-sitting. A year or two year's wages are paid in advance to the family. They get quite a good deal. I had a boy like that for a year. I sent him to Yong Ling school with my son. And any relative of my wife, whenever they come to see us they would give him some clothes, or a little money, like that. So we had quite a good bank account for him by the time he returned. So also, some families, teach them the sweater selling. It's all very individual.

Many Tibetans point out that their servants learn English and other skills. At the Tibet Memory Video hall, where the latest Hollywood movies can be seen ( pirated videos appear only weeks after American release), the proprietor told me the two Indian boys that work for him "are very hardworking and honest. When they first came they knew

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nothing, now they can write and know some English. They are like our own children."

One merchant woman told me she had employed an Indian girl for 15 years. The girl saved her salary and started her own open-air stall, selling alongside Tibetans. She speaks fluent Tibetan and is often seen wearing a chuba. Although many Tibetans say she is "like a Tibetan," many also say no Tibetan man will marry her, for "the Indian mind" and "the Tibetan mind" are too different.

Westerner travelers are ambivalent about being served by children, and some, if they notice, are disturbed by seeing Tibetan children playing in clean school uniforms under the watchful eye of working Indian children. Many, however, speculate that there is no better option for these children. I asked Peter Brown, an American with a long association with the Dharamsala Tibetans, if he thought the children were treated well.

> Yeah, better than the Indians treat them. I mean there's a real scam here, bringing these kids up from Bihar, you know, but for the most part the kids make out like bandits. They couldn't get a better trip. They're not going to get any education where they are. And here they learn a second language, maybe a third or a fourth. They speak Bihari and they come here and learn Hindi and Tibetan and English, and they learn how to cook. I mean they take these kids and they're living in a little mud hut with the parents with maybe a radio and two aluminum pots, and they come up here and they're living with someone who has maybe a motorcycle and TVs and gas stoves. But they often get homesick and its not easy for them. But you see them now, there's Indians that started out being coolies for the sweater trade, just as kids.

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and now they're running their own restaurants, and dealing Tibetan goods. For a lot of Indians it's uplifted them, it's made Dharamsala some sort of thing. If the Tibetans weren't here the Indians wouldn't have ever gotten it together, you know?

**Market Exchange as Ethnic Relations**

Although tourism has often been touted as fostering cross-cultural understanding, in fact it more frequently leads to ethnic stereotyping. Jeffrey Brewer (1984) has described how ethnic stereotypes are used by locals in the brief interactions of the marketplace. Brewer differentiates between "general stereotypes" -- perceptions of broad group characteristics -- and the "specific stereotypes" used to guide behavior in specific situations, for example, to get tourists to spend money in a store. Brewer recognizes that a few tourists may come to be seen as individuals given time. Yet stereotypes constrain interactions, and there is often little willingness to abandon them. Thus, Brewer observed, many of his informants never ceased to regard him primarily as a potential customer.

Although the prolonged presence of Tibetans and Westerners has led to the formation of many individual relationships between members of the three major ethnic categories in Dharamsala, ethnic stereotyping is pervasive. Each "super-ethnicity" tends to acknowledge the diversity that exists within it's own "community," while largely overlooking differences among the others. Thus, for example, most Westerners are unaware of the regional differences among the refugees, and lump them all into the category "Tibetan." Travelers often stereotype one another by nationality -- Americans are naive, for example, or Israelis are aggressive -- while the Tibetans simply refer to them all as "Injees."

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Stereotyping works to the advantage of those at the top of the hierarchy -- Westerners and Tibetans -- while disadvantaging those at the bottom, the Indians. Westerners are generally considered honest, helpful, affluent, and possibly highly skilled. Travelers with long, filthy hair and bedraggled clothes may be afforded professional respect and access to high officials. Rough young Khampa men, just out of Tibet and ready to fight over small insults, may be perceived by travelers as paragons of pacifism. Indians are considered aggressive and untrustworthy and compared unfavorably with the Tibetans. These stereotypes reflect the economic interests and conflicts of each group in relation to the others, as well as imagination fueled by gossip, videos, film, and travelers' tales. They also reflect generalized ethnic patterns of exchange in the market. Tibetan merchants have pegged Indians, Westerners, and fellow Tibetans as to what they buy, how they buy it, and how to get the best price out of them. These specific stereotypes -- observations and strategies built on brief market interactions -- lead inevitably to general stereotypes.

Although local Tibetans buy ritual items such as *drilbu*, *dorje*, and prayer beads for personal use, they buy and use "modern" goods for the most part. Tibetan clothes, while still worn by Tibetan women (and men on special occasions) are often ordered from tailors rather than purchased in crafts shops. As one merchant commented: "Tibetans don't buy these things [Tibetan goods and clothes] although we used them in Tibet." Tibetans sometimes buy goods from one another for resale to Indians and Westerners. One elderly female merchant told me that "among customers, Tibetans are the best- - they buy wholesale! When they are buying single things, then Injees are the best."

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Western travelers are, of course, the biggest buyers of "non-functional" items for gifts, decorations, and souvenirs. Unlike Tibetans and Indians, who often examine objects closely before purchasing, Westerners appear to buy impulsively, an expression of their larger bank balances and the low prices in the Third World. Their behavior amuses some Tibetans. "They buy everything," laughed one merchant. "They like it, they buy it!"

Indian tourists generally buy clothes and electronic trinkets. For most of them, McLeod Ganj is simply a concentrated and colorful market offering a great variety of goods in one small bazaar. Prices are competitive but not a tremendous bargain, and Indian visitors are choosy. Their reluctance to make purchases irritates many Tibetan merchants. Westerners are seen as individualistic, if impulsive comsumers, while Indians are confronted as challenging groups. Said one stall-owner: "Even in groups I can't tell what Injees will buy, they all buy differently. But Indians-- if one buys a locket, they all buy a locket! The Indians all ask 'what is this?' and then they never buy-- they want to know what it is, what it means, but they won't buy! If you don't attend to them they get angry, but even when you do they don't buy! If four or five come to me, I'm afraid they'll steal."

The contrasting motivations and travel styles of Indians and Westerners shape the kinds of relationships they form with merchants. Many Tibetan merchants reported that they are more likely to form "real" friendships with Westerners than with Indians. Western travelers are usually young, traveling alone or with one or two friends. Westerners often stay in Dharamsala for long periods, befriending particular refugees, making financial gifts, pledging to sponsor a child's education, or even

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engaging in a little business. Westerners may also take an interest in Tibetan culture, and have some knowledge of the cultural or spiritual significance of their purchases. Indian tourists, on the other hand, generally come in groups, with their families, or on package tours, and stay in Dharamsala for a night or two. Living in a diverse multicultural and multi-linguistic nation, they tend to be little impressed with -- or even hostile to -- the Tibetans' cultural difference.

Relations between Tibetan sellers and Indian buyers remain primarily market transactions -- brief, economic exchanges in which each party attempts to maximize value. Bargaining is expected and often intense. Many Westerners, on the other hand, may savor the process of making a purchase from a friendly Tibetan woman in a chuba. Economic exchanges with Tibetan restaurateurs, hoteliers, and merchants are sometimes romanticized as intimate encounters with the Other. One middle aged American woman told me that buying turquoise from an elderly Tibetan man was a very special experience. The man she referred to was a stall owner who is generally regarded as an old grump. He barks inflated prices from which he will not budge. "He's a beautiful person," she gushed. "I didn't want to leave his presence."

Although there is great variety in travelers' motivations, behaviors, and experiences, it might be generalized that for Indian buyers, Tibetan crafts remain commodities with an inherent exchange value, while for many Western buyers, these objects transcend commodity status. These crafts are "singularized" (Kopytoff, 1986) or made "dense" (Wiener, 1996) through their association with Tibetans. The Tibetans themselves are in a sense commoditized, and in consuming things, travelers are consuming people.

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**Bargaining: Knowledge and Ethnicity**

Although it is a common academic notion -- one increasingly popular with sophisticated travelers -- that First World tourists are embodiments of a reified and rather unspecified "Power," tourist encounters often involve a reversal of specific power. Tourists are often ignorant of local economic values and practices and at a disadvantage in exchanges with local merchants. Steiner (1990) has described the success of "middlemen" in African art markets as dependent on the separation of the buyer from producer. Traders know the local price, source, and quality of goods, and often manipulate their arrangement and appearance. Bargaining can be seen as a strategic "game" in which buyers and sellers attempt to take advantage or overcome differentials in knowledge.

Tibetan merchants rely on keeping their prices low by purchasing and commissioning objects manufactured by relatively low paid crafts workers (often Indians) and through buying wholesale and selling retail. As one merchant put it: "We buy wholesale and sell piece by piece with a strong hammer." Resale prices must cover initial purchase, transport, and payment of rent, fees, taxes, and occasional bribes. Each step away from the producer adds to the ultimate price of the good, and includes profits for each intermediary. It is when the final buyer is at an extreme distance from the producers that consumer ignorance, hype, and international exchange rates can most "add value" to the goods.

Peter Brown, a Western trader, told me that "everyone along the line [in the West] doubles their money. Normally I buy something for a dollar, and I sell it for three, because it costs me another fifty cents to get it there and deal with it, right? And then the store sell it for six or eight dollars,

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or sometimes even more." In 1994, I saw a Tibetan knife that might sell for several hundred dollars in Asia on sale for $1495 at a boutique in San Francisco's Fisherman's wharf.

Steiner writes that foreign retailers in Africa attempt to discern indigenous prices, often assuming that local merchants get the goods for almost nothing, while merchants attempt to get a handle on Western market values. Steiner describes in great and somewhat amusing detail the jockeying that surrounds the naming of prices and counter offers. The formation of inter-ethnic trading partnerships can stabilize mutually beneficial exchanges, ensuring fair prices and reliable sources and outlets.

Tibetans often attempt to sell their goods through Western travelers and residents they befriend in Dharamsala. Likewise, numerous Western scholars, Buddhist practitioners, and travelers underwrite their lifestyles through petty trade, sometime commissioning goods from Tibetan artisan friends, or from Indian women, whose labor is cheap. Western wholesalers in Dharamsala often form trading relationships with Tibetan merchants to ensure fair prices. Travelers may form market relationships with merchants related to the owner of their guesthouse, or who are the parents of a child they wish to sponsor.

Western consumers sometimes express the wish to pay a fair price to "help the refugees." While many Westerners are aware that goods they purchase may not produced by Tibetans, they seldom probe very far into the conditions and wages of producers. "[Dharamsala] is a very special place, a place for refugees" said a Cincinnati retailer of ethnic goods. "I have only so much money to spend and I couldn't think of a better place to spend it." Most Tibetan merchants attach a fixed price to crafts, which is appreciated by Westerns unaccustomed to bargaining. The Cincinnati

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retailer felt safe in the Dharamsala market. "I'm a terrible bargainer, they read me like a book. They're experienced and they see right through you!" What bargaining between exists between Westerners and Tibetans is minimal and low-key, and Westerners and Tibetans generally consider one another fair and honest.

The refugees in Dharamsala retain a quiet, dignified air, and never call out or chase after customers. Some tourists, in fact, may even feel ignored in shops, as merchants may not respond to them unless spoken to directly. Tibetan merchants in Dharamsala engage in little of such "performative bargaining" or other manipulations of appearance described by Steiner (1990) in Africa and so familiar to buyers in Nepal. In Kathmandu, statues are often kept in back rooms so that foreign buyers led to the inner sanctum might gain the impression that they are "the real thing." Merchants are also masters of staging market encounters, pretending to part with an item for so little because of their desperate plight, or be selling it for someone else who will undoubtedly be angry when they learn of the price they accepted. In Dharamsala, refugee merchants are generally straight forward about revealing the provenience of their goods, identifying who and where they were made, and the value of the materials they include.

Many tourists compare the Tibetans favorably to Indian merchants, attributing the Tibetans' demeanor to a deep spirituality. Indians are not so impressed. One traveling gemstone trader from Jaipur expressed his belief that Tibetan reserve was in fact a clever non-verbal form of "performative bargaining." Referring to Tibetan merchants murmuring prayers in their shops, the trader demanded: "I ask you, why do the Tibetans always do this?"

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"Strong belief?" I offered.

"No! This is only for Westerners! They sit and they don't look at you. You ask again, they are doing prayers. Then they say 250 Rs. for something you can get for 100 Rs. in Jaipur. This is only for impression. 'Oh [thinks the Westerner] this is an honest person, not like Indian people, only for money.' This is only for Westerners. Okay, no problem, everyone has their own way of doing business. They get sponsors, Western help. Very good trick, but I don't judge."

Having seen Tibetans murmuring their "Manis" in any and all contexts, and having observed that their behavior, dress, and demeanor in shops parallels that elsewhere, I do not believe that Tibetan merchants self-consciously "stage authenticity" to attract the generosity of foreign consumers. The normal pursuit of their cultural productions and spiritual life -- altered in exile though they are -- has been enough to attract consumers. In markets in Tibet and the settlements in Nepal, however, where Western clients are less numerous, Tibetan merchants may be as aggressive and insistent as any. While I am only speculating, I would suggest that the Tibetans' reserve is related to the small size of the McLeod Ganj bazaar, the lack (thus far) of serious competition from outside their community, and their long experience with Westerners, many of them committed to the Tibetan cause. Tibetan merchants often attribute the popularity of their community to the presence of the Dalai Lama, and feel they need do nothing extraordinary to attract visitors. Reserve, honesty, and fixed prices can in this context be a more successful strategy than the manipulations described by Steiner.

Shopping in Dharamsala is thus a relaxing experience that contrasts with many tourist markets in the Third World. It is possible, however,

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that if tourism in Dharamsala continues to grow, interactions between merchants and short-term Western visitors will become briefer, more numerous, more stereotyped, and more competitive, climbing the "irritation scale" that seems to rise inexorably in growing tourism industries (Crick, 1989). Already, some merchants report that "Injees bargain more and more" frequently, especially the Israelis who have been arriving in larger numbers.

In Dharamsala, there is a clearly demarcated ethnic price structure. Westerners, assumed to have greater wealth but little knowledge of local prices, are generally charged many times the local price for goods and services ranging from spinach to sweepers. These prices are sometimes referred to as "Injee prices." Westerners sometimes seek to attain status within the foreign resident hierarchy by obtaining local prices, while travelers may hope to demonstrate their experience and savvy. Bargaining indicates that one has transcended the status of naive "tourist," that one is to be dealt with seriously.

As I spoke with a merchant in her shop, a long haired German man entered and asked for her husband. He wanted to do "serious business," as he was interested in a rather low quality dZi. The merchant ignored his request for her husband, and began bargaining.

"You can have for 6000 Rs. Ususally 10,000 , for 6000, good price, for sure!"

The German pulled out a calculator and figured out the price in dollars, then countered with an offer of 5500 Rs. The merchant shook her head, and told him about the dZi's protective properties. "If you wear, no diseases!" She then showed him an agate with "no eyes . . . cheap, no

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profit, 1000 Rs." Turning to me she added, "when poor people they need money, they sell."

"I'll pay $150!" said the German decisively. "For 6000 Rs I make two weeks holiday!"

She asked him how long he'd be in Dharamsala.

"Three days."

"Go look at the other stalls and you'll be happy with this." Then she whispered to me: "I made a mistake saying this price -- there will be no profit."

"You ask your husband -- $150!"

"No dollar," she said, "you pay Indian rupee 6000!" I imagined she could get a better exchange rate than the German.

The man's girlfriend wandered in and asked if the dZi had "eyes."

"Nein!" he said sharply.

A Tibetan monk came in and asked the merchant if she had any *damaru* (small, ritual hand drums).

"Minduk!" (none) she snapped, turning back to the German.

"I must think," he said.

"Yes, think, good," she replied.

"Dollar no problem," he stated.

"No problem you, me problem!"

He asked again for her husband.

"He ask for more, sure-- fixed price! I less money!"

"Maybe I'll come back."

While most Western travelers remain comfortable with fixed prices, Indians and Tibetans almost always engage in competitive bargaining,

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reflecting both "tradition" and a lack of trust. Market exchanges only seem to distance them further, taking on the appearance of battles of will and pride. As one merchant observed: "Western customers just buy if they like, they don't look at the price so much. Tibetans know the situation and so it's easy also. But Indians! They want to look at everything, bargain hard, and at the same times always make comments and criticize. They really make the shopkeepers angry!"

Some observers feel the Tibetans are at an advantage in exchanges with Indian tourists and would-be Indian competitors. The Indians, said one Tibetan merchant, "bargain hard but usually don't win. The [Tibetan] business people are trained to respond with sharp arrows!" Peter Brown noted the long involvement of Tibetans in the trans-Himalayan trade, contrasting it to the local Indians regional market experience. Tibetans are fluent in Tibetan, Hindi, and English, and their South Asian and international networks and trade migrations familiarize and allow them to take advantage of price variations.

The Tibetans' refusal of citizenship and assimilation, their visibility in and movement between Indian markets, and their close relationships with foreigners arouse suspicion and resentment in some Indians. Avinash Mookhy, back in 1979, wrote in The Tribune that:

> McLeod Ganj is a popular shopping centre [but] the local people complain the Tibetan shopkeepers are rude to them. To this, the Tibetans answer that most of the Indians only inquire about prices of goods but seldom buy . . . . Proper receipts are seldom issued for imported goods. The suspicion is that these goods are smuggled ones.

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> . . . There is an urgent need for a police post to check unlawful activities. [Mookhy, 1979: ?]

It should be pointed out that the Tibetans also face many disadvantages from their status as a non-citizen minority, including limited access to government officials and land ownership. Furthermore, Indian visitors also bargain intensely with the Indian merchants in Dharamsala. Fights occasionally break out in the bazaar, often over charges for long-distance phone and taxi services. Many Indian merchants are also not above cheating, as the Jaipur gem trader admitted:

> This business is very dangerous. It is very easy to cheat. Many Westerners do not know anything except the color! I know four or five people from Agra. They catch only tourists. They have good command of the languages. For four or five days they are talking like friends, taking for picnics, then telling the Westerner: "You can bring these stones to the West and sell for four or five times as much!" They talk in dollars and pounds and they put stones in a parcel and address it to the tourist's home. Bring them to the Post Office. Then after the office closes, they have a connection, and they go and get the stones in the back!

The specific stereotypes formed in the marketplace lead to general stereotypes that influence long term patterns in ethnic relations. While many Tibetans maintain friendships with Westerners drifting in an out of Dharamsala, most express little interest in non-business relations with local Indians. Said one elderly female merchant: "I do not have even a single

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Indian friend and have no idea to start one! They are not reliable long-term friends. After one or two years they look for an advantage. They are only good for hello-good-bye friends." Many Westerners adopt the anti-Indian prejudice, stereotyping the Indians as negatively as they idealize the Tibetans.

Some Indian tourists are charmed and amused by the scene in the McLeod Ganj market. Prahald Singh Skewawat contributed a short piece to the Tibetan Review . "Local Indians and even Indian tourists are relatively few and keep a low profile," he wrote. "The Tibetans are more relaxed with their unhurried pace, their slightly amused but wonderful tolerance of the tourists. . . . there is a charm and mystery about these strange people from the forbidden land" (Skewawat,1985:16-18). Others are not so favorable. Mr. Norwojee's nephew, the writer Rohinton Mistry, described a trip to Dharamsala that made it into a collection of traveler's tales entitled Worst Journeys (Mistry, 1991). Admittedly his trip coincided with the "dreaded monsoon" and water and electricity outages. However, Mistry also described how despite the fact that his uncle "loved the Tibetan people" and had helped them over the years, they still cut his water lines to fill their buckets.

Many in Dharamsala, of course, recognize exceptions to the generalized stereotypes. Growing numbers of middle class Indian tourists, Tibetan Newcomers, and new waves of Western travelers are shifting perceptions. On one occasion, an Indian farmer expounded on the many faults of the Tibetans, concluding that while they are "clever" business people, the "Tibetans are lazy. They lost their country because all they do is pujas!" But during another visit, he told me it was safe for his wife to run their chai stall even though she could not add because "Tibetan peoples

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and Western peoples are good, honest peoples. Indians and Punjabis are always cheating her." However, he continued: "before all Tibetans were honest, now only most are."

A Tibetan restaurateur complained to me that while Westerners were honest, she could no longer trust Tibetans. Others say that Israeli travelers cheat or bargain too harshly, and some complain about a new wave of long-haired visitors. "Why don't we get decent Westerners?" one young Tibetan man demanded. Another merchant observed that "ever since the big Indian hotels have come we get more good Indians. They buy."

**Tensions Break the Surface**

Exile and tourism have generated new ethnic confrontations and competition for the Tibetans. The growing Tibetan middle class is doing better than Indians without the means to take advantage of the new tourism industry, and there is considerable resentment that the Tibetans refuse to assimilate and receive much more attention and support from Western travelers.

In 1992, Arjun Aktoch wrote a scathing editorial in The Statesman, calling for the refugees to accept citizenship by the year 2000 or face expulsion. He wrote that:

> As refugees they enjoy the best of both worlds, with special treatment and concessions, freedom to do what they want without being subject to the law of the land. . . . What rankles is that 30 years ago, when the Tibetans first came, they were employed as casual labour on roads. Today they live in pucca houses and employ Indian labour for construction work. [The Statesman, July 9, 1992: pg?]

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At a Dharamsala party one evening, I was told by a high CTA official that Western scholars should conduct "research on race relations." Previous anthropological accounts of Tibetans in exile have often downplayed or ignored ethnic conflict (Corlin,1975; Forbes, 1989; Goldstein,1978; Nowak, 1984: von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1990). In 1978, Goldstein observed that while economic growth spurred by refugee settlements in Mysore had benefited both the Tibetan and Indian communities, there was little interaction between them save employer/employee and market exchanges. It is precisely these interactions, I would argue, that largely structure ethnic relations.

Over a decade later, Fürer-Haimendorf wrote that Tibetans in South India employed Indian day-laborers and had "gradually become entrepreneurs similar to Indian high caste landlords depending on the labor of Harijans" (1990: 79). However, he continued, due to the "tactful conduct" of the Tibetans, this did not "antagonize the upper strata of the indigenous Hindu population." Perhaps not, but we are left to wonder about the lower strata.

The reality is that economic relations between Indians and Tibetans has given rise to simmering tensions that occasionally flare into violence. In 1985, on Janpath road in Delhi, Tibetan shopkeepers pulled down their shutters to protest the presence of Gujarati women selling handicrafts on the pavement in front of their shops. The women claimed that the Tibetans harassed and assaulted them, pouring water over their fabrics and assaulting them. The women now hawk their wares on a side alley around the corner form the Tibetan shops. In 1987, in Orissa, "tribals" complained that 600 Tibetan families had been placed on tribal land, and

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that the Tibetans paid field laborers and servants below the minimum wage. A local development committee called on the population to free itself from "Tibetan bondage" (UNI report, Feb. 17, 1987). In 1992, the Chair of Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies expressed the CTA's "concern" over "recurring disputes" between refugees and Indians in Himachal Pradesh, although he pointed out that flare ups were relatively minor and infrequent considering a 30 year Tibetan presence (Sunday Tribune, July 5, 1992).

In April 1994, tensions exploded in Dharamsala when a young man of the Gaddi community was stabbed to death by a young Tibetan after a fight over a taxi. In response, the CTA complex and many Tibetan shops and homes were ransacked and looted by local Indians carrying clubs and iron rods. Some of the rioters, I have been told, were local merchants the Tibetans had considered friendly.

The father of the stabbed youth refused a 15,000 Rs. compensation, arguing it was not equal to a lost life, and egged on by members of the Hindu chauvinist Bharatriya Janata Party (BJP), some Indians marched through Dharamsala demanding the expulsion of the Tibetans. They also sought an inquiry into land deals obtained through bribes and so-called "Benami" transactions, in which Tibetans buy houses in the names of Indian citizens from Lahaul and Spiti (Tibetan Buddhist regions). The Indians linked these deals to skyrocketing land and commodity prices. They also complained that while Indian shops and stalls encroaching on streets are pulled down by the authorities, some 300 illegal Tibetan structures on Bhagsu road are left standing (Times of India, May 8, 1994). The Times of India reported that in early May, 1992, pamphlets were strewn all over Dharamsala reading "This is a special warning to all Tibetans. If you

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people do not leave by July 25, we will bomb you out." In response, the Dalai Lama announced plans to move.

It is likely that some local Indians, left behind by the growth of tourism, are scapegoating the refugees for growing inequalities within their own communities. Saberwal (1996) suggests that stratification among Gaddi herders may be developing along lines observed among East African pastoralists, in which a few families own large herds while most families own very few animals. Deforestation and increasing population add to demographic pressures, and rising prices and competition put investments in tourist services out of the reach of poorer villagers. Add to this relative impoverishment the humiliation of seeking employment from the once poor refugees, and the BJP has found fertile ground around Dharamsala, and has supported several Gaddi candidates.

Although the Tibetans are sometimes in competition with small merchants -- much of the BJP's constituency-- other Indian interests would be devastated should the Dalai Lama relocate, in addition to the considerable political embarrassment this would create. The Dalai Lama was persuaded to stay, and the presence of the Tibetans continues to both benefit and infuriate the Indian community, and tourism continues to differentiate Dharamsala along ethnic lines. Tourism is also asymmetric along gender lines, the subject of the next chapter.

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# POSTCARDS FROM SHANGRI-LA: TOURISM, TIBETAN REFUGEES, AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION

by

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# CHAPTER NINE
# MARKETING LIBERATION? TIBETAN REFUGEE WOMEN AND TOURISM

> Diasporic experiences are always gendered. But there is a tendency for theoretical accounts of diasporas and diaspora cultures to hide this fact, to talk of travel and displacement in unmarked ways, thus normalizing male experiences. [Clifford 1994: 313]

This chapter will demonstrate the variety of experiences, opportunities, and outcomes of the tourism industry for Tibetan refugee women, a variety that challenges unilinear assumptions about the "development process." Just as tourism has essentialized Tibetan ethnicity and brought it into competition with the Indian population, with contradictory effects, so too has the commoditization of Tibetan culture had diverse effects upon gender roles and relations. These impacts cannot be understood by approaches which either anticipate an undifferentiated exploitation of women under patriarchal capitalism, or assume unequivocal "progress" though economic development.

This chapter will examine Tibetan women in Tibet, in exile, and in the imagination of Westerners. Claims for the relatively high status of Tibetan women, we shall see, are key to both Tibetan nationalist appeals and to the desires of Western seekers and consumers, for whom Shangri-la must embody contemporary values of sexual egalitarianism. However, the position of Tibetan women has been somewhat idealized, and the aims and values of Tibetan refugee women often conflict with their would-be Western benefactors.

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While tourism has brought real benefits to many women in Dharamsala, it has had unequal impacts linked to differential class positions, ethnicity, and kin networks. While the tourism industry supports the individual autonomy and even enrichment of many Tibetan men and women, it frequently places women in less remunerative, lower status positions. Although refugee women have made "progress" by Western criteria of civic rights, men retain dominance of political and cultural institutions, and some refugee women may actually enjoy less autonomy in exile than previously.

Many problems faced by women, however, are less a direct result of tourism per se than of gender ideologies, exile, and integration into a sexually unequal transnational economy. Tibetan women are disadvantaged both by domestic roles that preclude certain types of economic risk taking, travel, and the international networking so important to the diaspora, as well as by male privilege as the public representatives of a commoditized Tibetan culture and religion.

**Tourism and Women**

In Bananas, Beaches, and Bases, Enloe (1989) describes the importance of women in international tourism as both consumers and producers of goods and imagery. Enloe claims that the tourism industry requires women's inferior position as low-paid service workers, prostitutes, handicraft artisans, and icons of the eroticized, exotic other. "The very structure of international tourism needs patriarchy to survive" (Enloe, 1989:35). Margaret Swain, however, points out that Enloe's global generalizations are based on little empirical data (Swain, 1993). Tourism is a complex phenomena with multiple and often contradictory impacts on

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local communities, women, and handicraft artisans. Swain argues that there is a need for greater specificity in sociological accounts of tourism, describing forces internal and external to each community, such as gender relations, class and kinship structures, and state and international forces.

Gender dynamics in tourism industries have not been anticipated well, Swain writes, by "Development Theory" which envisions unproblematic economic growth and "modernization," or by sweeping generalizations assuming the universal exploitation of women by "patriarchal capitalism." More nuanced analyses can be found in a recent volume edited by June Nash on women handicraft workers in Mexico and Central America, and in the work of Lynn Stephen on Zapotec weavers and Karin Tice on Kuna embroiderers (Nash, 1993; Stephen, 1991; Tice, 1995). Such accounts describe how women's position in crafts industries vary with their position in local class and ethnic structures. The impacts of new income streams can be contradictory. While women may gain a new independence, gender and class tensions can be exacerbated in their communities and households.

Through a comparison of four communities of indigenous and refugee artisans subject to tourism -- the Sani, Kuna, Hmong, and Maya -- Swain concluded that ethnic minorities may resist cultural assimilation through the production of traditional arts without gaining much power within their larger state societies. While artisan production can facilitate the movement of individual women beyond traditional gender limits, empowering them within the household, women generally do not thereby acquire influence at higher levels, where market and state forces tend to lead to "the same old stuff" (1993:32).

It is certainly too early to concede that tourism and artisan

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production cannot lead to a more general empowerment of women, or that the political limitations Swain describes will not change over time. As we shall see, however, the case of Dharamsala lends some support to Swain's generalizations.

**Impressions of Equality and Gender Complementarity**

Even without considering the problematic nature of such universalistic categories as "Women," it is difficult to generalize about the changing "status of Tibetan women" due to a lack of empirical data (Aziz, 1987), and to the variety of social formations within the decentralized Tibetan state and surrounding culturally Tibetan regions prior to 1959 (Samuel, 1993). Accounts of travelers, British officials, missionaries, and anthropologists do, however, present a general impression of sexual egalitarianism relative to neighboring Asian societies. Charles Bell, a British official-cum-Tibetologist who traveled widely in Tibet at the turn of the century, claimed that:

> When a traveler enters Tibet from the neighboring nations in China or India, few things impress him more vigorously or more deeply than the position of the Tibetan women. Accustomed to mix with the other sex throughout their lives, they are at ease with men and can hold their own as well as any women in the world. . . .
> . . . those who have studied domestic life in Tibet can hardly fail to agree that the position of women in Tibetan society is remarkably good. [Bell, 1968 (1928):147 and 154]

More recently, Joanne Watkins has characterized gender relations

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among the Tibetan Buddhist Nyeshangte of Nepal as "fairly balanced or complementary" with "neither sex dominating the other" (1996:15). Adaptation to harsh mountain environments tends to favor a flexible sexual division of labor that maximizes use of the household labor pool and diversifies the number of tasks performed by individuals (Orlove 1985; Watkins, ibid.). In the "individualistic" economic life of pre-occupation Tibet (Samuel, 1993), the household or tenthold was the basic unit of production and consumption outside the monastic-state network. Within this sphere, women were valued as both laborers and decision makers.

In Tibet, women engaged in travel and trade, could inherit property, and initiate divorce. There were no traditions of foot binding, purdah, or suttee, and little sexual segregation outside monastic institutions. Aziz reports that there was a large degree of overlap in the sexual division of labor. Senior men sat in the local councils and were responsible for tax payments, but senior women were the custodians of the household, engaged in agricultural work and local trade, and sometimes managed herds in the absence of men. By the time they reached 40 years of age, they "might appear to be in a dominant place in the household" (Aziz, 1978:180).

Travelers, historians, and scholars of Tibetan Buddhism often have limited their substantive conversations, by choice or necessity, to male representatives of the aristocracy and monasteries. Portrayals of Tibetan society and religion have therefore been highly one-sided and idealized, and the "sociology of Tibet" has been decidedly male-centric (Aziz, 1987). The sexual egalitarianism of Tibetan society is also somewhat exaggerated by the wishful idealizations and apologetics of Western Buddhists, and by early accounts of the exotic practice of polyandry, which has been

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popularly considered a sign of female empowerment.

Despite the popularity of polyandry as a topic of research and fascination, it was not the most common form of marriage in Tibet (Aziz, 1978). Monogamous, polyandrous, and polygamous marriage varied in relation to class and demography, and arranged marriages were the norm in the upper strata. Polyandry frequently represented a strategy for retaining property undivided within the patriline (Aziz, op. cit.; Ekvall, 1968; Samuel, 1993). Schuler has demonstrated that "the other side of polyandry" (at least in the border lands of Nepal) entailed unmarried women serving as second-class domestic laborers for parents and siblings when they did not enter nunneries (Schuler, 1987). Although Tibetan women appeared to have been autonomously engaged in the economic life of Tibetan society at the lower levels, at the top, monastic and state power was in male hands.

Exile has necessarily restructured economic and social relations at both the household and community levels. The loss of land and property and the shift to trade and cultural industries has dissolved many of the traditional bases of both men's and women's power, while dismantling to some degree the class and caste distinctions of the old society. The status of refugee women varies with their placement in the new co-operative and petty capitalist productive systems as well as their access to "modern" forms of status, social mobility, and political empowerment outside the household.

Modeling itself on the capitalist democracies, the 1963 exile constitution declared that men and women are equal. The CTA has an affirmative action policy aimed at increasing the number of women in the government, and they now total about one-third of CTA employees.

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Women can vote and hold office, and have risen to positions of some influence. However, such government initiatives are somewhat limited by gender ideology and occupational roles that keep women at a disadvantage in the economic sphere. Despite the new emphasis on education for girls, for example, 63% of those receiving "qualifications" in the schools are male (ibid.). Women who have risen to high office in the CTA tend to remain in the "feminine" arenas of welfare and children, such as Minister of Education, and the women who occupy these positions generally come from the old elite.

Despite inequalities below the surface, for travelers familiar with other Asian societies refugee women appear surprisingly autonomous. Travelers interact with independent women in the marketplace and in Tibetan institutions. Refugee women constitute about 45% of the working force and are increasingly visible in the medical field, both as Allopathic and traditional Tibetan physicians (Planning Council, 1992). I asked thirty-seven short-term visitors to Dharamsala to evaluate the position of Tibetan women relative to men. Only one thought it appeared "Very Inferior." Thirteen thought it was "Equal" and twenty-three thought it "Somewhat Inferior." (No one considered women's status "Superior"). Many contrasted the position of Tibetan women to Indian women. Commented one ethnic Indian woman from Australia, Tibetan women enjoy "a lot of respect. They're allowed to show themselves. They have courage and strength." It cannot be expected that short-term visitors will perceive subtle forms of women's disadvantage. Many travelers engage with local individuals only in brief exchanges of goods, services, and money. The impressions of most travelers are formed in hotels, restaurants, and in the marketplace, and largely based on appearances.

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**Gender Differences Seen**

Foucault's notion of visual relations as power relations, of the "gaze" as an act of mastery, has recently been carried into the study of representations of the "exotic other" in social science, advertising, and tourism (Enloe, 1989; Lutz and Collins, 1991; Urry, 1990). Swain reports that while Kuna and Sani women artisans economically benefit from tourism, they "remain exoticized female images of the other, with little real power in their distinct state societies" (1993: 40). In many societies newly integrated with the global economy and subject to the gaze of "adventure travelers," the appearance of women has taken on a new significance. Women's bodies may become icons of resistance to assimilation, at once asserting ethnic identity and the maintenance of traditional (or re-invented traditional) gender relations. Women may dress in "ethnic" clothing, symbolizing the maintenance of their domestic roles, while men engage in the wage labor market wearing "modern" Western pants and shirts. Women's public appearance as icons of tradition transforms them into representatives of the authentic cultural "backstage" sought by many tourists (MacCannel, 1976), an image useful in tourism promotion. In many tourist contexts, the exoticism of the feminine is simultaneously eroticized, as in advertisements for Pacific island destinations, commonly adorned with young, semi-dressed brown-skinned women. Many travelers seek to photograph women in ethnic dress, bringing these images back to the West as evidence of their experience of the authentically other.

Tibetan women would seem likely candidates for such eroticized imagery, as Tibet was renowned for its' independent women and relatively relaxed sexual mores. The Chinese administration has provided a large mural in the Lhasa airport, visible to tourists as they are processed through

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customs, in which attractive, large breasted Tibetan women are depicted at work. While it is true that female nomads, for example, sometimes worked topless, the mural seems to reflect a Chinese conception of Tibetans as sexually promiscuous savages. Their status permits revealing portrayals -- akin to those of the 1950's National Geographic -- restricted for members of the more civilized race.

In the flashy new Indian hotels in Dharamsala, women are depicted as erotic other and exotic other, although not simultaneously. In one hotel's bar, for example, a life-sized, naked Indian (?) woman is painted upon one wall, her long hair tousled, beads of sweat running down her aroused face. A tiger's head is placed strategically over her genitalia. In another hotel restaurant, the decor evokes the mysterious (further) East. The red walls with black trim, pillars, and the dragon on the ceiling suggest China more than Tibet. The mural on one wall depicts three women who might be Tibetan, but who look more Japanese, adorned in ornate, generically Far East gowns (kimonos?). They bear gifts, perhaps to the pagoda-like temple in the background, or perhaps to the affluent guests of the hotel. The images are none too specific in ethnic terms, but seem to aim at arousing the expectation of servile East Asian womanhood during one's sojourn among the Tibetans.

The lens of Western tourist cameras in Dharamsala generally focuses upon the exotic more than the erotic. Young Tibetan men are more likely than women to engage in romantic and erotic relationships with foreigners. But dressed in the latest fashions, they are not often chosen as interesting visual representatives of the refugee community. It is above all refugees in "traditional" clothing engaged in "picturesque" activities-- spinning prayer wheels, prostrating-- which are sought as the icons of Shangri-la. Tibetan

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women are perhaps more likely to be photographed than men because they dress more often in (modified) Tibetan clothing. However, in contrast to Tibet, where market women may wear extremely photogenic headpieces, in exile personal adornment is much more subdued. Old men fingering rosaries or groups of monks in brightly colored robes, a stream of maroon, are as enticing subjects for tourist photographs as Tibetan women. We cannot assume that women are always the preferred eroticized subject of tourist photography, particular for young Western "adventure" travelers, among whom women are as likely to carry cameras as are men.

In Tibetan restaurants and hotels in Dharamsala, by far the most popular image is that of the Dalai Lama, sometimes accompanied by world leaders. Western postcards are frequently displayed on walls and shelves, as are Tibetan flags and posters of local and Tibetan landscapes. Representations of ordinary Tibetans are infrequent, and pictures of Indians quite rare (save for an occasional Gandhi or politician with the Dalai Lama). The photographs and posters found in Tibetan businesses reflect the values, aspirations, and strategies of the refugees: the marriage of religion, politics, and nationalism as embodied by the Dalai Lama; nostalgia for the homeland; tension with and segregation from the local population; and political and material appeals to Western travelers. The image of Tibetan women is not (yet) deployed for these purposes to a great extent.

Instead, the representation of Tibetan culture is primarily male. At the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, the walls of the stairways and the hall on the second floor, which houses a museum and classrooms, are lined with photographs of Tibetan subjects. In 1993, the display included these photographs:

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Tibetan Men alone: 40

Tibetan Women alone: 16

Tibetan Men and Women: 31

Monks: 32

Nuns: 0

Artisans: 5 (4 of Women weaving)

Traders: 3 (All male)

Laborers: 4 (All male)

Nomads: 5 (Men and women)

Aristocrats: 5 (Men and women)

Landscapes: 6

Secular Architecture: 7

Monasteries: 11

Destroyed Monasteries: 16

Potala (Dalai Lamas palace): 4

Monastic Interiors: 9

Secular Interiors: 0

Lama Dances (Religious): 8

Tibetan Opera (Secular): 1

The official cultural and social hierarchy is here revealed in visual images reflecting official CTA values. Religious subjects predominate over secular ones. Aristocrats are depicted infrequently, and as historical figures, reflecting the partial leveling of refugee society. It is interesting to note that among the few photographs of the local Gaddi pastoralists displayed, women in traditional dress are most frequently represented by a margin of eight to two. At the Tibetan Library then, the image of the

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community's own traditional culture is predominately male, while that of the Other is predominately female.

Perhaps this mirrors the hierarchy so common to touristic representations: the inferior feminine represents the inferior Other; the masculine represents power in one's own and superior groups.

**Gendered Religion, Gendered Tourism**

Despite the importance of women as in lay domestic religious practice, public religious culture, perhaps the cultural arena most appealing to foreign consumers, is largely represented by male incarnations and monks. It is true that some of the most important deities in Tibetan Buddhism are female, such as Drolma and Palden Lhamo, and there were several important female incarnations and religious figures, such as Yeshe Tsogyel, the disciple and consort of Padmasambhava. Part of the feminist reconstruction of Buddhism is to publicize accounts of such miraculous women. But as Janice Willis (1987) Barbara Aziz (1987), and Anne Klein (1985) have pointed out, such stories cannot be taken as representative of social reality. The most important incarnations, who wielded political as well as spiritual power, were male. Women were held to be less capable spiritually. Female practitioners still pray to be released in the next life from their "lower birth" (the literal meaning of the Tibetan word for woman, *skyes-dman* ) and be reborn as men. While monks are generally respected, nuns are often considered to be running away from family life, or thought to have been unable to find a willing marriage partner.

While foreign women are as active in Buddhist studies in Dharamsala as are men, Tibetan monks receive far more attention and donations than do nuns, even from female practitioners. This is due in part to greater

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wealth and influence of the male monasteries, but also to the monk's higher levels of education, bilingualism, and public relations savvy. They far more frequently play the role as teachers and gurus of Western seekers. Monasteries operate craft shops, restaurants, and guest houses in Dharamsala, and organize tours of monk artisans and performers abroad. The nunneries have few such enterprises, instead relying on volunteers and the Tibetan administration for support. Most tourists have no idea where the nunneries are located, and few tourists have any contact with Tibetan nuns. There have been some attempts to improve the visibility and status of Tibetan nuns, some of whom are now studying philosophy at the Dialectics Institute, but attempts to initiate full ordination for nuns within the Tibetan tradition are often considered an intrusion by Western feminist practitioners. One area where nuns do receive a significant amount of support is as victims of Chinese oppression. Stories of nun's torture and resistance are probably more frequently elicited and published than any other aspect of their lives. Nuns have become nationalist symbols, represented as victims of ethnic oppression, but rarely as victims of gender inequality.

Many Western spiritual seekers, having rejected secular modernity and their own religious heritage, grasp at a seemingly uncorrupted Eastern spirituality and often turn a blind eye to social inequalities in their adopted traditions. Serious female practitioners, however, soon confront a sexism that is tied to Buddhist attitudes toward gender differences. There have therefore been several attempts to "reconstruct" Buddhism within a feminist framework. Rita Gross (1993), for example, argues that the essence of Buddhist teachings are incompatible with patriarchy, while Klein (1985) believes that it is Tibetan society, rather than Buddhism itself, that

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does not live up to egalitarian ethics. Despite Gross's protest that her status as an "insider" (Buddhist practitioner) in no way conflicts with her analysis of Buddhist history and social ethics, much of her argument is an apologetic, and demonstrates the limitations of sociological analyses conducted by believers. Many travelers and Western Dharma students, when confronted with sexism in Tibetan society or by their spiritual teachers, make excuses similar to Gross's argument. One must separate the Tibetan cultural overlay, which is historically contingent, they say, from the core Buddhist philosophy, which is eternally valid. The Buddha's reluctance to allow women into the spiritual community is rationalized as "a teaching appropriate to the social context" rather than the Buddha's own values. To question the omniscience of the Buddha, since we now "know" that men and women are spiritually equal, would plunge the Dharma into the mire of history and relative truth. Such a reduction is unacceptable to many scholars and practitioners in Dharamsala who, who having rejected their own religious heritage and Western humanism, grasp at idealized foreign absolutes.

When Tibetan Buddhism is presented to a Western audience it is, on the surface, more sexually egalitarian. In the Dharma classes taught at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, equal numbers of women study philosophy, and one of the two translators is a Western woman, although both of the instructors are Tibetan men. Traditional biases still occasionally surface. A 30 year old American woman complained about a particular lecture by one of the teachers:

> He really went on about women in a derogatory way. 'How to choose a wife;' outlining all these really sexist things 'quiet, co-operative,' you

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know. He seemed to have a low opinion of the family in general which is where women can have some power. The [Western] women were surprised but no one said anything.

Phallocentric Buddhism is not only the fault of Tibetan attitudes but of the Western audience. At Tushita, a retreat center for Westerners above Dharamsala talks are sometimes given by Western nuns, but during my fieldwork period the Tibetans invited to give talks were always men. An administrator at Namgyal monastery told me that his "impression is that more foreign women come to Dharamsala. . . . Most of my foreign friends are women." These women are much more likely to sponsor a monk than a nun. A common sight in the restaurants of McLeod Ganj are middle-aged Western women treating "their" monk to a nice meal.

One day at the Tibetan Library, I came across the following bit of "found data," scribbled in the premier issue of Tricycle: The Buddhist Review, an American journal which features articles on topics such as teachers and authority, race, and sexuality:

"Photos of men-27
Photos of women-4
Men and women-2"

For Westerners too, Buddhism presents a male face.

**Tibetan Women In Handicraft Production**

The gendered nature of Tibetan religious culture is mirrored in the productive process. Tibetan women are largely engaged in handicraft production as employees rather than managers, more likely to be photographed as smiling weavers than interviewed as master artisans. Men

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nearly monopolize the high status arts -- such as painting, metal work, and woodcarving -- which entail the time-consuming production of religious objects. Masters of these arts can work privately for much higher wages than can be earned in the CTA's craft centers. Women primarily work in the less spiritually significant -- and less remunerative -- crafts such as tailoring and weaving, in which designs are frequently modified for Western tastes and there is a growing emphasis on rapid, standardized production. Men may become "artists," while women generally remain "craft workers."

None of the thangka masters I spoke with had heard of any female thangka painters in Tibet prior to 1959. Tenpa Choepel, the Norbulingka master, told me that while he didn't "think there are any restrictions on women painters in the texts," he had never had a female student. "According to Tibetan tradition, he said, "women don't do certain things, like thangka painting. People think that if a woman has done one--it's awkward, even though the Buddha never said one word against it." Sangay Yeshi, the teacher at the Tibetan Library's former thangka school, pointed out that "according to tradition, one who is a painter should have taken vows [been ordained]." But nuns cannot be fully ordained within the Tibetan tradition. Said one of Tenpa Choepel's students: "I feel that when someone makes a painting they should be ordained. It's very precious; women doing it is strange." In fact, most male painters are not ordained either.

Despite the continuation of traditional gender attitudes, exile has brought inevitable changes. The social-welfare state-in-exile not only provides education to both boys and girls, but also provides new occupations and "rehabilitative" positions wherever they can be found. The

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preservation ideology further loosens customary restrictions. Commented one monk painter: "According to Buddhist teachings, women can't do it [thangka painting]. But according to our situation, the need for preservation, anybody can do it; even people without a philosophical background, even women and laymen. They see the importance from a cultural point of view." Merchants and teachers have estimated the number of thangka painters in Dharamsala at about 200. I learned of three female painters among them. Sangay Yeshi has taught several foreigners at the Tibetan Library's school but only one woman. She studied for six years and "was very good," he said, "but then she got married and always tells me that once you start a family, there's no time for painting."

At Upper TCV in Dharamsala, there were two female painters in 1993. They were quite reserved, in contrast to the seven men who constantly made joking commentaries during my visit. To my embarrassment and secret gratitude my translator and the other painters prodded the women to speak with me. One, a nun, was painting a White Tara (Drolma). She mainly paints Taras, she told me, they are "easy" and usually have only one main figure. The nun was born in Kham. Her parents were farmers and she never had any ambition to become a painter. She walked over the passes out of Tibet, she told me, only because "I wished to see His Holiness. The conditions weren't so bad." With her parents' previous approval, she took nun's vows while on pilgrimage in Bodhgaya. She wanted to enter Ganden Choeling nunnery in McLeod Ganj, but she says she didn't have a sponsor and there was no place for her. She was "too old" for classes at TCV, and there was no vacancy in the tailoring section where many women work. There was, however, a space in the painting class. "That's how I became a thangka painter;" by default.

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Being a female thangka painter is "no problem at all," she said. I have learned since interviewing her that she was later admitted to Ganden Choeling, and with all the prayers the nuns conduct for needed donations, she had no time for painting. Her sole female colleague was born in India. She told me:

> I had an interest in becoming a painter, but at that time there were a lot of big boys in the school and I was afraid, so I started carpet weaving. But there was one girl, a Newcomer from Tibet, doing painting. Then when I got sick from meningitis, the doctor told me not to do hard work, so I started thangka painting. . . . The thangka master was not encouraging nor discouraging. But he did say that in Tibet there was no tradition of women doing paintings, that people didn't believe they could do them. But friends at school were very encouraging.

At the Centre for Tibetan Arts and Crafts all the trainees in the fiberglass molding, metal crafts, wood carving, and thangka classes were male in 1993. The tailoring section, however, employed a number of women. In the tailoring centers at the Norbulingka, the Center for Tibetan Arts and Crafts, the Handicraft Co-operative, and Namgyal monastery, the tailors are a mix of men and women. Most designs are created by men or by Western women. Teachers and managers also tend to be male, partially due to their greater expertise. In pre-1959 Tibet many women sewed clothing at home, but older artisans report that most professional tailors were male. Lhakchung, the tailor master at Upper TCV school, told me that "in Tibet most of the tailors were men. Maybe one quarter were

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women. We had a few in the guild [in Lhasa]. . . . Of course the best were men. . . . but here in the handicraft center, seventy-five percent are girls." Another tailor master remembered that "only the best tailors" were allowed into the guild, and so "all were men." In exile, the CTA's handicraft centers are designed to employ the "weakest sectors" of the community such as orphans, new arrivals, and widows (Planning Council, 1992). TCV's handicraft centers provide job training to students unable to excel academically. One teacher told me that as girls "go higher and higher in studies, they can't do it. Only a man can do it, so they have no choice but to join the handicraft center."

I never witnessed any women engaged in metal work. When dropping in on a silversmith one day, his wife was sitting in his workshop, hammering away. It was considered a big joke, and I was encouraged to take a picture. On another occasion I asked a silversmith what he wished for his daughter's future. "I would hope that she would finish her schooling and then serve our government," he said. "But if she can't finish eighth class well, then she should resign and pick up something practical, like tailoring or thangka painting." Surprised that he mentioned thangka painting, I asked if she might also consider metal work. He paused and thought a moment before continuing: "Tibetan women don't take much interest in art, but these silver designs, women can do it. I know two or three women who do the designing, but not the hammering. My daughter could design but not hammer; this takes a lot of strength."

Like metalwork, the gender division of labor in carpet factories is explained as a result of differential strength and talent, and like tailoring, a largely female work force produces under male direction. At the Handicraft Co-operative in Dharamsala, there are approximately 100

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weavers, all of them women. The manager is male, as is the elderly carpet designer, a former painter. There are three carpet instructors, one woman and two male. All ten carpet cutters are male. The weaver Nyima told me that the co-operative used to employ both male and female weavers, but now very few Tibetan men weave. She gave two very different reasons for this. "Women are better weavers," she explained. "Men have clumsy hands; women have small, skilled hands. Carpet weaving is women's work; if I see a man weaving it doesn't look right." However Nyima also recognized that this idea had something to do with different gender expectations and options. "Before many men wove," she said, "but the income was small and the work hard, so the men left. But women like the cheap rooms the co-operative provides. If they leave they have no house." Her own husband used to work in the Co-op, but now has a stall selling clothes and electronic goods. "This has a little better income; also less hard work!" Nyima explained.

The center also employs elderly Tibetan women to card wool, and some twenty-five Indian women knit sweaters for about thirty-five rupees apiece (a bit more than one U.S. dollar). One of the managers told me that "local people will work for less and they don't need training." A Tibetan woman is in charge of the sweater contracting, handing out photographs or examples for the Indian women to copy. Whereas women are not seen as spiritually or artistically as gifted as men, they excel in trade and are often said to be more responsible with money than are men. The center's two shops are staffed by women who earn salaries of 1300 Rs. per month, substantially higher than the weavers' 500-700 Rs. per month.

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**Market Women**

Nyima takes a three month break from carpet weaving every winter when she and her husband sell sweaters. Nyima's husband arrived while we were talking about the sweater trade and broke into the conversation, expounding on the capabilities of women. "Selling is good, and caring for the children and caring for the home. Business -- they can sell more. Girls can sell sweaters better." Nyima's friend added: "If two women and two men have stalls, the Indians go to the women. Women can talk more frankly and Indians like women better." This perception is shared by many Tibetans, while some Indians express the opinion that Tibetan men are "off smuggling" while the women mind the shops.

Women were always participants in Tibetan trade. Klein (1985) points out that women all over Tibet engaged in trade, and that in eastern Tibet horse traders were reportedly unwilling to conclude deals without the presence of their wives. In Lhasa, women owned their own businesses and ran shops. Aziz (1978) reports that in D'ing-ri, senior urban women often traded and traveled. Bell wrote that:

> women may often manage the shops and the retail trade generally. Especially this is the case in Lhasa. Men take charge of the commercial dealings which necessitate journeys. And in any case in which the trade transaction is a large one the decision as a rule rests with the man. [Bell, 1928: 157]

Wealthy and aristocratic trading families and the monasteries, however, maintained trading monopolies. Thus major commerce was under the control of men.

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On July 19, 1993 I took a census of the open-air stalls in the McLeod Ganj market. Fifteen were operated by Tibetan women, one by an Indian woman (wearing a Tibetan chuba) and one by a Nepali woman. Nine were operated by Tibetan men, and one by an Indian man. Women are not only regarded as better sales representatives, they are generally considered more prudent in financial matters. Tibetan girls are often seen behind the counter of crafts shops, while their brothers remain in school or hang out with their friends or Western travelers. Some Tibetans say it is no special advantage to have male children. There is some concern, however, of the cultural effects of the marketplace on young Tibetan women. An official in the CTA's Finance department wrote that the sweater trade:

> has lured many young girls mostly from settlements to expose themselves in the Hi-fi metropolitan Indian cities and this has in the process made many of these ignorant girls pollute the cultural integrity, thus leaving undesirable impressions on the whole society [Kontsa, 1990:18]

Such a concern for wholesomeness and "cultural integrity" apparently has developed in exile along with new notions about sexuality, decorum, and ethnic identity that may be more restrictive for women than in pre-occupation Tibet. This is particulary true in Dharamsala, with it's numerous officials, elites, and religious figures. (This will be discussed more fully in Chapter 12). Cross-cutural comparisons have led many to conclude that women's status is greatest where men and women contribute nearly equally to subsistence, a situation that characterized much of pre-

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occupation Tibet (Aziz, 1978; Samuel, 1993; Sanday 1981; Watkins, 1996). Although refugee women engage in trade both locally and throughout South Asia, long distance trade, particulary international trade, tends to be more a masculine sphere. Thus, as Watkins (1996) reports for Nyeshangte traders, increased integration with the fully monetized, international economy may lead to reductions in the significance of the local and household economies and the relative power of women.

I interviewed "Pema," a fifty year old married woman with three children, one afternoon in her shop in McLeod Ganj. Before fleeing Tibet in 1959, Pemas' parents earned what she called a "middle" income in the D'ingri region, transporting rice across the Himalayas and selling it for cash in Shigatse, Gyantse, and Lhasa. They left Tibet when she was sixteen years old, crossing into Nepal, where the Sherpas "were very kind to the Tibetan people." They made their way to Darjeeling, where she knitted and sold sweaters, then to Shimla and Manali, where she built roads for four years. Pema moved to Dharamsala in 1970. Her family began selling food and milk, but with the competition from the established Indian shops, they profited little. Some Tibetans who had settled in Delhi prior to 1959 recommended that the family begin selling crafts. She sold a few of the precious objects and jewelry she had managed to bring out of Tibet, and was able to open a small crafts shop about 15 years ago, "one of the first in McLeod Ganj," she told me.

Prior to the Chinese occupation, Tibetan individuals often specialized in one or several economic activities within a diversified household economy (Aziz, 1978, Samuel, 1993). In exile, this strategy often continues, for there are not enough agricultural resources to support most

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of the settlements. Pema's husband does most of the buying and travels constantly, while she does most of the selling. One daughter is in college and Pema hopes she will obtain a salaried job after graduation. Another daughter is working in the United States. Her son runs a shop in Dharamsala with his wife. "Girls and boys are the same," she told me. "Maybe girls are more efficient, because they are more obedient to the parents. In Tibetan society there was no difference between girls and boys!" I looked skeptically at my translator Karma. She continued, "according to tradition the eldest son must take care of us, and he will take over the business."

**Kin, Class, Ethnicity: Competition and Western Sponsorship**

Christine Gailey has pointed out that "gender relations rarely are abstracted from other aspects of one's social identity in kinship societies" (quoted in Tice, 1995:14). "The position of women" varies with their individual position in kin, class, and ethnic structures. Formerly "egalitarian" (or complementary) relations may become exploitative and asymmetrical as household and community economies are further integrated into the unequal international development process (Etienne and Leacock, 1980; Nash and Safra, 1985). An example of both these processes at work is provided by Watkins, who reports that some Nyeshangte women have been able to take advantage of new oportunites in tourism by operating trekker's inns along the Annapurna circuit, while in general she percieves a loss of autonomy for rural women as men increasingly dominate trade (Watkins, 1996).

In petty commodity producing communities, women and children's "unaccounted" domestic labor may enable some degree of capital

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accumulation (Nash, 1993; Stephan, 1993). In exile, the loss of landed resources required many Tibetan households to make a transition to petty commodity production, and later many used their savings and/or loans, often from kin, to initiate petty mercantile or even capitalist enterprises. These enterprises may employ the labor of poor Tibetan and Indian women in their enterprises. The employment of Indian children, mostly boys, as domestic servants frees women to engage further in profitable enterprises, and may be one reason that Tibetan girls generally attend school. Although middle and upper class women thereby gain a good deal of economic autonomy at the household level, men's dominance of international trade, the public representation of Tibetan culture and religion, and the higher status arts leaves them with the advantage at higher levels of social and economic power. Meanwhile, the empowerment of individual merchant and capitalist women cannot be taken as indicative of the general empowerment of "Women" across class or ethnic boundaries.

Exile has had contradictory effects upon poor Tibetan women without extensive or affluent kinship networks in India. The opportunities for women provided by trade and tourism, as well as the centers of cultural production and education sponsored by the Tibetan administration, offer a new independence from the traditional corporate household. "Love marriages," rather than arranged marriages, are becoming more common. Without landed assets as an incentive to the preservation of the corporate household, many families fission, and polyandry is increasingly rare. Supported by wage labor, and sometimes supplied with a subsidized living space, widowed, divorced, and separated women are now able to set up independent households. My wife, JoAnn Vrilikas, who studied the lives of Tibetan Buddhist nuns, reports that few India-born Tibet women choose to

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enter nunneries, a previous alternative to familial life.

This "liberation" is, however, a two-edged sword. Single mothers are generally poor, especially if they have few kin in Dharamsala. As we have seen, because initial costs are very high, and space is limited, it may be difficult to start businesses in Dharamsala. Kinship ties are often vital for initiating enterprises. Kin may offer credit at interest rates a low as one and one half percent, and provide networks for obtaining goods at reduced prices. As in other Tibetan households, single and Newcomer women may engage in diverse arenas of cultural production and trade, but with fewer members in the household to complement their labor. These women tend to become dependent on the CTA's social welfare system or on better connected private entrepreneurs. The weaver Nyima, for example, supplements her income by weaving nights and holidays for a woman whose son sells carpets in the United States. Because women retain the primary responsibility for children, they are also less willing to take financial risks, and more frequently settle for secure but low paid jobs in the CTA's crafts centers.

Ethnic tensions between Tibetans and Indians thus far seems to preclude women from the two communities cooperating for their common interests, and women often distrust the motivations of men. One lower-income woman told me: "From 100 Tibetan men, maybe 25 are good. Maybe half Western [men] are good. From 100 Indian men, one is good." Differences in ethnicity, gender, class, and place of origin divide women and men who largely compete along household and kin lines in the private economy. The "leveling" mechanisms common to many peasant societies persist in Dharamsala: fears of gossip, jealousy, and even sabotage prevent many women from independent actions which might improve their status.

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Many women thus seek sponsors among travelers and foreign residents who regularly send money for education, living expenses, or even to invest in business. While raising the quality of life for many Tibetans, such sponsorships foster a dependence on the sometimes temporary generosity of Western patrons. The case of a Tibetan woman I call "Songmo" and her Western patron "Nancy" illustrates the interweaving of gender, class, political sympathies, and ethnic divisions framed within unequal international relationships and exchange rates.

Nancy, an American volunteer, planned to organize a women's co-op to produce and sell fine handicrafts. Her main purpose, she said, was to meet the needs of her friend "Songmo," a new arrival from Tibet with an infant son. Her husband was an artisan whose income was not sufficient to meet their needs. Songmo had no kin in India her small family was about to lose the room provided by the Tibetan administration. "She fell through the cracks in the Tibetan safety net," Nancy explained.

Songmo's former job in a Tibetan restaurant had paid a pittance for a long, hard working day. Songmo also tried knitting socks for a Swiss couple. The young couple supported themselves and their Buddhist studies in Dharamsala by buying crafts in India and selling them for a much higher price in Europe. They bought Indian shawls for 80 rupees, using Tibetan women to bargain with the Indians. The couple then sold the shawls in Switzerland for the equivalent of 1200 rupees. They bought socks Songmo knitted for 30 rupees and sold them for 300 rupees. Although the Swiss paid Songmo a better wage than they paid Indian women, Songmo quit when she discovered how little of the eventual profit she received.

Nancy wanted to form a co-operative of newly arrived refugee

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women to knit higher quality goods than those usually produced in Dharamsala. The cooperative would share profits fairly and be run by the producers. Nancy had already found some prospective buyers in Delhi. Although she had some initial problems locating sources of fine wool, the biggest obstacle were the women themselves. They were reluctant to give up whatever small security their current jobs might provide, and afraid of the opinions of others. The women "wanted it all to be secret," Nancy told me. They were "afraid that people would be jealous and even try to sabotage it." Songmo never really wanted a co-operative, she wanted her own private business. Songmo imagined hiring poor Tibetans and Indian women who would work for low wages, while Nancy found clients in the West. Having learned that the cost of labor and goods are ethnically and nationally unequal, she wanted to take advantage of the differentials herself. Not only was Indian labor cheaper, should the venture fail she would not be accountable to her peers in the Tibetan community. Nancy was troubled by this. "To sell in the West," she said, "you need sympathy [for the Tibetan cause] and I already had potential backers for a *Tibetan* women's co-op. It would be dishonest if we employed Indian women."

The idea fizzled out, although Nancy later took carpets Songmo made to sell to Western friends. Songmo "feels she'd be exploited dealing with shopkeepers here," Nancy said, "and also thinks she'd get more money from the West. So she probably wants me to be in control and be responsible for the business end of things." Unable to take advantage of ethnic differences, and unwilling to be exploited herself, Songmo still hoped to profit from uneven exchange rates, but remained dependent on Western sympathy and expertise.

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**A Postcard from Yangchen**

"Yangchen" is a single mother with three sons. Over the years, as her English has improved, she has increasingly become friendly with Westerners, and has come to rely upon them for a significant part of her income. When I interviewed her in the spring of 1993, she had already been interviewed several times. She had also served as a translator for two anthropologists, an American and a Swiss, researching women's issues, and recently for a film crew interviewing Tibetan nuns. When she was paid, she gave each nun they interviewed a share, sponsored some prayers at the nunnery, and kept a small amount for herself.

Yangchen's family was relatively affluent in Tibet. Her father was a "fallen" monk who had become a government official. Yangchen said her mother's family had been against the marriage, because they feared that as a government official, her father was sure to be lazy and expect to be waited on hand and foot. In 1959, fearing Chinese reprisal due to her father's position, the family walked over the Himalayas into Arunachal Pradesh. "Because my father was staff [an office worker] he was not strong. He carried my little brother. My mother was more strong and carried the luggage." The family couldn't carry many valuable things with them, only tsampa (roasted barley flour) a little butter, and some jewelry on her mother's body. These were sold in India for next to nothing. Yangchen retains no family heirlooms from Tibet.

Her father planned to leave the family near the border, Tawang, go to Kalimpong to work, and retrieve them after he had saved some money. But he fell ill and died. Yangchen's mother was advised to go to Dharamsala so that the children might receive an education. Yangchen thinks they arrived in 1963 or 1964. "There were not more than five

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[Tibetan] houses."

Her mother's life was very difficult even after she remarried an artisan. Her mother had "thought she could stay very happy, but that husband was not so good. She thought better her son be a monk." Her brother became a monk when he was six or seven, and is now in a monastery in South India. Her stepfather had thought Yangchen's mother had money stashed away, since "she wore nice clothes she bought from working hard." Her mother had thought her husband would be a good mate and provider, "but what she dreamed, different!" He drank a lot and beat her mother, so she left him.

Yangchen married at the age of fourteen or fifteen and entered the Handicraft Co-operative, earning up to 40 Rs. a month (about $5). She considered the wage very generous, since the Co-op also subsidized her room and board. Soon after her sons were born, her husband died. "Then I had to work hard!" She would rise at 5:30, make breakfast, and then work on privately commissioned carpets in her room. At 8:00 she went to work at the Co-operative, returning in the evening to make dinner. After putting the children to bed, she wove for several more hours. Tibetan merchants gave her the wool and specified the design, and she worked on a vertical loom propped against the wall. "Rich people buy wool, then gave me only the labor charge. I have the loom and everything else." She could make a three by six foot carpet every two months. "Many did this and got sick. Now not so many do it. It is not good for health, it is very dusty, and make the room very dirty." She earned about 250 Rs. per carpet. Now she thought weavers working privately could charge about 700 Rs. for carpets retailing at 2000 Rs.

After twenty years of weaving, her hands have become swollen and

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painful and she is unable to weave quickly enough. She went to "Lady Doctor" Drolma, a physician of Tibetan medicine, who told Yangchen she should not work with her hands, that she should try to go into business. Her mother and new stepfather by that time had a small business, but did not have enough money to help Yangchen get started, so she entered the tailoring section of the Co-operative. For the first three months she received no pay. Then for a year and a half she earned 14 Rs. per day. Her wage when I spoke with her in 1993 was steady at 21 Rs. per day, regardless of how much she produced. "But with carpets we can make more if we work hard." Yangchen earned about 500 Rs. a month when she left the carpet section. In the tailoring section she earned only 340 Rs. She complained that there is no pay for sick days, for missing work due to emergencies, or for family crises.

Yangchen figured a Tibetan mother needed about 1000 Rs. (about $33) a month "to stay" in Dharamsala. "Not happy, but we can stay; not bad." Now that she was working again in the Handicraft center, her room was free. Otherwise she would need about 200 to 350 Rs. a month for rent. "I must pay for vegetables in the market because we have no land. Everything I buy. I must pay for water, everything. Electricity, 82 Rs. for two months. I don't use heaters, this I think is too much. 100 Rs. for a gas cylinder for stove every two months." Her sons stay in Tibetan schools in other settlements nearly ten months of the year, and live with her only during breaks. The schools feed her children, and she sends them "pocket money for shoes and everything. Children, they finish shoes quick. But now shoes are a big price."

Yangchen was unable to get her children into the TCV schools in Dharamsala. TCV schools are generally considered better than other

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Tibetan schools, but, she said, "only rich people and Newcomers and orphans, they get admission." Sometimes, she complained, "rich" people from Lhasa come to India and leave their kids in these schools and go back to Tibet. "They get passports and can go back. Poor people they have to go secret ways and can't go back. Tibetans in India, she said, either think "I need big money," or they think their children can get a good job if they get a good education. "Now it's very important -- money and education. [At] one time, 1975, children can leave school after class five, and get jobs. Then, not many people have education. Now many, many people are coming from school. "

I asked Yangchen who in the community was successful in finding Western sponsors for their children. She told me that sometimes people in the CTA offices direct Western sponsors to their friends and relatives. "But it depends on the family. Luck. Now my children have sponsors, but this money is not coming to me. The Tibetan education office, they keep. From Japan. I don't know how much they give. I went to the education office. I told them my income. I have no husband. I wrote my name. They wrote my story, I give my children's photo and they sent to a foreign country. Then the [foreign] people chose." She told me that many "rich" children, who look "nice, clean" are chosen from such photographs. But, she says, it's "luck." Despite her hardships and her complaints about the advantages of the rich, like most Tibetans she attributes social differences primarily to karma and luck. I asked her who became rich in Tibetan society.

"This depends on karma, you know, luck. We cannot say this business is very good, this business bad. Some Tibetan making carpet, they are very rich. This is karma."

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"How about poor people? Who is poor?"

"Because they do a lot of work, because they make money but they eat" and the money is gone. In handicraft center, we all make carpets , but some are very poor, some are medium, and some are rich. Some can save money in the bank. Some are not saving in bank, they put money in home and then they sell sweater and lend to other people. Example: there are twenty Tibetan people. Five people very rich. Then ten medium. Then five people poor."

"What are you?" I asked.

> If I look down, I'm very happy. But I look up at medium people, not so good. I'm middle . . . down. . . . But, if we have big money, then we can buy a job. We can give money [in a CTA office] and say 'can you give me a job?'" The rich are able to use their money to improve their "luck" by making donations to religious institutions. "Very rich people, they save money, they give to Dalai Lama. I heard some Swiss Tibetan people. They get money and they send to Dalai Lama for offering and for government staff and for the South (Indian settlements). And we have special prayers. Some rich families, they take application to the Dalai Lama, and they ask to sponsor big teachings.

Yangchen tries to make donations as well, but cannot as often as she would like. "When I have money I give 30 Rs., 40 Rs. for prayers. And every week I go to Tsuglakhang. You know, in the main temple they have one lamp in front of [a statue of] Guru Rinpoche. You saw? Every week I give 5 Rs. Also on the roof they have Palden Lhamo. This I do, for

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prayers that good will come to the world and to me."

"Do you ever give to Ganden Choeling? To the nunnery?"

"Sometimes. Because sometimes they do Drolma prayer. Then I want to give donation. If I have 200 Rs., I give 20, 30 Rs. I have no money, then I give 10 Rs."

For Yangchen, the monasteries transform money into blessings benefiting both the donor and the entire world. The more she gives to them, the easier her life will be. "Good for me, good for the whole world; more peace. " If asked, Yangchen argues for the equality of the sexes, and likes to make offerings for statues and prayers of female deities. However, she preferentially donates to the monasteries and anything associated with the Dalai Lama.

To meet her needs, both material and spiritual, Yangchen must supplement the income she earns at the handicraft center. She still occasionally makes carpets in her room, and also produces woven Rangzen ("Freedom") bracelets which she sells for 5 Rs. apiece. In the last few years, she has found that befriending, helping, and teaching Westerners can help her make ends meet.

"How did get the idea to start teaching Tibetan?" I asked.

> I knew one Australian man. He was very good. Then I think "Australia is very good!" Then I saw this man at Losar [Tibetan New year]. He asked if he can take some photo of Losar at my house. Then I say, "OK, you are welcome." Then he comes, takes picture. My eyes are not so good at that time. I am making carpets here in this room. So he buys more light and he sponsored me. At that time my income very small, handicraft center money very small. I never

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have enough. You know [name of a shop owner], sometimes she [lent] me money, and sometimes I go to shops and borrow, write my name in the book, and get 10 kg rice, like that. Then this man, he said "I cannot help you for a long time." But he told me one idea: "You must teach Tibetan to foreign people, then you have money. For one year, two years [it will be] difficult, then you have practice and good money coming."

I asked how many students she had and how long they studied.

"I teach some one week, one month, two months. From England, America, Germany, France. Not many. People want to stay long time but they have no chance. Sometimes they want to do other things; you know, meditation."

"So it come and goes. How much do you ask for now?"

"Now I ask for 25 Rs. Then sometimes they ask what is my salary, they ask about my children, and I tell them. Then they want to pay more. One France woman she pays 35 for one hour because she wants to give me money. If she come she pays me, she not come she pays me! But she only stayed seven days."

While Westerners can be quite helpful, it is difficult to rely on them. Yangchen's income rises and falls with the number of tourists in town, and with her "luck." Her association with Westerners exacts a social price.

"Do some Tibetans think it isn't good that Westerners come to your house? Like I come here and I'm a man. I come alone."

Yes. Now I don't know. Before, people [were] talking. I say: 'You can't give advice to me.' Some people, they [don't] like Western people

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> talking to me. Because I'm alone. Now I'm doing good, and I'm sure people are not thinking I'm bad. Before some people. . . . One day my teacher didn't find a room. I went with him and try to find a room. And one woman say: "You are alone, and he came to your room!" Tibetan people, if we are not married, we [do] not stay together in one room!

I asked Yangchen if she had any Indian friends, if she might be able to do business with them like Tibetan men do. "For me I have no Indian friend. Some men, they have Indian friends. Also sweater selling -- they become good business friends, and then come visit and stay in the house. Most of the [Indian] shops here have men, not women. If we visit often, this is not good, because I'm a woman. Then people are talking."

**Tibetan Women in Dharamsala: Some (Risky) Conclusions**

> . . . it is true that before the Chinese occupation of Tibet, the position of women in Tibet was not one of equality. But compared to most of our Asian neighbors, especially China, the position of Tibetan women was considerably good if not one of equality. There has been some improvement in the relative position of women in Tibet in the past forty years, but progress has been much slower than elsewhere in the world and definitely much slower than the Tibetan community in exile. [CTA Department of Information and International Relations, Women's Desk. WWW Document forwarded by Nima Dorjee: 11 Aug 1995, Pp. 1]

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Watkins (1996) aptly warns Western social scientists against making ethnocentric judgments concerning where authority and social power are located, and about what counts as value and agency. Local meanings may not accord with Western categories of domination/subordination. It is difficult, and probably inappropriate, for outsiders to define the degree of "progress" that has been made in the elevation of Tibetan women's' status. Power in indigenous and refugee contexts is based on different political, economic, and familial structures. Criteria for passing judgments on women's status in the new merchant capitalist democracy are barely applicable to traditional Tibetan society. Furthermore, the aims of Tibetan women do not necessarily coincide with that of their would-be international sisters. The monolithic category "Women" is one deployed more frequently by Western social scientists and feminists than by refugee women, who tend to think in terms of household and nation.

However, generalizations based on one's own perspective and values are not only unavoidable, but vital if we are to further a transnational "conversation" and come to some mutual understanding. Because so much of Tibetan women's lives in exile is tied to transnational sponsorship and tourism, I believe there is the need to attempt translations and discuss the shifting and unequal "co-dependent" relationships linking hosts and guests, Tibetans and others. In this conversation, we must undermine exaggerated depictions of Tibetan sexual egalitarianism, a myth encouraged by non-Tibetans who require an ideal society -- by contemporary Western standards -- to legitimate their New Age fantasies.

The case of Dharamsala appears to concur in large part with those in Swain's (1993) cross-cultural comparison of Hmong, Kuna, Maya, and Sani artisans. Despite the relatively high status of women in Tibetan society,

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most public economic, political, and artistic power remains in male hands, and Tibetan culture and religion are largely represented by men on the world stage.

The shift in the social context of handicraft production -- from Lhasa guilds to private and CTA sponsored production under preservation and welfare ideologies -- has had diverse effects upon the artisanal division of labor. Once a primarily male profession, tailoring now involves both sexes. In carpet production, however, the division of labor seems to have rigidified, with women monopolizing the weaving, and men the cutting. Although a few women have entered arenas of cultural production once reserved exclusively for men, such as thangka painting, in general the higher prestige arts remain male domains. Those crafts with the greatest potential for mass production, standardization, and capitalist development -- carpet weaving and tailoring -- tend to employ Tibetan, and sometimes Indian, women at the lowest levels. Teachers, designers, and managers are generally male.

Comparisons should eventually be made with the tourist and handicraft producing industries in Nepal, at a distance from the CTA, where private Tibetan factories employ large numbers of Nepalis, including children, in the lower levels of production, and where greater numbers of women have become entrepreneurs. Developments in Dharamsala, at any rate, coincide with those in other handicraft producing communities globally, where labor is unevenly valued according to gender, ethnicity, and class. Scott Cook (1993), for example, reports that in Oxaca, Mexico, of five crafts surveyed the two least remunerative crafts predominately employed women, the mid-income craft employed both sexes, while the two highest paying crafts were largely male occupations.

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Stephan (1993) notes that among Zapotec artisans women pieceworkers do not reap returns commensurate with merchant households. In Dharamsala, as Cook concludes for Oaxaca, it is economically more favorable to be an intermediary or employer than a direct producer; better to be male than female.

Changes in women's status are, of course, not due solely to tourism and handicraft production, and extend to realms other than the division of labor. Marriage and kinship patterns are shifting, perhaps most influenced by an exile situation which provides little land to be passed through the patriline. Corlin Claes (1975), who conducted research among Tibetan refugees in Nepal, reported that the extended, polyandrous families of pre-1959 Tibet fragmented in exile. Scattered in flight from the Chinese, the families never reconstituted even where possible in newly established settlements. He believed this was due to a preference for monogamy and nuclear families, established whenever economically feasible. In Nepal, Tibetan land holdings were quite small and could be farmed with a few members of the household. Handicraft production, as in Dharamsala, was conducted either by one or two people in each household, or by multi-family co-operatives, but in neither case by extended families. In both Nepal and India, cultural pressure from surrounding populations and the desire to "modernize" have also discouraged polyandrous marriages.

Despite the continuation of economic diversification within households, new occupations, the lack of land and housing, and fission brought about by exile reduce the number of extended families, and arranged and polyandrous marriages. Old kinship ideologies alone are apparently not enough to preserve traditional familial patterns. These changes provide some support for the materialist interpretation of

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polyandry as an economic and ecological adaptation.

The effects of economic and kinship changes upon women are contradictory. Women are marrying later, and some may establish independent households, often supporting themselves through some form of cultural production. Kin ties remain important, however, and women without the support of extended families and kin are less able to rise into the growing merchant middle class in Dharamsala. Single women with children and widows remain among the most vulnerable segments of the community. They tend to remain dependent on the CTA's schools and production centers, or else employed for minimal wages by better off and better connected refugee entrepreneurs (who may be women).

Camino and Krulfeld (1994) write that the refugee situation in general is one that fosters gender changes associated with changes in economic and familial forms, and Krulfeld (1994) notes that changes in gender roles among refugees is most likely to occur in areas of greatest articulation with the dominant society. However, like Tice (1995) writes of Kuna women, Tibetan women retain or have gained gender symmetry in many parts of their lives despite involvement in the global capitalist system (or, I would add, perhaps because of it).

The involvement of Tibetan women in new markets and in relations with foreigners, the entry into "modern" schools, and the creation of an exile administration modeled after the capitalist democracies have improved (or at least defined) women's "civic" rights while simultaneously creating some ambivalence about proper roles. Nowak (1980) has written that young Tibetan women (and men) have moved from a society in which one knew one's place in a stable community to a world of new and shifting options and a greater emphasis on achieved status. Education, CTA

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employment, and entrepreneur ship are new avenues of social mobility. Young men and women are now socially judged by both the criteria of the old and new societies. While women can vote and may obtain government posts once restricted to men, new ideas of female decorum and sexuality that have emerged in India as well as old notions of women's domestic responsibilities, spiritual inferiority and appropriate religious and artistic roles may limit women's participation in regional and international economic and cultural networks.

The presence of Western travelers and Buddhist practitioners has indeed raised an awareness of "Women's issues" and of inequalities in the social and religious hierarchies. The Amnye Machen Institute, for example, although founded by four male intellectuals, has committed resources to Women's studies. However, Tibetan goals remain primarily nationalist, and the concerns of Western feminists are often considered irrelevant or intrusive. According to an English language pamphlet it circulated in 1993, the Tibetan Women's Association (TWA) seeks to "improve the conditions of the poorer and weaker sections" of society, provide care for needy women, and promote peace and justice by "joining hands with the women of the world." In Dharamsala, the TWA attracts numerous female volunteers from the West who desire to help but are often frustrated by aims and perspectives that conflict with those of their Tibetan sisters. The TWA is a nationalist organization providing welfare to poor Tibetan women, not an explicitly feminist one. It states that its purpose is to work towards Tibetan independence, to detail the condition of women in Tibet suffering under the Chinese occupation, and "to channel the resources and energy of Tibetan women towards the preservation and promotion of our religion, culture and distinct identity." One American

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volunteer who had worked for several months in the TWA office said that she thought the Tibetans "feel under fire from the West in terms of the position of Tibetan women. They feel they're under a lot of criticism." She felt an "ambiguity" in Tibetan women. "On the one hand they need donations and appreciate help, on the other there is some resentment of Western interference and attitudes." Some Western women feel that the TWA should directly tackle issues such as wife-beating and alcoholism, but the TWA is unwilling to create disunity among the community that desires above all to liberate Tibet and return to their homeland.

If women as a category remain disempowered in Dharamsala, it is due less to any uniformly noxious effects of tourism than to nationalist goals, gendered religious and cultural ideologies and structures, and to divisions along household, class, and ethnic lines which have precluded a drive to gain political and economic autonomy as women. Regardless of the desires of Western volunteers and feminists, this is likely to remain true so long as cultural preservation and national independence remain the primary aims of both male and female Tibetan activists.

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# CHAPTER TEN
# WESTERN CONSUMERS: TOURISTS, SEEKERS, RESEARCHERS, FREAKS

## Types, Status, Impacts

> One among some fifty million globe-trotters, the traveler maintains his difference mostly by despising others like himself. [Trinh T. Minh-Ha, 1994:22]

> God is dead, but man's need to appear holier than his fellows lives. [Dean MacCannell, 1989 (1976):10]

Dean MacCannell (1989 [1976]) considered the tourist a theorist of modernity searching for authenticity. Today, quests for authenticity continue, but in myriad forms. Some continue to naively seek authenticity in the "primitive" (now commoditized "ex-primitives" in MacCannell's (1992) terms). For them, authenticity is equated with isolation from the very culture the travelers themselves represent, placing impossible demands on indigenous peoples. Others have become "post-tourists" (Urry, 1990) who revel in the disjunctures and "inauthenticities" of the post-modern era. For many seekers, authenticity can only be found inside themselves.

The "totality" many travelers seek to construct is not one of the world, but of the self. Travel is a form of consumption, a way of consuming things, people, and experience on the move. Like the consumption of mass produced commodities (Bourdieu, 1984; McCracken,

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1988; O'Dougherty, 1996) touristic consumption is also a form of production, the production of self, identity, and status. Travel, along with other types of experiential "cultural capital," is increasingly a required component of transnational adulthood. The production of travel narratives, along with the display of objects and photographs obtained in transit, are new forms of cultural capital that make one an "interesting" and sophisticated (post) modern citizen, independently (it may seem) of class and education. The ethnic "Other" is often only a collectible, and foreign lands the scenery, that confirm the traveler's individualized project of self creation and re-creation. Although travel may be considered a form of pilgrimage in which social distinctions are suspended, travel is in fact class differentiated, competitive, and status re-creating.

The journeys of travelers/pilgrims, though sometimes conceived as anti-materialist spiritual quests, have profound impacts on material forms of production and on the political and economic structures of locales consumed along the way. Travelers extend transnational markets and culture to the very places they hope will provide an escape. Westerners in Dharamsala consume things and people -- Tibetans and Tibetan cultural productions -- in varied projects that range from the "merely" recreational to the production of academic careers. These varied projects have diverse (and similar) impacts on the lives of individual refugees and on the communities and culture of the Tibetan diaspora.

Cohen (1988a) described tourism studies as moving from etic to emic strategies, and to more theoretically rigorous and less ideological analyses. He argues that the use of typologies to differentiate the variety of travelers can bridge differences in various approaches, and reduce the stereotyping of THE tourist so prevalent in the earlier sociological

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literature on tourism. There seems to be a proliferation of tourist typologies. Cohen proposed distinguishing between Institutionalized and Non-institutionalized tourism, and later defined Recreational, Diversionary, Experiential, Experimental, and Existential types of tourists, as well as distinguishing between Concentric and Excentric pilgrimage sites (Cohen, 1979; 1992). Valene Smith described seven categories of tourist, including Explorers, Off-beat, and Incipient mass (Lea, 1988). There are the various typologies developed by marketers, with such categories as Comfortables, Adventurers, and Bargain hunters (Johnson, 1983). While such typologies are certainly preferable to stereotypes about tourists, or a simplistic (and elitist) tourist/traveler dichotomy, we can get bogged down in an endless multiplication of types distinguishing ever finer differences among travelers. While typologies may help compare across cases, they may also, as Cohen recognizes, reduce essential differences in research strategies to the lowest common denominator. Are the categories distinguished by the marketer useful for the anthropologist? Which typology shall become the standard?

Rather than propose any master typology applicable across cases, I will employ a simple four part typology combining etic and emic criteria, making no special analytic claims for this categorization other than that it provided a crude tool to distinguish the major varieties of self-productions and projects carried out by travelers and foreign residents in Dharamsala. I assume that "etics" are no more than the theoretically informed "emics" of the anthropologist. My typology is roughly based on simple and temporary etic criteria -- "what are they (primarily) doing here?" -- rather than on their presumed consciousness. The categorization differs from other typologies in that it includes Western consumers not generally

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considered types of "tourist," such as Anthropologists and other researchers. I include these (temporarily) non-traveling, or "located" consumers in this typology not only because of their deep participation in the tourist industries of Dharamsala, but because their behavior and consciousness is not always distinguishable from that of "moving" consumers. The categories are:

**Tourists and Travelers** -- those who visit Dharamsala, for short or long periods respectively, without engaging in work or study.

**Volunteers** -- those working for the CTA or other Tibetan institutions.

**Dharmas** -- those engaged in sustained Buddhist studies/practice.

**Researchers** -- those conducting academic or journalistic research

The categories, like the people within them, are fluid and shifting. Continuous human behavior is not easily sliced into discrete categories, boundaries blur between types, and there are subtypes within each category. However, this categorization fits rather closely with the emic pidgin-holes most often deployed by Westerners in Dharamsala. I am confident that this four-type division gives a rough idea of the major types of activities that foreigners engage in without valorizing chauvinistic nationalist or status distinctions that are for the most irrelevant to understanding interactions with the local community. As we shall see, individuals may fit into different categories at different moments in their

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journeys. Many long-term students or volunteers, for example, were travelers who got hooked and decided to stay.

Some Westerners -- usually those that I would put into the Tourist/Traveler category, who enjoy little status -- refused to categorize. "To put people in categories puts the categorizer in misery," said one self-described "Cosmic Traveler." Other Westerners' happily proposed types and typologies including:

Students/ Regular Tourists/ Freaks/Business types

Researchers/Tourists/ the Lost

Low Budget Travelers/ Dharma Tourists/VIPs/ People Like Me (who have connections for a long time and work with the Tibetans)/People Like You (scientists, anthros, linguists, musicians, etc.-- study Tibetan culture)

Anthropological Terrorists

Young Middle Class Caucasians with backpacks

Rich Americans/Israelis/White People with money

Travelers just hanging out/ Travelers really traveling (see the culture, trek, stay with locals)

Yuppie see the world types/Spiritual seek the truth types

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> Metaphysical tramps/Druggies/Trekkers/Israelis/American gung-ho maniacs/Anthropologists
>
> Joyride do drugs Tourists (vast majority)/Sensitive tourists (few)/People who are learning/Official Researchers/Meditators
>
> Freaks/Geeks/Jocks/Junkies/New Agers/Neurotics/Kids/Babes/ Anthropologists/Real Intellectuals

While I consider the types overlapping, porous, and shifting, many Westerners in Dharamsala take their categorizations quite seriously. Experience abroad is both a way to lose one's self and a way to affirm it simultaneously. Others like oneself/different from oneself are a constant challenge or confirmation. One Volunteer complained:

> Sometimes I smile at Injees and they totally ignore me. They've lost their shoes, grown dreadlocks, lost seventeen pounds. They think they aren't a Westerner anymore and they don't want to be reminded of who they are were so they can't acknowledge me.

An interesting research project might focus not on "communitas" among travelers, but on competition. Although some travelers -- particularly to a place like Dharamsala -- may indeed be considered (post)modern pilgrims sharing a liminal communitas with their fellows (Graburn, 1977), in fact there is an intense status jockeying among travelers.

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The most basic distinction is the binary contrast between what I call "Doers" and "See-ers," between those passing through Dharamsala and those staying to work or study with the Tibetans. One American (self-described student) divided foreigners into "those who stay to really learn about the culture" and "those who just come through to see and don't learn much." Another woman contrasted "those who study" and "those who don't." While many in the three "Doer" categories vehemently assert their non-tourist status, I have found that many of their interactions with the locals parallel that of other travelers, and they consume many of the same services and commodities. All foreigners in Dharamsala, including anthropologists, support a Tibetan cultural industry increasingly directed to and dependent on tourism, and as we will see, many researchers and religious students support themselves through promoting the tourism and handicraft industries.

The Doers generally hold themselves above the See-ers (dismissed as "tourists"), and among the Doers, there are distinctions made on the basis of whom one knows, length of audience with the Dalai Lama, whom one has slept with (extra points for a Tibetan), etc. Although Buddhist philosophy negates the existence of the self, there is an amazing amount of ego in Dharamsala, sometime especially among those who seek to lose themselves.

I have never been able to discern any essential differences between "tourists" and "travelers" other than that "they" are "tourists" while "I" am always a "traveler." Not a single foreigner interviewed categorized her/himself as a "tourist." Many Westerners distinguished "serious" long term visitors from presumably shallow short-term tourists. The criteria of time-in-a locale is the only way I can justify differentiating "tourists" from

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"travelers," as this is loosely associated with differential tendencies in consumer behavior. But this distinction, too, is temporary and non-essential. By the criteria of time-in-locale, the tourist in Dharamsala is a traveler in Goa, while even the Anthropologist in Dharamsala is a tourist in Thailand.

Despite the Western status hierarchy privileging travelers over tourists, Doers over See-ers, some Tibetans might prefer those who merely pass through town spending and donating more money than the sometimes (temporarily) impoverished Doers who become involved in Tibetan cultural production and begin making demands and criticisms.

## Tourists and Travelers: Recreators and Re-creators, Freaks and Hard Travelers

> "Why did you come to India?"
> "I am a metaphysical tramp acting on ontological instinct. And also a socio-economic protest against the West. Plus to gather data for books." -- Kim Bartlett, 33 year old Australian Traveler

> Sometimes one gets the impression that behind the big sounding philosophical rejection of their societies, at least for some of them the fact simply may be that it is cheap to live in India; it is warm and sunny, it is easy to find something to smoke and one can get away with all kinds of behaviour under the pretext of being a foreigner or hippie. [Prahald Singh Skewawat 1985:17]

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There is a great diversity among travelers in Dharamsala in their motivations for travel and in demands for "authenticity" in goods and people. From another perspective, however, foreigners passing through Dharamsala are rather homogeneous. Although some East Asians, particularly Japanese, visit Dharamsala (mostly falling into the "Dharma Student" category), the vast majority of foreign guests are self-described middle class White Europeans, North Americans, and Israelis. In a non-scientific sample of 46 travelers, 43 were White, one was Korean-American, and two were of East Indian ethnicity. The chance to travel is, obviously, limited to those with sufficient funds. Although the cost of travel within India is relatively inexpensive, flight to and from the sub-continent is not. Dharamsala disproportionally attracts those who claim to be disenchanted with materialism (and imagine that Tibetans are not materialistic). This disenchantment, it seems, afflicts primarily those with the means to choose voluntary simplicity, rather than those who have simplicity thrust upon them. Perhaps related to their low participation in Buddhism or New Age spirituality, Blacks are rarely seen in Dharamsala, and receive a rather negative reception from Tibetans.

While the ages of travelers interviewed ranged from 19-49 years, most travelers in Dharamsala are in their early twenties, single, and childless. Only one traveler interviewed was currently married, and only three travelers had children. They are fairly educated. Of 31 responses, 10 travelers had completed High School, 7 were in college, 5 had a degree, and 9 had some postgraduate work. Although travelers interviewed had varied job histories, and included gardeners, naturopathic physicians, and engineers, the most common "occupation" was student.

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Despite the characterization of See-ers as mere "tourists" by Doers, most visitors to Dharamsala could be labeled "alternative travelers" (Zurick, 1995). Few non-Indian package tourists come to Dharamsala. Most travel on low budgets, providing clients for the small, locally owned Tibetan hotels and buying relatively low cost crafts (if shopping at all). They are extremely well traveled. Of 42 responses, 5 travelers were on their first international voyage, 3 had made two international trips, and 34 had traveled internationally 3 or more times. The length of their current trip abroad varied from 2 1/2 months to 4 years, and the time they planned to say in Dharamsala ran from 2 days to 8 months. Those who decided to stay in Dharamsala for extended periods were generally transformed into "Doers" before resuming their journeys.

Cohen described long-term "Drifter" tourists in the late 1960's and early 1970's who wandered as a Counter Culture lifestyle or search. There remain many "Drifters" in Dharamsala. India -- with it's cheap living costs, plentiful hashish, mystical religions, and tradition of hippie tourism -- attracts many hold outs of the Counter Culture, or those that wish to revive it. Many young travelers, though soon to enter or return to professional life, play hippie in India, grow beards and dreadlocks, and wear colorful ethnic garb that may never leave their closets once they return home. Some of them throw away their shoes, and can be seen communing with nature on the steps of Dharamsala restaurants, digging worms out of their feet. These travelers wander in India following the sun, the traveler's scene, and drugs: Dharamsala and Manali in the hot season, Goa in the winter. Many claim they are protesting the materialism of the West, though some are in fact refugees from recession and

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downsizing. Unemployed at home, once they are able to purchase an airline ticket, they find it cheaper to live in the Third World. Many travelers admit that one reason they come to India is because it is inexpensive. They tend to offer little in the way of handicraft consumption. Like many of the "Hard Travelers" described below, they travel as cheaply as possible and buy few durable goods, save perhaps for a fetish of some variety to hang around their necks.

Tibetans often distinguish only between "Good Injees" who "come to see/help His Holiness (and/or the Tibetans)" and "Freaky people." Too many Westerners, under the influence of drugs, deteriorating health, and/or mystical ideas and practices (Phipps, 1990) inevitably go mad. One day during my fieldwork, an American woman convinced she was the reincarnation of Palden Lhamo, Protectress of Tibet, engaged in a battle of spastic mudras (ritual hand gestures) in the market with a lungi wearing Spanish man, fingernails painted bright red, who had been haranguing all within earshot of the evils of their ways. While the crowd that gathered found it temporarily amusing, "Freaky" Westerners are considered a bad influence on Tibetan youth, and their performances and indulgences take little account of local sensitivities. These travelers contribute to a impression among many Tibetans that Westerners are generally unstable.

**Postcard, Monsoon 1993**

Walking back from TCV in the rain, we passed by an open space on TCV road. Karma remembered that when he was a kid, this was where the hippies had a flea market. "It was really fun in those days," Karma remembered, "even though they had no money." He compared the "real hippies" to the "lost and found people" he sees now at Bhagsunath. "The

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real hippies enjoy life, they go from place to place and take it easy. But these people in Bhagsu are always changing. One week they smoke with a Baba, and the next week it's Om Mani Padme Hum at Tushita."

Empirical studies conducted since Cohen described the Drifter tourist have found that most long-term "Budget" or "Alternative" travelers are not committed to wandering as a lifestyle, but are at a life juncture and are traveling between jobs, after finishing school, or ending a long relationship (Phipps, 1997; Riley, 1988). This was certainly the case in Dharamsala, where many travelers were seeking either recreation and/or self "re-creation" before taking on a new career or entering graduate school. Said one Norwegian woman: "[through travel] I let myself gain experience and give myself a chance to change. That's why I like to travel alone -- or as alone as I like to risk." Many travelers saw their journeys as a time of absolute freedom before entering what was sometimes dreaded as a regimented adulthood.

Young Israelis provide good examples of the recreational/re-creational types of traveler. In Dharamsala, they are surprisingly numerous considering the small population of Isreal. Israelis are stereotyped by other travelers, and increasingly by some members of host populations, as aggressive, insensitive, and chauvinistic. In Dharamsala, however, they enjoy generally good relations with the Tibetans. Israelis often compare the Tibetans favorably to other peoples in Asia, while the Tibetans sometimes see Israelis as the model diaspora -- one that has accomplished a return and the creation of a state. (They also provide an alternative model to the non-violent strategy supported by the Dalai Lama).

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Israelis tend to travel in groups and share a travel subculture. Westerners often categorized Israelis per se as a distinct type of traveler. Akin to the Asian "Freak trail" or the "Gringo trail" in South America, Israelis tend to follow routes well scouted by their fellow nationals. Many reported that they learn the trail at slide shows in travel shops in Isreal. Even if beginning a trip alone or with one or two companions, they often meet compatriots in popular spots along the circuit, and band together to party, speak Hebrew and sing songs, and exchange books and information that reinforce the trial. Quite a few subsidize their travels through petty trade in jewelry bought in India and Indonesia and sold to other travelers. Some buy jewelry from companies in Japan and sell in the streets there.

For young Israelis, it seems, it is almost a social imperative to travel after military service and before one settles into adulthood. "If a young man doesn't travel after the army," one said, "we almost think something is wrong with him." Travel is a chance to forget the stresses of the military and turbulent economy and politics of Isreal. Said one young man: "In Isreal it's very hard, there's a lot of stress. Here we make a split, and don't listen to the news about Isreal." A female companion added: "It's like running away, especially for a male. It's very hard in Lebanon, in the West Bank."

Travel for Israelis, as for other Westerners, may not only be "Diversionary," to use Cohen's (1979) term, but may be part of a larger project of self re-creation. It provides opportunities for experimentation in dress, sex, drugs, and spirituality, as well as providing an education in global culture. One Israeli woman told me: "Isreal is very small. Travel provides me with the opportunity of joining the wider world." Israelis are but a recognizable national subgroup of Western travelers carrying out

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similar projects of recreation and re-creation. India and Dharamsala provide the backdrop for these projects, but do not necessarily entail any deep confrontation with the Other.

Travelers' projects of recreation and self-recreation perhaps alter the world more than the travelers, as Bruner (1991) argues. A traveler's subculture -- and an industry to service it -- develops wherever "alternative travelers" congregate. Those in the subculture in India tend to a rather 1960's sensibility and dress, openness to New Age mysticism, and a fair amount of hashish use (21 of 34 travelers responding had smoked hashish in Dharamsala). In favored locales, similar small hotels and restaurants crop up where Western magazines, novels, and music are exchanged. Many travelers are lost without their Walkman cassette players. All over the world, from Dharamsala to Cuzco to Haight Street, nearly identical "ethnic" backpacks, vests, and sweaters are sold to these consumers, with only slight differences in designs and messages recalling local motifs. Although many travelers expressed the desire to experience "cultural differences," and most reported some interest in Indian and Tibetan religion, most extended interactions occur within the traveler's scene. Of 40 travelers interviewed, 28 reported spending most of their time in Dharamsala with other foreigners, 10 claimed to have spent more time with Tibetans, and only 1 said s/he spent the most time with Indians.

A question arises: what is the difference between package tourists who, as self proclaimed travelers sneer, gaze at the world from their protected air conditioned buses and "alternative travelers" who move within their own low-budget bubbles? I cannot see any persuasive reason to valorize one experience or presumed consciousness over the other except as a matter of personal taste. The significant differences are the types of

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services and goods consumed and the infrastructures that arise to provide them. It is often simply assumed that alternative travelers will have a more benign impact, but that is not always the case. Low-budget travelers do tend to support locally owned small businesses, while affluent travelers funnel money into large hotel and transport chains. Low budget tourism in Dharamsala has meant opportunities for petty business and a large degree of dispersal and "trickle down" of touristic revenue.

However, alternative travelers extend Western travel culture and markets to the far reaches of the planet, often paving the way for mass tourism. Some nations and communities, such as Bhutan, may desire to limit the cultural and environmental impacts of tourism by limited the number of alternative travelers and restricting entry to small numbers of "high quality," moneyed guests whose movements and consumption can be more easily channeled. Profits are then primarily captured by the state or economic elites, and cultural production can be more tightly controlled.

There is a peculiar type I call the "Hard Traveler" who make concerted efforts to move out of the traveler's scene and experience "real" life in the Third World with all it's inconvenience and hardships. Hardship, in fact, is often sought. Many travelers visit India, Tibet, and other Third World countries precisely for the heat and dust, the slight to severe personal risk, the primitive accommodations and transport, and the poverty. As one traveler told me, "I came to India to see poverty and ill health, and for the culture shock."

For some, the reality of India is overwhelming, and they flee for their lives soon after arriving. A friend of mine panicked almost immediately upon confronting the filth, crowds, and aggressive taxi drivers

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in a transport hub between Calcutta, where he had flown in, and Darjeeling, where I awaited him. He jumped out of a taxi an hour before we would have rendezvoused, and started walking back, slept that night in a flea ridden hotel (where his backpack was stolen) and flew home the next day. Surviving India might be seen as an accomplishment.

Most low-budget travelers have a touch of the Hard Traveler in them. Many Israeli travelers told me that Europe and America are for "old tourists," while young healthy travelers must experience Asia, Africa, and South America while they still have the stamina. Hard Travel is a way of challenging oneself, proving one's endurance, and establishing authenticity of experience. Status accrues to those who undergo the worst journeys. The true Hard Travel syndrome seems to be an affliction primarily of young, relatively affluent Westerners who find their lives too soft, comfortable, and artificial. Suffering is what is real (a conception many link to Buddhist philosophy).

Hard Travelers, as consumers of landscapes and experience, are generally not very good consumers for crafts dealers. They desire to travel lightly and make their way as cheaply as possible, a source of pride. (Many Westerners joked about meeting people trying to survive in India for a year on 100 Rs.) One Israeli, for example, who had walked some 150 miles in Tibet, carried only a small backpack, a piece of turquoise around his neck, and a walking stick upon which he had carved cosmic and celestial symbols. He told me he was "against souvenirs."

Tibet and the Himalayas are favored sites for Hard Travelers. Suffering is readily available and the geography, political repression, and spirituality of the Land of Snows can turn a journey into a pilgrimage of ordeal. Even ironic "post-tourists" (Urry, 1992) who mock the search for

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authenticity, cannot but find a spiritual meaning for themselves in the thin air and open spaces of Tibet, a last outpost of the exotic. Pico Iyer's Video Night in Kathmandu precisely and humorously captures the Hard Traveler ethic of the "Underground Overland Invasion." Even he loses himself in the atmospherics at a monastery, where he reports, "I felt myself to be a clean and empty room, thrown open to the breeze" (1988: 74). Jeff Greenwald's ironic attitude is captured by the title of his book Shopping for Buddhas (1990), but he too, in the end, has an overwhelming spiritual experience. Travel narratives in the Himalayas share an incredible similarity -- there is hardship, it is spiritual, it may be political, and it all revolves around the self.

As Thurot and Thurot noted (1983), advertising has outrun traveler's tales, and the tales now copy the advertisements. In the (post) modern world, it seems, even the attempt to touch "reality" is caught in a web of reproduction and repetition. Many Hard Travelers search for unique and authentic experiences by attempting to copy the paths and hardships they have read about in the travel literature. Danziger's Travels, a tale detailing one man's journey across rugged and politically restricted territory in places like Tibet, Iran, and Afghanistan, is a favored devotional guide (Danziger, 1987). The political danger, the thrill of entering the forbidden, adds to the appeal.

Tourists in Tibet are always witnesses to occupation and cultural imperialism. But they are sometimes also witnesses to demonstrations and police repression, and may be a vital source of information for the outside world (Schwartz, 1994). I spoke to several travelers in Dharamsala who had witnessed political violence and had managed to contact news agencies or smuggle photographs out of Tibet. Some travelers even carry out

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"missions" to Tibet to collect information, and return to Dharamsala to report what they have seen.

Tourism relies on cultural difference. The tourist as cultural sponsor, as political supporter, and as witness/journalist may be gaining significance for ethnic resistance movements in the post-modern era. Those travelers who take real risks to carry back information are worthy of respect. Inevitably, however, and despite even the most selfless of intentions, the report of the witness becomes a tale that reflects the special experience and virtue of the traveler, and the political hardship of Third World Others may become another adornment of the Western Self. The Hard Travelers in Tibet may imagine themselves as kin to the Indian "pundits," such as Sarat Chandra Das, who trudged through Tibet in disguise, gathering information for their colonial British overlords. An encounter with Chinese officials, especially a temporary detainment, is particularly exciting. The consequences for Westerners of breaking the law in the People's Republic, are (thus far) within acceptable limits.

A typical Hard Traveler's tale, mixing hardship, politics, spirituality, and intestinal distress, is Jim Reynolds' The Outer Path: Finding My Way in Tibet (1992). The central theme of the book is the endurance of "dukkha" (suffering, in the existential Buddhist sense). Reynolds later became a Buddhist monk, and the book recounts a last "outer" journey. Having completed three months of meditation in Thailand, Reynolds writes that "I wanted to face every obstacle and overcome every hardship, as I had learned to do in the monastery. . . . I was ready for dukkha travel. I was ready for Tibet" (p.?).

The Dalai Lama has written forewords to numerous books about all subjects Tibetan, including Reynolds'. (One wonders if His Holiness has

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the time, or interest, to actually read them all). Of The Outer Path, the Dalai Lama wrote: "Although the author has a long-standing interest in the practice of Buddhism, his journey in Tibet took on more of the character of a physical challenge and adventure. . . " (p.1). I counted eighteen mentions of dukkha in the book, as in "Chinese drivers are generally equatable with dukkha" (p. 34). Diarrhea is mentioned thirteen times. Reynolds recounts being stopped by the police four times. Reynolds displays the snobbism that privileges oneself (the Hard Traveler) over other Westerners (the tourists), and seeks to avoid their contaminating influence. He leaves his friends to meditate by a lake, and is thankful that he can see it before mere tourists come and leave their trash. He desires to bike along a particular road because it is little traveled, "which is part of its attraction," (p. 135) and because it was described by an earlier adventurer, Heinrich Harrer.

Reynolds' journey may be through external space and time, and he does hear word of protests and repression back in Lhasa, but the book is essentially about himself. His descriptions of Tibet and Tibetans are rather stereotyped. On page eighteen he describes a house as a "museum piece from the middle ages," and a bit later makes the obligatory reference to tea with "rancid yak butter" (p. 23). As all Americans do (including this anthropologist), Reynolds marvels that the Tibetans "look like American Indians" (p. 29). Then it's back to himself and his Hard Travel: "I'm feeling queasy. I have diarrhea again, and the blisters on my feet are infected" (p. 38).

Dharamsala, despite its relative comforts, is frequented by numerous Hard Travelers, some coming to rest up or study up before embarking on

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an adventure. They also come to report on their experiences to the CTA and to other travelers, for what good is a traveler's tale without an audience? Many travelers to Tibet, Hard and Soft, also wish to compare the diaspora people and culture to what they have seen in Tibet (this is particularly true of Israelis). They are often as scornful of the "inauthentic" exile Tibetans as they are of "inauthentic" tourists. Kim Bartlett, the self described "metaphysical Tramp," claimed that the Tibetans in Tibet and in Dharamsala are "a different species really. Here [Dharamsala], well, maybe they're like the middle class in Lhasa, but you see some of the others in Tibet who have that untamed quality, like you'd imagine an Apache Indian, sort of wild, sunburnt, teeth missing. And more religious. You see them prostrating, crawling along highways, elbows bleeding, trucks just missing them."

With the opening of Tibet to Western travelers, the Tibetans in Dharamsala are newly challenged in representing themselves as the genuine resevoir of Tibetan culture. For many travelers the very success of Tibetans in exile makes them inauthentic, for authenticity is found in difference and hardship. Kim Bartlett, like increasing numbers of travelers, is agnostic about finding authenticity in the brutal contemporary world. "The way out is the quest for the Holy Grail," he told me. "The search gives one a meaning. If you actually found it, you'd probably be a mess. It's the search that gives the meaning."

"Mike Bargain" was a thirty-three year old British citizen, a geologist who had been a mining consultant in Australia before taking off on his travels. He had been traveling for two years when we spoke in the Spring of 1993. "I had outgrown Australia," he said, "I'd spent 13 years criss

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crossing mountains and deserts. Wherever I went, I could kick a beer bottle." He left and had since hiked through New Zealand, New Caledonia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Tibet. Mike was in Dharamsala to report on his trip, and submitted a paper on Tibetan national resources for the Environmental Desk of the CTA Information Office.

In southwest China Mike decided to walk through restricted areas in what he called "an epic to Lhasa." Mike likes to visit what he called the earth's "power places," and said he was "humbled by the vastness" of Tibet. "Initially it was the scenery," he said, "scenery few Westerners ever get to see," but soon the landscape was a challenge, both physical and political. He had an inkling of the problems that might lie ahead from reading Danziger's Travels. His journey became a cat and mouse game with the police, akin to the evasions required of Western "trespassers on the roof of the world" who attempted to reach the forbidden city of Lhasa in earlier centuries (Hopkirk, 1982).

Mike's traveling companion was "an ex-British army private with a gung-ho determination. . . . Toughness was part of the experience. Bus riders complain of thirty-six hour rides, but we spent a day for every hour they do" Mike said. The "extremes of the passes and gorges were a personal challenge." They survived on very little food, and Mike claimed that he ate only fourteen meals in twenty-three days. They slept in a bed only four times, otherwise they found what he called a "hidey hole" to escape detection while resting. They were questioned by the police five or six times, and detained twice. Security was lax, and they would walk out, hop a fence, or just claim that they had come from Lhasa when told to go

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back the way they had come. "It would have been an enormous task for them to escort us out."

"Tibetans mostly treated us as royalty," Mike said. "We would knock on doors. It was rare that people would not give us something, even though they knew they could get into trouble for helping us. It was humbling. . . . Sometimes we'd walk with pilgrims and say 'Dalai Lama, Dalai Lama,' and they'd think we were also pilgrims. But they walked a bit slow for us."

Mike got to Lhasa, were he found "beggars, fake turquoise, the market, Chinese influence." Having worked so hard to attain a "false" goal, his disappointment was so great he felt almost suicidal. "My goal was always to travel to Tibet. After I reached Lhasa I lost a sense of direction and went home and saw my parents for two or three weeks." Mike told me he was beginning to want some "stability," a home, maybe a family. "One guy I traveled with died while rafting in Nepal. It was a big hassle to cremate him and get back home. That's no way for a son or a daughter to die." Mike told me about a T-shirt he had made in Kathmandu with the message "A Meaningful Journey of Aimless Wandering." It was inspired by a phone conversation he'd had with his father, who told him that "what started as a meaningful journey is in danger of becoming aimless wanderings."

The trip to Tibet, Mike thought, had tested his endurance, and people told him he was "more patient" than before, but he seemed to be having doubts. Mike mused:

> One guy I knew, he went to Tibet but didn't change. I didn't want that to happen to me, but it did. I'm still the same person. . . . I thought

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going to Tibet would change me, I thought it held something for me. What would it take [to change]? Something monumental like finding religion or something. I can't see where to draw the line. When is enough enough?

**Volunteers**

The category "Volunteers" includes foreigners who work for the CTA or other Tibetan institutions in Dharamsala. Volunteerism is both an expression of social conscience and another form of cultural production in which the needs and desires of Tibetans and Westerners are both satisfied and brought into conflict. Volunteers are often very idealistic, with a somewhat exaggerated Utopian notion of the significance of their work. One volunteer, an environmentalist, told me that he saw Dharamsala "as a sort of model of what society could be like. . . . The people who come here are highly educated and will be running the world in ten or twenty years." Volunteers often suffer disillusionment with the Tibetan community, an outcome of their confrontation with other values and the frustration of their personal projects. Other Volunteers form long lasting friendships with Tibetans, and continue to be active in Tibetan support groups when they return to their home countries.

An American Volunteer (female) wrote that Volunteers can be subdivided into:

Longer term do gooders (usually egocentric)

Travelers -- volunteerism as part of it

Professional types -- formal consulting

Save the world types-- temporary

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Long-term Volunteers are generally older and have long standing ties to the Tibetans. They are often Buddhists. They may not, in fact, be "volunteers" so much as employees, or may volunteer in addition to their primary commitment to Buddhist practice. One woman I interviewed, for example, had been in Dharamsala since the 1970's. She had two children fluent in Tibetan and worked for the Tibetan Nuns Project while her husband worked for the CTA. The American woman cited above probably felt that long-term Volunteers are "egocentric" because they are often impatient with shorter term Volunteers, and may exercise authority over them in projects while snubbing them socially. Long-term Volunteers' patterns of consumption begin to parallel those of the more affluent locals (with the addition, of course, of more Western imported goods). They tend to commission artistic goods rather than buying them in shops.

Traveler-Volunteers travel for extended periods but stop in Dharamsala for several months to work on various projects. They may or may not have had some previous interest in Tibetan culture and religion, and often decide to stay in Dharamsala only after arrival. Dharamsala sometimes represents the end of their journey, having found what they were seeking, but most stay temporarily before traveling to the next site. One American woman working for the Planning Council told me that:

> I wanted to stay somewhere longer. When I got here I just felt at home, felt more at home and happy than in the USA. I just lost the interest in traveling, though when I hear people talk about certain places I think 'Oh I want to go there someday,' but not with the same urgency. Those feelings just dropped away.

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Dharamsala attracts a particular type of long-term traveler I call "Global Villagers." These are people engaged in international travel for years at a time or as a way of life, but are generally more affluent and goal oriented than "Drifters." Often they are professionals who have quit well paid but high stress jobs, or have recently inherited money, and have gone on a search for meaning and good works in the Third World. They tend to remain fairly aloof from the traveler's scene. These travelers are unhurried, and often become longer-term Doers in locales like Dharamsala which offer cultural, spiritual, and charitable opportunities. They sometimes return repeatedly to Dharamsala to "re-charge their batteries" before making another extended voyage. Although many Global Villagers have "rejected materialism," they tend to have plenty of money and time and often buy or commission a few high quality goods to ship home (or, if they no longer have a home, to someone watching their assets). World Villagers are like a traveling and shopping Peace Corps, and sometimes subsidize their lifestyle through promoting "ethnic" handicrafts and cultural productions.

In the Spring of 1993, I interviewed a Swiss couple who had been traveling for four years. The man had been a physician. The woman told me her occupation was "traveler." They had inherited some pre-Columbian art and sold it along with most of their other possessions before leaving Switzerland. Switzerland, said the woman, "is so bare, empty, the values are bad -- it's good for a vacation." The doctor added, "People say it's so clean and nice, but I would call it sterile!"

When I spoke with them, they had already been around the world three times, and had spent some months in Kathmandu "helping feed the

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beggars in the streets." The couple had met the Dalai Lama in Santa Fe and said they wanted to "return to his presence." They had encountered the Nechung monks in Hawaii, and were in Dharamsala helping the monks develop Western style menu items for their café near the Tibetan Library.

The couple raised money dealing in fabrics, stones, and silver jewelry. They marked up the stones 30-100%, the doctor said, and sold them in Switzerland and at flea markets in the United States. "It's a good price for people," he said, and the stones made them a little "extra income." Most of their money was earned dealing in silk. They subcontracted "through an Indian friend" for the fabric. They didn't know how much the weavers were paid, but the doctor said he was "sure he's not doing any child labor." The couple designed patterns for embroiderers in Delhi, then shipped the silk to the West. The couple saw their business as not only subsidizing their travels and volunteer work, but as helping local communities. The handicrafts, the doctor said, are "well done and it helps the artisan."

Such traveler-entrepreneurs do indeed provide outlets for artisan production, but they also act as middlemen that both shape artistic evolution and extract the highest share of the profits by taking advantage of differential international prices and exchange rates. Many Global Villagers, however, believe they lead (relatively) frugal lifestyles and are "recycling" money back to the Third World through their good works and consumption of local goods. The Swiss couple told me they had commissioned a "good quality" thangka in Dharamsala which they paid for with a camera, and had bought a carpet to "help a [weaver] friend."

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Professionals engaged in "formal consulting," may be either travelers who stop temporarily in Dharamsala, or Volunteers who have arranged in advance to carry out particular tasks. Professionals often had a prior commitment to Buddhism or the Tibetans. They may help draw up administrative plans, design buildings, organize handicraft marketing. Many of them are committed to the "Tibetan cause" and to "preserving Tibetan culture," but as we have seen in the previous chapters, in fact introduce foreign influences and innovations.

The majority of Volunteers are relatively unskilled youngsters in their twenties, eager to have an experience abroad. They are usually in college or have just graduated. They stay in Dharamsala for several months to a year, and generally form close connections with members of the Tibetan community. They do office work, write articles for the CTA. organize trash clean ups, and (especially) teach English. These and other volunteers are part of the promotion of Tibetan cultural productions, helping present the refugee cause and institutions in an idiom that Westerners will understand.

My impression was that more women than men volunteered for these positions. They shared the aim of many travelers in re-creating themselves, but attempted to do so in active "external" work in addition to travel or an "internal" (religious) search. None of the thirteen young volunteers I interviewed were Buddhists. More than any other category, Volunteers were more likely to come from upper middle class or wealthy backgrounds from which many sought to (temporarily) escape, experience a simpler life, and help those less fortunate. One twenty-five year old American Volunteer, from a very wealthy family, told me she liked to travel "for education, for time to read, to see different ways of life," but

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that travel "depresses me and I feel tremendous guilt and I wonder how I can help more." India, she thought, "would demonstrate an order within chaos that would be a real challenge. . . . to look inward you need to look outward." Another reason she came to work in Dharamsala, she said, was because her father had tried to talk her out of it.

That the Tibetan administration relies on the skills of Western professionals as well as students is some indication of both Tibetan dependence and cultural tolerance and adaptability. There are inevitable clashes between Westerners and Tibetans in the CTA over goals and methods. While many volunteers have the best of intentions, this work is often a form of self-production and self-promotion aggressively pursued, which mixes uneasily with a Tibetan bureaucratic style of modesty, consensus, and respect for authority. "On the Western side there's lot of self-focus," said one American Volunteer. "We think we are doing a big favor . . . and communication breaks down. They [Westerners] think they know what's right and get to bossing around . . . people [Tibetans] nod their heads yes but there is no real impact."

Another volunteer noted that:

> Westerners don't want to do menial tasks. They come from far off and expect special treatment and access [to high officials] right away, whereas Tibetans spend years toiling without recognition. . . . Maybe it's more directed to people at home. Instead of "I helped set up an address list for fund raising," they want to say to their friends "I cleaned up McLeod Ganj" or "I built a school" or whatever.

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Many Westerners felt frustration at what they saw as a conservative and inefficient bureaucracy (a criticism echoed by many young Tibetans in the CTA). One volunteer said that when she brought a report to a Kashag (CTA cabinet) member: "I was told I was 'working too fast.' So I threw the report on my desk for three days and brought it back untouched, and he said 'thank you very much!'" Another said that it was difficult to understand when "yes" really meant yes. "The Tibetans are hard to work with," she complained, "they're so polite." One researcher, who had visited Dharamsala repeatedly, told me that:

> Tibetans like it if they [Volunteers] take orders and do what they're told. They don't like people with ideas! Of course, some come and want to run the show and the government people already have an inferiority complex. Plus they don't want anyone to go too deeply and criticize, especially publicly. Most bureaucrats are set and resent any interference.

Part of the problem is simply a clash of cultural styles, but there are other factors at work. Many volunteers have no prior experience with bureaucracy and have unrealistic notions of how the CTA will or should operate. Their disillusionment with the Dharamsala elites and officials is sometimes unfairly generalized onto Tibetan culture at large. Another problem is that Westerners who could not expect to be taken seriously in Western professional circles expect special treatment by the Tibetans, regardless of behavior and appearance that is outlandish and insensitive to local standards. That they are given as much access and respect as they

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enjoy is a measure of the asymmetry in the relationship of refugees to their would-be Western benefactors. A few examples should suffice:

An environmentalist complained that at a meeting to promote awareness of solid waste buildup, the older Tibetans were not really listening or trying to understand. However, he noted, they were quite polite to the young woman with the bright florescent yellow mohawk who made a presentation.

A Swiss man passed out self-authored papers advising Westerners to be responsible tourists ("Watch your garbage . . . be polite . . . educate them"), and teaching Tibetans and Indians about family planning. He wore a Kalachakra Tartar medallion next to a condom he had pinned to his inside-out T-shirt.

One American volunteer worked on construction projects for three months and married a rather desperate Tibetan girl with a "bad reputation." He sported multiple piercings as well as several tattoos, including an Om Mani Padme Hum in Tibetan on one leg below the knee. He told me:

> My theory is, they put it on prayer flags so the wind carries the prayer. And according to the Tibetans, every time you say it, it betters the universe. . . . The leg has movement, like the flag blowing on the wind. Every time I take a step, it's like saying a prayer. And if the Tibetans can't see that, it's just their own damn ignorance. I've gotten a lot of shit for it. . . . I went around for the first two months I was here, not wearing shorts because I didn't want to offend anyone. And once I came clear about what these people are really about, and the reality of what's going on here, well, fuck them.

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While Westerners are free to experiment or challenge authority without long term repercussions for themselves, Tibetans' actions will reverberate through the community and perhaps effect their careers. As one sympathetic Volunteer said: "Tibetans already know these things [Western criticisms] but they aren't in a position to challenge things -- it effects their life and work, while a Westerner can come in and do anything and go home without feeling any backlash." Westerners often begin projects they do not complete, or leave without having established any infrastructure to guarantee continuity after their departure. (This is also a problem for the CTA in general. The refugee community is constantly shifting, and CTA staff members sometimes leave for better opportunities in business or emigration abroad). Said one volunteer:

> They're a bit wary of volunteers. They're like goldfish in a bowl and people come in and feed them and take what they want and say "how cute." But they [Tibetans] are not able to choose what they're fed. Then the people leave and forget them in a minute and half.

As in other cultural spheres, Western Volunteers often project their own values and interests on the Tibetans, and become frustrated and angry when their projects meet with little response or with hostility. There is often a radical disjuncture between the myths Westerner Volunteers both consume and help promote and the realities of Diaspora life. Environmentalists, for example, have helped shaped a new discourse that highlights the devastating consequences of Chinese neo-colonial exploitation of Tibet. This is contrasted to a somewhat idealized picture of the

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ecological harmony of traditional Tibetan life-ways. Tibetans serve as an icon, like Native Americans, for Western opposition to (and guilt over) the destructive aspects of modernity, while Tibetans are helped to generate a new discourse of resistance which appeals to the West. But attempts to actually clean up Dharamsala have not been so successful, and Westerners find that older Tibetans particularly do not quite understand their feelings about litter. A few Volunteers told me they thought that the major concern Tibetans have about the local environment is how it will effect the image of Dharamsala in the eyes of Western tourists. Because many Volunteers, as one admitted, take on projects that Tibetans are not really interested in, they often "write papers that go into someone's desk and never get read."

Reflecting on these problems, Volunteers are often ambivalent about the work they've done. One photographer told me:

> Maybe they don't need volunteers, maybe they need longer term people with real skills. . . . It wasn't important work, I wouldn't want to do it again, but I have problems with volunteers who complain. It's a fairly even exchange, I guess.

A British woman who had produced a brochure about sponsoring elderly refugees said:

> We got it all ready to print and then the office decides to do some changes, on cheaper paper, then said they'd "think about it." They're still thinking about it and I'm practicing non-attachment!

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> . . . If someone asked me how to help I'd say join a Tibetan support group and lobby your own government, unless you've got a really specific skill like a dentist. I don't think they need people like me.

That so much Tibetan cultural production relies on the labor and influence of Westerners raises issues of autonomy, dependence, and paternalism. Both Tibetan individuals and institutions rely on individual and institutional sponsorship from the West. Some Western Volunteers believe their help is, in the end, resented. The Tibetans, they say, feel inferior to Western experts and humiliated by their dependency. The quest for self reliance is an ongoing goal of the CTA and Tibetan activists, but they must always seek a hand from the West when initiating projects to foster that very self reliance.

Kleiger (1992) has written that the long distance patronage of the Mongol chiefs allowed cultural autonomy for their clerical Tibetan clients. Today, an analogous patronage is that extended to the refugees by affluent foreign Buddhists, celebrities, and philanthropists who make few concrete demands other than gratitude and a plaque on a new school or clinic. Said one long-term Western resident:

> I don't think people here really like Westerners much except for money and sponsorship. The Westerners they like the most are the ones that fly in, drop a lot of money, you pick them up at the airport, put on a few days of events -- they [the Tibetans] are good at being gracious and charming -- they give a big check and go, then you don't have to deal with them.

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Kleiger (1992) has written that the Tibetan system of religious patronage reverses the usual Maussian assumption about gifts. In the Tibetan system, the client is superior to the patron, for the client allows the patron to receive merit. "The traveler or stranger who aspires to membership in a community," he writes, "achieves a certain status by having a gift accepted" (p. 157). Kleiger notes that in the modern diaspora, all "patriotic" Tibetans can be the recipients of sponsorship that was once a privilege of religious elites. Not only Volunteers, but even Western travelers passing through town are patrons of Tibetan individuals and institutions. Nearly one third of travelers interviewed had given money to Tibetans they had met or to CTA institutions.

However, patronage is now extended across vast cultural distances and there are widely divergent models of appropriate behavior on the part of foreign sponsors and clients. The sponsorship of Westerners is often whimsical and short lived, or long term and intrusive. On an individual level, much support is offered by foreigners who idealize Tibetans and do seem to believe that the client graces the patron. But at a higher level most sponsorship is elicited in new non-religious terms, and Tibetans, both individually and communally, must prove their social and political worthiness. Tibetans, like other indigenous peoples, must learn rules of international and administrative discourse and organization that were constructed by others, joining a world that inevitably changes what it seeks to preserve.

Cultural productions are a key avenue for the elicitation of support, but must be altered sufficiently to communicate across cultural boundaries. Volunteers often play key roles in this process of "translation," which is

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also a process of invention and innovation, and sometimes one of commoditization and dependence.

**Dharmas**

> When the Iron Bird flies, the Tibetans will be scattered like ants and the Dharma will come to the land of the Red Man. -- Prophecy of Padmasambhava, 8th century
>
> . . . that silly prophecy about iron birds flying and the Dharma going to the Red Man -- which is mistakenly attributed to Padmasambhava, but which I firmly suspect of being the invention of one of our hippie lamas wanting to legitimize selling his milk and water Buddhism to naive Westerners. [Jamyang Norbu, 1989:10]
>
> Q: "Do many Westerners come here?"
> A: "Yes. They all take a lot of pictures."
> [From: "Monastic Dialogues" in Tibetan Phrasebook, Bloomfield and Tshering, 1987:76]

The impact of Western interest in Tibetan Buddhism in many ways parallels the impact of foreign consumers on Tibetan crafts. New income flows into revived exile institutions, "preserving" Tibetan culture, at the same time that those institutions are altered through interactions with the West. Like ritual objects, religious teachings and ceremonies now widely circulate as commodities, promoting both Tibetan religion and institutions. and the Tibetan political cause. Where once the Dalai Lama appeared in

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public rarely, he is today an international figure touring the globe giving once rare initiations to thousands of Westerners, many of them with little knowledge of Buddhism. Like other consumers, Dharmas both demand "authenticity" and introduce innovation, sometimes themselves becoming producers. As Tibetan Buddhism has become Transnational Buddhism, some foreign consumers have come to see themselves as the true heirs of the tradition, separating what is "essential" in Tibetan Buddhism from what is "corrupt" in Tibetan culture.

Tibetan Buddhism is an extremely rich and varied tradition that appeals to Westerners on multiple levels, to both the mind and heart. It offers magic and mystery for New Age dabblers as well as a wealth of sophisticated philosophical texts for scholars. Tibetan Buddhism can appeal to atheists who seek a rational approach to life's problems, as well as those who place their hopes on faith; it offers Guru devotion for believers and analytic practices for skeptics. Its elaborate, graduated methods of practice and the aim of accumulating merit mesh well with the individualism and "technological" thinking of Westerners (Bishop, 1993). Most young travelers to India are open to New Age ideas and mysticism. Of 36 travelers responding, 15 told me they believed in reincarnation, 12 were not sure, and only 9 said they definitely did not believe. Almost every traveler mentioned an interest in Buddhism and Eastern religion as reasons for traveling in India and coming to Dharamsala.

As with crafts, there is a split market in the Dharma scene. There are long-term practitioners who are committed Buddhists and make repeated and extended visits to Dharamsala. They often have a relationship with a particular lama as their "root" Guru (though they sometimes shop around). They consume the high-end, "commissioned" spiritual goods that

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retain a significant degree of a Tibetan idiom. Many of these long term Dharmas were travelers in the 1960's and 1970's who found the end of their search in Dharamsala and "took refuge" in the Buddha in the "early days" before, as they say, it became a tourist thing. "The heyday of the Library was the 1970's," said one long time Dharma student. The Tibetan Library formerly offered long, "in depth" philosophy courses, and before visas were restricted in length, foreigners could remain "forever." Some of these practitioners become monks and nuns, and a number earned doctorates in Religious Studies.

At the other end of the market are the travelers who sample a taste before moving on. They consume the ready made spiritual "goods" for sale at the Tibetan Library and the Tushita retreat center, or perhaps just breathe in the atmosphere, visit the temple, and read a book or two. The Library offers two hour-long lectures in Buddhist philosophy a day, with simultaneous English translation. In the high season, the lecture room is packed with perhaps fifty Westerners and a few young Tibetans. There is a core group of Dharmas that attends every day for months at a stretch, but increasingly the classes are filled with travelers who attend for a day or two. Although the courses last a couple of months, some of the old timers complain that every class seems geared to beginners and they cannot go into real depth. The Tushita retreat center above town has also changed it emphasis. Originally it hosted long retreats for serious practitioners, but increasingly offers short term retreats and lectures for travelers.

Dharamsala is attracting the attention of other religious groups hoping to cash in on the flow of visitors. The Osho (formerly Bhagwan Rajneesh) organization, for example, has opened up a shop and bakery in the McLeod Ganj market. A Western practitioner of the Goenka method

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of vispassina meditation (a Theravada Buddhist tradition) established a retreat center above Dharamsala as I conducted fieldwork. Posters advertising the private services of Western travelers and longer-term residents offering everything from aura readings to "Vocal Energy Science" increasingly clutter the bazaar.

**Tushita**

> We continue to receive, by radio and newspaper, accounts of the world outside our valley. In none of us do they inspire any wish to return to the old life. Not only is there so much to do here, in the sense of cataloguing glories of the past; we remain convinced of the wisdom of Shangri-la in remaining aloof from the endless struggle of Arab and Jew, Iraqi and Iranian, Catholic and Protestant. [from the novel Return to Shangri-la; Halliwell, 1987: 298]

> All the *gehses* [learned monks] staying in some beautiful penthouse or estate in the West, donated by some senile old woman, the widow of some great steel magnate, and she gives it all to some stupid lama. . . . Wisdom, compassion, love, but meanwhile people are suffering. If they really had that much compassion they'd go to Africa. They'd go to Ethiopia and do something. -- Jamyang Norbu

The bungalow that is now the Tushita retreat center was built by the Nowrojees, but was too far from McLeod Ganj to be practical for the merchant family, and they rented it to British tenants. Later, hippies squatted there without paying rent. They burned the furniture for fires,

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Mr. Nowrojee told me, and there was "lots of smoking and fighting." Mr. Nowrojee thought that they would kill him one day if he tried to kick them out, so he sold it to Lama Yehsi's group, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana (FPMT) for about a third of its actual value.

Lama Thubten Yeshi and his disciple Lama Thubten Zopa met in exile at the Buxador refugee camp. In 1969 they founded the Nepal Mahayana Gompa Center in Nepal. A Russian woman bought a hillside for them outside Kathmandu, which became the site of Koppan monastery. Koppan now has some 140 Tibetan and Nepali monks, and has become a famous teaching center for Westerners, offering short and long courses. Charismatic and skilled in communicating with Westerners, Yeshi and Zopa's organization expanded into the FPMT and now has over 60 centers around the world (Coleman, 1993). Yeshi died in 1984, and Zopa took charge of the organization. Tenzin Osel, a boy born to a Spanish Dharma student less than a year later, was recognized in 1986 as Yeshi's reincarnation. Osel was the fifth Western reincarnation recognized by the Dalai Lama (Kleiger, 1992), but many Tibetans were perplexed about the media hoopla that surrounded this event, for Yeshi was a minor figure in their eyes. Some have told me that the FPMT rather aggressively tried to promote Yeshi as a significant incarnation

The Tushita Retreat Center, founded in the early 1970's above McLeod Ganj, is named after the heavenly abode of Maitreya, the Buddha of the future age. I spoke with Rudy Harderwijk, the Dutch director of the center, during the 1993 monsoon. The center was expanding, and Harderwijk took time out from a busy schedule overseeing construction.

Harderwijk had been a welding engineer, but he was dissatisfied with his life. He trekked several times in Nepal, and on one trip ended up at

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Koppan. Eventually his interest in Buddhism changed from an intellectual fascination to actual practice. Back in the Netherlands, he took FPMT courses, but did not join the organization until he was asked to become the director of the Tushita center by Lama Zopa's attendant. They needed "Western energy and expertise for the building expansion," he explained. "Once you are in the organization and have your shit together, you get smashed from one end of the world to the other." Now, Harderwijk said, he was at the level of "Guru devotion. Lama Zopa knows what is better for me. I'm at that level of surrender."

The center employed three Nepali cooks, three Tibetan monks, an Indian laborer from the nearby village of Dharamkot, and various Western volunteers. It was hard for the locals, he said, to avoid the temptation to steal from the Westerners with their $100 watches. Harderwijk was paying 90-100 Rs. per day for Indian carpenters and masons, which is quite good by local standards. "It's hard to work with Western space kids," he said, "it's easier with Indians. I can tell them to work and if they don't just fire them."

The long retreats of the past, he told me, were not very cost effective, so starting around 1990, Tushita began offering short courses and lectures for tourists. There were now usually two to eight Western practitioners, some of them monks and nuns, conducting long or short retreats in addition to the "tourist courses." Business was way up: even in the monsoon they had 50 clients in courses, and people were fighting to get in. The center could accommodate 65 people in 1993, and it offered eight eleven day courses a year, one three month group retreat, and numerous short courses and lectures. The eleven day course cost 2000 Rs. "We still have to charge 75 Rs. per day for food," Harderwijk said. "I can guarantee

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we don't make a penny on it. But they compare it to the cheapest rice and dahl ever in India. That's when you get the endless discussions! Surprising how much people are greedy to the last Rupee. They want to stay 400 years in India when they have $100 left!"

The clients are "white young people maybe just finished with school. Most of them are travelers, not tourists. About 50% now are Israelis just out of army with a bit of money and nothing to do. The first few months they smoke, drink, fuck their brains out; it gets boring. They hear about these classes and try it out." The popularity of New Age thinking in the West prepares many to be open minded to the teachings, Harderwijk thought. "Before it was just Westerners with blown brains, now we have some normal people."

The courses employ one Tibetan lama and one Westerner as instructors. "There are problems with translating; we don't have terms for mind and mental states. But also they turn off when we start on [Tibetan concepts] like hell realms and Guru devotion." The courses first establish a framework with concepts of suffering, karma, and rebirth. "If this is just presented by Tibetans with traditional examples it sounds like a fairy tale that doesn't prove a bloody thing to any Westerner with a brain in his head. So we try to have the Westerner present those ideas in a Western way with a logical framework. Buddhist logical philosophy they can grasp and find appealing." After talks they have discussion groups. There is "heavy discussion in the first few days. . . . People are getting excited, they get an itch. . . . Emotions calm down, then get stirred up."

The course then moves on to Buddhist concepts of Emptiness (or the contingency of all existence). "I love it," Harderwijk said. "Critical people who follow quite closely get blown off their feet. . . . Some just sit and

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absorb and you could put any trash in. Most experience it as intense. We warn, but many underestimate how intense it will be. . . . After it's over most are more relaxed and happy in their skin. I don't know how long that lasts. There's a definite brainwash effect. . . . First there is outer resistance, then maybe collapse and people become sheep." Most clients are open "except the Israelis. They are good to work with; stone hard and critical but I usually win!" he laughed.

A few always drop out. "[They say] it's too serious, I'm on vacation,' or want something more exciting. 'I haven't seen Goa yet.'" One or two times people have "freaked out. Some have psychiatric problems and stop taking their medications. They feel protected and happy." Not too long before our interview one man had "flipped out" during a course. "It's only one in a thousand . . . now we're thinking of having people fill out a form on mental background. But will they want to tell us?"

Lots of clients, Harderwijk said, are "space outs. I wonder how they even managed to find a train. Wandering around barefoot, looking for something. I think they have a very troubled background, sexual abuse you name it. They choose to be spaced out rather than face reality and India is a great place to just fly around and never touch ground."

All is not always peace and love at the retreat on the hill. My wife JoAnn and I lived nearby one cold winter, in the cabin of a Japanese thangka painter who wisely had gone home during the cold months. During our stay, rival uses of local land came into focus. An American woman had bought a piece of property next to Tushita (when foreign ownership was still legal). She began work on a vispassina center during our stay, and at one point put a chain across the road, blocking vehicular

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access to Tushita. (Harderwijk said, "I've discovered that some older Western practitioners are some of the most sectarian people in the world. Really disgusting!")

An old Tibetan monk, a lama's attendant, lived in a small house near us that had belonged to the lama before he died. Now the lama's family wanted the house, though it sat on land owned by another foreigner. The American woman wanted the old monk out too, part of her master plan, the Japanese told us, to take over the hill. Her Indian overseer, like many local Indians, earned money working for Westerners -- hauling water, washing laundry, purchasing wood (often illegally). The overseer was in a fight with his father over the use of local pasture, and after a raid, we suspected the father had informed the Forest Department of the wood stockpiles of the Westerners. The old monk distrusted the overseer, and disliked all Indians.

Meanwhile, the Charitrust was planning construction of a resort in an open pasture just below our cabin and the two centers. The meditators were up in arms, and plans were downsized. Local children had taken to playing cricket in the pasture, which the Western practitioners also protested, as it interfered with their meditation. A young Western nun became angry with JoAnn and I for playing badminton and laughing too close to her retreat hut. One American nun complained constantly, sprinkling her comments with Tibetan terms delivered in a thick Brooklyn accent, about the Tibetan monks at Tushita who were "always playing Madonna!"

As much as many Dharmas would like to rise above worldly concerns, politics and conflict is always surfacing in "transnational Buddhism" (discussed in chapter 12). A method by which some Dharmas

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maintain their idealism is through the avoidance (often unconsciously) of frequent or lengthy contact with lay Tibetans. They often remain largely unaware of the problems found in any community. A Dutch woman in her fifties was absolutely shocked when I told her about an incident of domestic abuse. She found it hard to believe a Tibetan could even get angry, let alone beat his wife. Other Dharmas become disillusioned, and come to believe that lay Tibetans are all hypocrites, and that the salvation of the tradition lies with Western practitioners. One long time American practitioner said that in the beginning he idealized all Tibetans, then he only idealized the monks, but now he only believed in His Holiness; "He's the only one!" Save for the market interactions common to all travelers, Dharmas often have little contact with any Tibetans other than their teachers. They tend to overlook Tibetan monastic history, with its intrigues and power struggles, and focus on individual spiritual teachers who they imagine rise above the world.

It is not always easy for Dharmas to ignore seamier politics of Tibetan Buddhist sects and their Western extensions. There have numerous sex and money scandals in Western Buddhist centers. A well known incident was the uproar that occurring in the Vajradhatu USA, founded by the late Chögyam Trungpa, when it was discovered that his successor had spread AIDS to several students without informing them of his condition.

Trungpa was an incarnate lama of the Karma Kagyu sect. This sect has been embroiled in recent years in a controversy surrounding the recognition of the 17th incarnation its leading figure, the Gyalwa Karmapa. The 16th Karmapa died in 1981 in the United States, leaving no clear instructions about his next incarnation, which was to be discovered and enthroned by four regents. There was mounting pressure from adherents

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for a new incarnation as the years passed. One of the regents, Tai Situpa, suddenly claimed to have found a letter from the 16th Karmapa with predictions about his reincarnation. A Khampa boy was then "discovered" in the People's Republic of China by the two regents, Tai Situpa and Gyaltsab Rinpoche. A third regent, Jamgon Kontrul, died in a car accident soon afterwards (arousing suspicions). The fourth, Shamar Rinpoche, was adamantly opposed, and at one point stormed into Rumtek monastery, the sect's headquarters, accompanied by armed Indian soldiers. Some factions claimed that a Kathmandu Khampa group promoted the new incarnation, while others pointed to Shamar's close relationship to Bhutanese royals, accusing him of trying to enthrone a Bhutanese boy. Situpa has been accused of attempting to curry favor with the People's Republic by recognizing a boy approved by the Chinese state. Although the Dalai Lama had already confirmed Situpa's candidate, Shamar later proposed another boy, and there were two rival claimants (sometimes several incarnations of one figure are recognized in a non controversial manner, each incarnating an aspect of the whole).

Westerners can be hard pressed to rationalize the worldly controversies that entangle their spiritual mentors. In a letter to the Tibetan Review , Tom Drummer of England tried to do it this way: "The so called Karmapa controversy is surely no more than just another karmic ripple in the ocean of samsara and relative time. Why not let it rest at that? Even 'it' is empty of inherent existence" (Tibetan Review, 1992, 27 (1): p.?)

Other Dharmas reason that problems that arise in Tibetan (or Tibeto-Western) religious institutions are the result of cultural corruptions that have been laid over the essential Buddhist teachings, which remain

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pure and timeless. Although Buddhist philosophy has surprising similarities to contemporary linguistic and deconstructive philosophy -- all things are contingent and relational, "empty of inherent existence" (Derrida might say "lacking presence") -- many Dharmas hold Buddhist truths to be non-contingent and culture-free.

**Tuesday, March 30 1993**

Up at Kenji's cabin the days are getting warmer. We've been seeing more langurs of late. They're beautiful and shy, not like the troops of macaques that will come right into the cabin to raid fruit and flour and make a huge mess.

"Tenzin Wongmo," an American nun, author, and teacher came up for lunch. We talked a lot about Buddhist ideas, including whether because "the Self" is always changing, we should consider it "non-existent." (And just what is existence, anyway?) Tenzin also talked a lot about herself and why she left the FPMT. They posted her to Singapore unexpectedly, then shifted her again without consulting her. She said she was beginning to feel like an international ping-pong ball. Apparently, Lama Zopa performs a *mo* and decides what you're to do. Tenzin decided she wanted to take responsibility for her own life, not depend on a roll of the dice. Now she's a "free agent," and supports herself through donations and teaching. She insists she doesn't "belong" to any group now, though Zopa remains her "teacher." Apparently, she never charges a fee for teaching, but recieves "gifts" afterwards, which usually covers her expenses. However, on this trip she thinks Tushita won't even cover that. Whenever she gets extra money, she puts it in

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the bank. Tenzin has never paid into Social Security, and her parents cover her health insurance. She's started to worry about the future.

Tenzin also talked about the conference for Western Buddhist teachers held in McLeod Ganj recently. They spoke about the problems that have surfaced in the past decade, such as: what do you do when your teacher, who you're supposed consider as Buddha incarnate, is sleeping with students, or there's funny money stuff going around? The Dalai Lama wanted specific names of misbehavers, and he may have been informed of some in private. His Holiness said that since his teachers (the Regents) had been in conflict with one another, he thought of them as Buddhas in the spiritual sphere, in meditation. Outside of meditation, he could express his disapproval. Tenzin thought that living with such contradictions was easier for Tibetans than for Westerners.

There was also a presentation by a woman who had everyone imagine themselves as a woman entering the temple in McLeod Ganj. All the monks up front are men, there's His Holiness up on the throne, the thangkas depict the lineage gurus who are all men. . . . Everyone was roaring with laughter, but Tenzin thought the Dalai Lama was less amused and didn't quite seem to get it, though she thought he tried. She thought the general attitude of old Tibetan practitioners was: "Women are equal -- you can serve as a beautiful consort to Tantric practitioners!" The Tibetans tend to deny there's sexism in the community, but obviously they define it differently.

I asked Tenzin again about corrupt teachers. I said it seemed to me that one is safe assuming that no human being is ever perfect, that no person is ever "finished," but Tenzin strongly disagreed. The Buddha was perfect, she said, and a real understanding of emptiness is always

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accompanied by ethical behavior. We talked about the sexist structure of Buddhist institutions, and if Buddha was perfect and all-knowing, how he could have been reluctant to allow women into the Sangha (spiritual community). Tenzin explained it all as Buddha addressing "what people are ready to hear and act on in a particular setting." I challenged this, saying I didn't think spiritual enlightenment could lift one out of one's time and place, and that the Buddha couldn't know rocket science, for example. But Tenzin maintained that one must have faith in the possibility of perfection and omniscience.

But where is that to be found in this world?

**Preserving Tibetan Culture (Literally)**

Western consumption often becomes a form of production that modifies Tibetan religion and arts. A number of Dharmas become teachers and Researchers (discussed below) translating and adapting Tibetan teachings for Western uses. Some Dharmas train in the ritual arts. Shortly before leaving Dharamsala, I interviewed Lisa Heath, an American Buddhist and sculptor.

At the age of seventeen Lisa took an acid trip ("on Owsley's acid") and experienced past lives. "I was an agnostic before but was shown other mental and spiritual dimensions," she said, "I became interested in meditation." In 1973, she traveled to India, and went to a Kalachakra initiation given by the Dalai Lama. Returning to the United States, she read up on Buddhism while going to art school, getting a teaching certificate, and teaching High School. She wanted to return to India but it took her nine years to earn the money. "The teachings in the West were

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distorted. I didn't get good vibrations, so I had to get back to the root of the tree."

Returning to India, she planned to study Buddhism in Dharamsala, not sculpture. "But soon after I arrived someone appeared at my door and asked me to make a [clay] statue of a deceased Lama. That started five years of non-stop statue making." The statue was for the stupa of Lama Trijang Rinpoche, one the Dalai Lama's tutors. When it was finished, it was carried up to the labrang [estate; household compound] of Ling Rinpoche, the Dalai Lama's senior tutor, near Tushita.

> State artists looked at it and criticized it on the basis of Tibetan iconography, but they had asked me for a realistic one so I did one. I didn't care because Ling Rinpoche blew my mind. . . . he saw it, and showed me a piece [relic] of the Buddha. . . . I saw him once at a puja. . . . He looked at me as he was leaving, and in his eyes instead of pupils I saw holes with shafts of light and I was just ecstatic. Later he said "you must study Tibetan sculpture" and so that was the start. . . . these things don't happen in America, the magic happens here!

Lisa studied with two Tibetan brothers, the sons of a well known Tibetan artist. They spoke no English. "They gave me masks of Buddha's faces and I'd copy them. It was clay but used in a different way so I had a lot of technical problems." She studied with them for one and half years. "Then Ling Rinpoche died while in meditative equipoise. His Holiness had decided to embalm him and I was approached to work on this." The body is dried out and a statue built around it. This had not been done in India, but the Dalai Lama threw a *mo* and decided go ahead, monsoon and all.

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> They needed extra waterproofing -- so needed Western techniques! I suggested they coat him in plastic, so they said "Good! You can do it!" I was overwhelmed but once I recovered I said no thanks, I'm not qualified. I hadn't used plastic in ten years. But I said I'd find someone qualified and consented to do the head. [Ling Rinpoche] was in meditative equipoise; not quite dead. After death the elements dissolve. The mind gets subtler and subtler and is reduced to red and white drops that merge from the nadis [bodily energy channels]. They form a point in the heart then open up and consciousness leaves. . . . Normal people black out and can't control where they are born, but the lamas can . . . stay in the subtle clear light state indefinitely. When finished the white drop comes out the penis, the red drop out the nose.

Ling Rinpoche stayed in this in-between state for thirteen days, she said. Attendants then saw semen drops emerging out of his penis, and a bit of blood come out of his nose. There was a ring around the moon. They threw a *mo* and "told me to get ready, " she remembers.

> I went in [to the body]. It was another mind blowing experience. I had been worried about being with a dead body -- my guru -- but I felt like I was Santa's elf! It went great, it took three hours [to coat the body in plaster]. Even the Indian plaster worked well. It was fantastic to work on a Buddha's body-- it was like a sixteen year old's body. It was light, beautiful, and glowing. I was like a zombie afterwards!

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> So for the next three years I made this statue. The body had dried. I did the statue with layers of resin and fiberglass, and the outer layer finally looked like him. . . . He's sitting in the lotus [posture], left hand in meditative equipoise, right hand in the teaching mudra [gesture]. It was consecrated by the Dalai Lama and is in his palace now.

Lisa had a hard time working with the Tibetans. "They didn't want to listen to a woman. The only reason I could work was His Holiness. But the attendants and populace were opposed. People would come and say 'don't let her do it!'" The Dalai Lama, however, encouraged her and told her it was very good to combine Tibetan design and Western techniques.

Lisa has not been paid much for her efforts, "you're not supposed to get paid working for your guru," she explained. She had gone into debt and had to return to the United States. Having been gone for five years, she couldn't get a teaching job, and tried unsuccessfully to get grants to study Tibetan sculpture. She drove a taxi for a while, and saved up money. She returned to Dharamsala and had again been studying with the two brothers for four years.

While studying Tibetan clay sculpture techniques, which allow the clay to dry, rather than firing it, Lisa began making her own statues. "It takes too long to do it the Tibetan way and sell. I thought I'd make rubber molds and do editions and support myself this way." She follows traditional designs but uses unbreakable polyester and fiberglass, which are more durable and lighter. "No Tibetans are interested as yet in learning to use these techniques," she said. "Some assistants have learned, but not

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artists." She sells her statues to Westerners for the most part, and thinks they could fetch up to $1000 in the West.

The director of the Tibetan Library bought one of Lisa's statues, which is now in the Library, signed. "It's unusual," she said, "statues were never signed. It's a [Maitreya] Buddha image and exactly the same or essentially the same as those for thousands of years. The image is more important than the artist. My mind was blown in Spiti. I saw huge images of the Buddha made about 1200 AD that were exactly what I had finished working on for three months. My mortality just hit me. But they put my name on the piece in the Library. Tibetans say they saw my piece and it's great that a Westerner has learned this tradition. I think it's for that. It's not for any ego reasons really."

When I spoke with her in 1993, Lisa was again running out of money and was planning to leave soon. She said she was now "respected and asked to do statues of deceased lamas, but they can't pay! I can't live as cheaply as a Tibetan, I just can't." She thought she'd go teach English in Taiwan, and maybe get another credential and teach art back in the United States. "But who knows what the future holds?"

**Mining Tibetan Culture: Researchers**

Researchers, like other foreigners in Dharamsala, are both consumers and producers of "Tibetan" culture. They consume the same goods and services as do other travelers, and some use their expertise to promote Tibetan goods or even become tour guides. In addition, through the consumption of local knowledge, they produce texts and films through which the world comes to "know" Tibetans, and through which the Tibetans, at least in part, come to see themselves.

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Dharamsala is simultaneously a site of multiple varieties of cultural production for tourists and a site for the production of academic careers. Since Robert Thurman, now a professor at Columbia University, was the first Westerner to be ordained in the Tibetan tradition in 1964, Dharamsala has become somewhat of a factory for doctorates. One informant, Dr. Ronald Schwartz, a professor of Political Science, remembered that "in Dharamsala in the early 1980's I knew about a half dozen Western monks in the Gelukpa [Tibetan Buddhist] tradition going through training. All of them with one exception gave up their vows, went back to the West and got Buddhist Studies Ph.D.'s. A few are professors now."

There are several varieties of researcher in Dharamsala. Many journalists and film crews pass through town briefly. They generally receive a high degree of cooperation from Tibetan institutions, concerned to present a good image to the West. They often provide translators and direct the crews to appropriate informants. Film crews are seen at almost every important public event, and are tolerated to a surprising degree as they station themselves in the midst of Tibetan artistic and ritual performances.

Academic researchers remain for extended periods, and congregate around the Tibetan Library, which offers both thousands of Tibetan texts and cheap rooms nearby, including a block of apartments reserved for researchers. Researchers, usually a bit older than most other travelers, are generally in their thirties or above. Many are married, and some bring their spouses and children to stay with them. Many researchers were travelers who years earlier had encountered Tibetans in Dharamsala and returned to study some aspect of Tibetan religion, society, art, or history.

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Academic researchers can be roughly divided into two sorts: those who study Buddhist philosophy and religion, and those who study society. Most religious studies scholars are Buddhists and tend to idealize the Tibetan tradition and project their own values upon it. Peter Bishop (1993) has written that Western ideas of orderliness and systemiticity are mirrored by scholarly representations of Tibetan Buddhism as a system. This is partially due, he believes, to Western scholars working almost exclusively with the scholastic specialists of the Tibetan world rather than with ordinary married lamas, shamans, or lay practitioners. This and an emphasis on the textual -- what Donald Lopez (1995) has called "bibliophilia" -- are responsible for the relative lack of knowledge regarding everyday and lay religious practice and belief. Religious scholars often regard the idealized representations of the texts as closely reflective of actual social life. Anthropologists and religious scholars, relying on divergent sources and applying contrasting definitions of validity, often disagree about the "truth" of Tibetan religion, and compete over the authority to define it.

Like other foreigners concerned to preserve Tibetan culture, religious scholars tend to see Tibet as an "endangered archive" (Lopez, 1995: 251). Tibet was indeed the repository of the richest Buddhist libraries, for Tibetan scholars translated thousands of Indian texts before Buddhism virtually disappeared from it's land of origin. Lopez describes contradictory feelings on the part of Western scholars. There was the Orientalist notion that the Classical Age of Eastern religion is gone forever, while the present is corrupt. Tibet's ornate lamaism was considered the most degraded form of Buddhism. But in this century, isolated Tibet, with it's storehouse of original texts, came to be thought of

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intact. Lopez writes that now that the treasure house has been opened to the world and to ugly history, Western scholars must rush to translate the texts and preserve the tradition.

As with other Tibetan cultural productions, it is up to the West to salvage quality and authenticity. Western scholars, Lopez writes, felt that this could not be left to the Tibetans themselves, for the young "seemed to be losing interest in their religion, seduced by materialism, nationalism, and rock music. There seemed to be only one group ready for the task: American graduate students." As for the Tibetans, he writes, "the culture they were charged to preserve was not of their making but of ours" (p. 258).

One long-time practitioner and translator, about to leave Dharamsala to pursue an academic degree, and told me:

> The future of Buddhism is in the West -- it's being purified and revived in the West. Asians are not so interested. . . . All the interesting work is being done in the West. The historicism and analysis of the West is so important to revitalizing and creating new forms.

The textual focus of religious scholars is in part an affect of academic requirements -- the production of a translation, often of a single text, is a common route to the doctorate (ibid.). Tibetans seem to understand and appreciate religious studies and its emphasis on texts, for this parallels Tibet's own scholastic traditions. When anthropologists, historians, museologists and the like investigate sacred teachings and the arts, particularly if the researcher interviews elites, high lamas, and master

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artisans, they can expect a good deal of support in the exile community. Researchers mining Tibetan culture in search of the gold that will establish their academic credentials may be seen as allies in the Tibetan struggle, helping preserve and advertise their identity. Many times during my interviews I became embarrassed when I was told how important my work was, and how crucial it is for Westerners to understand Tibetan traditions. The past is favored and safe ground for cultural mining.

Many Tibetans are old hands at interviews, but they are sometimes surprised when interviews diverge from expected pathways. When Westerners dig around in mundane social life, when they examine the economic interactions and power relations of the present, interviewing ordinary Tibetans rather than the elite representatives of sanctioned Tibetan culture, many refugees are confused and institutions less co-operative. The aims of Western researchers are not always the aims of their subjects. In the next chapter, I will examine more closely some of the issues and obstacles of research in Dharamsala, focusing on anthropologists, a group rarely captured ethnographically, at work in the field.

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# CHAPTER ELEVEN
# ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND OTHER TOURISTS

> I sneeze at organized tours, for the things I see in wild or remote parts of the world, and those You can't see when You abide by prepaid, ready made routs. Furthermore, You don't see all that I know how to see, even if You go to the same places. [Trinh T. Minh-Ha, 1994: 22]

> The ethnic tourists are not categorically distinct from the Anthropologists who can be regarded as professional ethnic tourists. [Pierre van den Berghe, 1992: 247]

> Overheard in a Dharamsala Restaurant:
> Traveler One: "I'm so glad I'm not a tourist!"
> Traveler Two: "Yeah, you need three weeks to really get to know a place."

## Introduction: A Difference That Makes A Difference?

Malcolm Crick once asked: "What is the difference between being an Anthropologist, being a tourist, and being an Anthropologist studying tourism?" (1985:74 ). Anthropological research, like tourism, is a form of cultural consumption and production, as well as a form of Self and career production. Anthropological literature is, like travel literature or museum displays, active in the construction of that which both Tibetans and Westerners consume as authentic Tibetan culture. Anthropology claims,

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however, a privileged place vis à vis tourism, in that its representations are held to be more informed, "objective," and economically disinterested.

This chapter will briefly address some issues regarding the differences and similarities between the cultural consumption and production of Anthropologists and other travelers, Anthropologists' attitudes and behaviors with regard to tourism in Dharamsala, and how the role of "social scientist" carries with it political, social, and epistemological consequences which can distance Anthropologists from relationships and insights other foreigners -- even tourists-- may enjoy. During one period of my fieldwork, there were at least twelve other Anthropologists in addition to myself simultaneously stirring the cultural stew in Dharamsala, a fact that somehow has escaped serious analysis-- or even mention-- in previous ethnographic accounts. This silence is especially problematic in a research-factory like Dharamsala, but it is also generally the case that Anthropologists, in the words of Marcus and Myers (1995), can no longer address subjects "cleanly." Nearly all the peoples we scrutinize already have a history of relations with social science (Marcus and Myers, 1995). Furthermore, Anthropology often plays a key role in "authorizing" ethnic difference and authenticity, which may then attract tourism.

Although it has become a cliché to open academic papers about tourism with the observation that tourism studies have previously been lightly regarded and are only now coming into their own, competing researchers generally did not take my research into the tourist industry very seriously. My wife, researching a more purely "Other" focused topic, Tibetan Buddhist nuns, was considered the real ethnographer. Interviewing tourists was interesting perhaps, but somewhat funny to my

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ethnographic colleagues, and interviewing other Anthropologists was vaguely threatening.

In a context of intense competition, Tibetologist emphasis on the precise translation of timeless texts, and a refugee ideology of "cultural preservation," most researchers working in Dharamsala attempt to bracket out the influence of tourism and the constant intrusions of other researchers. In doing so, as the religious scholar Donald Lopez has pointed out, they practice a form of "New Age" Orientalism that attempts to locate an "authentic" Tibetan culture isolated in the past and insulated from the transnational present (Lopez, 1994). Ironically, this practice mirrors the essentialist notions for which tourists are frequently criticized. It may however, preserve heroic narratives of the Anthropologist roughing it alone in a culture that is completely other, spicing accounts with harrowing tales of culture shock and intestinal fortitude that echoes so many travelers' tales.

But if we admit the presence, influence, and even rival claims to knowledge of non-academic travelers, how do we maintain our ethnographic authority, *our* "difference"?

**The Mind of The Tourist [sic]**

Despite the deconstruction industry that has demolished Orientalist and ethnographic myths, most Anthropologists are not ready to relinquish their authority, at least not to tourists. Nearly twenty years ago Dean MacCannell noted the growing similarity between ethnography and travel writing. Nevertheless, he claimed, "tourism is different from ethnography, and perhaps this is the secret of its success, because it is not conscious of its aims. The tourist remains mystified as to his [sic] true motives." The

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ethnographer is not, or ought not to be, mystified, nor "taken in by the grandeur of his undertaking," rather he is "simply . . . making the world more understandable" (1989:178-9). From Papua New Guinea, Errington and Gewertz report that "tourists are essentially unilineal evolutionists who find the world filled with chiefs and witch doctors, and their self-referential tales are based on -- indeed require -- partial, simplified, and often completely erroneous information" (1989: 46).

Even when ethnographers and other social scientists temporarily take on the role of tourist -- if only to gather data undercover -- they maintain their distinction, as David Zurick (1995) attempts to demonstrate in his recent book Errant Journeys (categorized on the back cover as "Travel; Geography; Anthropology"). In 1990, Zurick joined an "adventure tour" by jeep, boat, foot, and elephant in Northern Thailand with the aim "to collect information about the tour, a voyeur into the lives of the tourists and, in fact, into the very life of the tour itself" (p. 97). The first difference claimed by Zurick is simply national: he is an American, the rest of the tourists are European. A second difference is that his experience is closer to the ground and more spontaneous, thus he implies it is more authentic, precisely as do many Hard Travelers. While most tourists make their arrangements ahead of time in their home countries, Zurick books the tour in Thailand and takes a public bus instead of the charter to Chang Mai. Zurick found it a bit suspicious that the tour's first stop in the hills was in Fang, a "smuggler's town" on the Burmese border. The guide they hooked up with there was "a young lad behind Rebo sunglasses, wearing jeans and a Metallica T-shirt" (p. 99). Apparently, social scientists are as surprised and disappointed as any authenticity seeking tourist when the locals prove to share the global culture of the present.

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A third difference is that whereas most Western visitors to the Thai hill peoples are fascinated by ceremonies, costumes, and handicrafts, Zurick has the ethnographers' eye for Mode of Production. He writes (redundantly) that he "found most intriguing the fact that they are shifting cultivators, slash and burn farmers, swidden gardeners . . . . Horticulturists really." The ethnographer is more perceptive of economics and environmental consequences than mere tourists, whose aim is mere pleasure. Thus, Zurick writes:

> Where other tourists might take postcard pictures, I sought visible destruction: burnt fields and cleared slopes, eroded gullies. While my companions might examine hand-woven baskets and embroidered cloth, I looked for digging sticks and hunting gear, and imagined them being used (p. 101).

Zurick was "impressed and appalled with how completely each transaction our group had with the villagers was reduced to its monetary equivalent," while his "bargain-hunting companions squealed in delight whenever an especially fine piece of handiwork was obtained" (p. 102). Zurick claims a surprising final difference: the ethnographic traveler is more open to visual/aesthetic appreciation. "My silent reveries across the distant landscapes were obtained only in brief gazes," he complains, ". . . . interrupted by the continual outbursts from the other members of our tour" (p. 104).

The trip, Zurick confesses, was an enterprise in "ethnic voyeurism" for which he felt ashamed. The tour did not live up to it's packaged promises, and the group agreed to cut it short. Zurick made his own

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arrangements to return to Chang Mai, and jumped into the back of a Toyota pickup, taking a "slow and tedious" trip down a "ruddy and muddy" dirt track, the driver "mangling the curves." He hops out "shaken and sore and in search of a clean hotel" (p. 106). Now he is on his own, authenticity restored -- as in so many travel and ethnographic narratives -- through suffering.

There are numerous problems with the differentiations between ethnographers and other travelers outlined or implied by MacCannell, Errington and Gewertz, Zurick, and other Anthropological critics. To begin with they generally offer an undifferentiated treatment of "tourists" that replicates the same type of facile stereotyping for which tourists are often criticized. At least Errington and Gewertz distinguish between "tourists" and "travelers," adding the interesting observation that while sophisticated travelers -- and Anthropologists? -- desire time-frozen primitives, tourists are more open to change.

Generalizations regarding the motives and consciousness of tourists are often made without interviewing many -- or any -- actual tourists. However, in Dharamsala, I found that many travelers not only had vast experience with diverse cultures, but even had social science backgrounds. Many travelers had made repeated trips to Tibet, Nepal, and India as well as other tourist locales around the globe. Most of the graduate students doing research in Dharamsala, on the other hand, had neither the time nor money to travel much, sometimes providing them with less of the comparative understanding that is supposed to be a hallmark of our profession. In some senses the travelers live more similarly to refugees, who may engage in international trade and migrate each winter for the

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sweater business, than do Anthropologists like myself who remain rooted to one "community" as though its boundaries were stable in space and time.

## Anthropologists: Consumers, Producers, and Promoters

> What is the ability to define the Other as authentic, other than the ability to make profits by it, or to sell this as a commodified good. . . . What is authenticity except Anthropology in its most profitable guise? [Vincenne Adams, 1996: 229]

The status of "tourist" (or as many prefer, "traveler") is not something essential, nor is it a state of mind. Being a tourist is a *behavioral role* , one that Anthropologists frequently slip in and out of, even while conducting research. In India, those not fortunate enough to have obtained a research visa must leave the country every six months before re-entering. Many of my graduate student colleagues took advantage of this necessity by making winter or monsoon trips to the beaches of Thailand. Should they be considered gullible tourists in Thailand, but sophisticated Anthropologists in India? As Edward Bruner (1989) points out, while social scientists often consider themselves a wholly other species than their absurd fellow foreigners, the locals may not differentiate us at all. Anthropologists generally frequent the same restaurants, hotels, and sights, buy the same souvenirs, and generally have a very similar relationship to the cultural industries of Dharamsala as do other travelers.

In Dharamsala, researchers were another colorful part of the local flora and fauna, themselves part of the spectacle and sometimes the focus of

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snapshots taken by Indian tourists. Margaret Mead's house in the Sepik, New Guinea is now itself a tourist attraction (MacCannell, 1992). Like Jeffrey Brewer conducting research in Baja California (1984), and like any Westerner in Dharamsala, no matter how deeply our Anthropological involvement in Tibetan culture, or how intimate our relations with the locals, we are always, to somebody, a potential sponsor or customer.

In conducting interviews with Anthropologists and other Westerners, I discovered a few unsettling facts. As Crick had noted, many Anthropologists spend much of their time hiding in their rooms reading novels (Crick, 1985), and many seek out the company of other Westerners, including attractive tourists. Many researchers in Dharamsala admitted they spent more time with other Westerners than they did with Tibetans, and they often avoided the local Indian community altogether. Anthropologists were less likely to have a firm command of the Tibetan language than were religious scholars, and less likely to develop deep friendships or romantic relationships with locals than were volunteers working with Tibetan institutions. Most surprising, the student Anthropologists I interviewed were less likely than entrepreneurs or spiritual seekers to have a deep understanding of the indigenous meanings of Tibetan material culture and religious artifacts.

As many critics have pointed out, MacCannell's notion of "staged authenticity" assumes that the social scientist has a privileged knowledge and authority to distinguish and define the "real" and the "artificial." Errington and Gewertz dubiously imply that Anthropological knowledge is not inherently partial and simplified, or even erroneous. In Dharamsala, Anthropologists may variously believe, consume, produce, and promote exoticizing myths about Tibetans and Tibetan culture. In analyzing the

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"mimesis" between Sherpas and their Western interlocutors, Vincenne Adams points out that it is not only tourists, but Anthropologists, who attempt to find themselves through the Other (Adams, 1996). Anthropologists interviewed in Dharamsala demonstrate that social scientists commonly participate in the romantic quest for the Absolute Other. Indeed, fieldwork is for some the method to carry forward the search.

Anthropologist 1 was a thirty-one year old Norwegian woman. She spent nine and half months in Dharamsala conducting research on Tibetan youth identity and politics, living with her husband and young child in rooms at the Tibetan library. Anthropologist 1 had traveled widely prior to focusing her interests on Tibetans.

Asked what she would do given unlimited time and money, Anthropologist 1 replied "it's not the time and money [that are obstacles] it's the border guards! I'd go to Tibet to stay with the nomads for a couple of years. I'd like to confront my own ideas and dreams about a different kind of life that I haven't found anywhere else except with the nomads. They're as close as I've come to my ideal. It's hard to explain; it would take ten pages. 'It' was there, but I'm not sure it's there anymore."

Like many travelers, the quest began in her twenties and stemmed from a disillusionment with Western society and its' comfort and materialism.

> I sort of figured that if you took away this and took away that, you'd get rid of lots of modern things. You'd get back to a place that was better. I saw the nomads at a festival outside a monastery in Kham.

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They had their tents up. We saw them three times. . . . We had a Chinese translator and she was very forward, like I wouldn't be. She just pushed her way in. But, the people were laughing.

"What about the nomads attracted you?" I asked.

She thought for a moment. "Space."

Anthropologist 1 told me that she got into Anthropology "so I could do fieldwork as a socially accepted way to do what I wanted and see if they [the Tibetan nomads] are living a kind of life more interesting than in my own society. . . . You could say I was looking for a lost paradise."

Anthropologist 2 had a more ambiguous and flexible attitude to culture change than do many researchers, who in seeking to discover and protect some imagined static "authentic culture" are prone to the same knee-jerk criticism of "tourists" that self-defined "travelers" profess. Anthropologist 2, however, assumed that researchers would have a more "realistic" attitude and that it was only tourists who naively sought out some museumified culture. Reflecting on the question of "authenticity", Anthropologist 2 commented that "whatever authentic is, it can't be found in the streets here. It's in the homes and in their [Tibetan] heads. But, I can't stand people who criticize tourism because the people here want Western things. They have a right to want these things. Tourists have a big idea of preservation."

Anthropologist 3 was a thirty year old American woman. Although not enrolled in any graduate program, she was gathering an oral history of an elderly Tibetan nun who had led a rebel band against the Chinese.

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Anthropologist 3 had visited Dharamsala repeatedly, and had traveled to other Tibetan settlements in India as well as occupied Tibet. She was deeply involved in Tibetan political and social support, and had married a young newcomer from Kham.

Anthropologist 3's interest in Tibet had been sparked at the age of thirteen when she read Alexandra David-Neel's Magic and Mystery in Tibet (1971). Tibet, she thought, "was so different. [David-Neel] lived in an amazing place. Part of it was how she described it. Tibetans represented a larger understanding of how things worked. A sense of unlimited possibilities."

Anthropologist 3 described herself as "an anarchist" who had an "interest in people living on the edge." Tibet, she thought, was one of the most extreme environments to which humans had adapted. "People adopt interesting ideas to help them survive. . . . Their idea of reality is so different. [Tibetans] see this life as encompassing many lifetimes. The miracles they describe, for them it's as real as washing machines and refrigerators."

Most Anthropologists in Dharamsala maintained a rather unexamined relation to the crafts and tourism markets, both as consumers and as promoters. When asked if she thought her "Tibetan" purchases were actually made by Tibetans, one Anthropologist replied: "I like to think they are. Well, by Tibetans in Nepal, I guess. I suppose it matters. It's religious art and shouldn't be sold as tourist items." She had, nonetheless, bargained for religious objects on the market, including a bone trumpet. Asked what was "special" to her about the object she emphasized its use as a signifier of cultural difference and of her own status enhancing experience.

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"We don't handle bones that way," she said. "It's from another culture and used in pujas mainly. . . . I don't know the real details. It's just that it's so different from what we'd do in the West."

Like many other Westerners in Dharamsala, particularly religious scholars, Anthropologists sometimes become culture brokers, profiting from Tibetan crafts, religious teachings, and the Shangri-la myth. Anthropologist 3 had bought numerous Tibetan bone malas [rosaries] which she hoped she could resell in the United States for some ten times their Indian price. Each bead was carved in the shape of a skull. "Punks love them!" she explained. "Leather types in Seattle, they'll love 'em! Wear them like a necklace around their black T-shirts. They don't necessarily know they're Tibetan. It doesn't matter. They're skulls, they're cool."

When asked about his relationship to Tibetan material culture, one Anthropologist, who was also a Buddhist practitioner, first claimed that "I have no contact with objects! I'm bad with them." When pushed, however, he too confessed that he was not only cashing in on unequal exchange values, he was not above taking advantage of indigenous ignorance.

> I have a friend, an antique dealer in France. So I have bought some stuff [to resell]. I bought three statues. If he doesn't sell them I'll keep them. Well, there's [also] my ritual objects. One old Buddha statue and one new one. [The old one] was previously consecrated, obviously stolen from a monastery! I spoke with lamas and they said it's good it go to the West. First rich people get it, then when they die, it'll go back to the [Dharma] centers. It was so cheap and really beautiful. A nomad was selling it and he didn't know what he was

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doing. It was in Kham [Eastern Tibet]. He approached me in the street. I feel bad when I think about it.

Karma, it seems, has a way of equaling out, easing the conscience of this Anthropologist. "The antique dealers in Tibet sold me things for more than they'd get in France," he claimed. "I don't pay much attention to it. Last year thieves took everything from my house. But they left the Buddha. I think they had respect for it."

Several Anthropologists, religious scholars, and Buddhist practitioners doubled as tour guides, funding not only their study but their personal consumption with earnings dependent on touristic fascination with the mystic East. Anthropologist 4 was a forty year old Frenchman who had earned a BA in Sociology and an MA in Ethnology. A Buddhist practitioner, he had just completed a book on the Tantra he practiced when I interviewed him. He described himself as teacher and travel agent. He had been in the tourism business for ten years, having founded a tour agency in Belgium that now operated out of Nepal.

Anthropologist 4 was in Dharamsala with a group of American students participating in a "College Semester Abroad" through the School for International Training. The school is part of World Learning, Inc. whose mission is to reduce global conflict through multicultural education. Most of the students receive credit from their home colleges. For part of the program students lived with refugee families in Dharamsala for five weeks. Anthropologist 4 admitted that most of the students came from affluent backgrounds. Tuition for the seventeen week Tibetan program was $9,000, out of which Anthropologist 4 took about 55% for the

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semester's budget, including his salary. Anthropologist 5 figured he could earn about $13,000 a year with the program, plus food, transport, and other expenses. He will never get rich this way, but, as he noted "That's not bad for here!" Anthropologist 4 was paying a local Tibetan woman nearly 8,000 Rs. (about U.S. $270 ) in salary and expenses for teaching Tibetan for five weeks, a tremendous amount by local standards. Anthropologist 5 also paid Tibetan and Western scholars 1000 Rs. per lecture to the students.

Anthropologist 4 first visited Dharamsala in 1975 after a traveler in Kabul told him that Dharamsala had "nice noodles, nice mountains, and nice women". He took refuge in the Buddha soon after his arrival, and began studying Tibetan. "It's the worst disease you can contract here! At the same time it's nice to be able to read the texts." His interest in Tibetan religion was monetized when on a visit to Rumtek monastery in Sikkim, the Karmapa (the head of the Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism) told him he should serve as translator for a group of Westerners. "I talked to several agents and started organizing tours. It's a great way to earn money. I do two or three weeks of travel than three months in Kathmandu, studying, doing retreats. I can also show people things, share something. Tourism is not all negative!"

I asked what people could get out of his tours.

> People work eleven months a year. The tour can give them some space. A space without problems, a chance for an opening, for something to happen, here and now. *Look*, instead of being a tourist. You can't do it by books. You need to experience. Sometimes it's a half an hour out of weeks. Some people remember that half hour ten

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years later! Mishaps are maybe the best thing to happen. When plans go awry . . . when you have nothing, you can relax. With a camera, bags, etc. you cannot open up. I took to a group to Varanasi. . . . They were avoiding the beggars. I told them to imagine they were beggars asking for money. At breakfast they couldn't eat! Still, they remember this only 15 minutes!

I asked about trips to Tibet, and what made Tibet special.

"It's my own interest. I don't think by itself it's a sacred land. Tibetans are nothing special. All this exoticism can hide the real things. But when I travel with a group since I know about it they get a deeper experience. Get a bit behind things."

Certainly, Anthropologists are capable of "giving good tour," but what effects might multiple and contradictory roles as teachers, culture brokers, advocates, and entrepreneurs have on ethnographic representations of the Other?

**Privileged Knowledge?**

It is sometimes claimed that credentials and funding give Anthropologists access to informants and institutions denied not only to mere tourists, but even to many Tibetans, a point made in print by several refugee intellectuals, such as Jamyang Norbu, with some bitterness. I asked Norbu about his claim in Illusion and Reality (1989) that Tibetans face difficulties in attempting to conduct research, while foreign researchers have the Tibetan Library staff at their command. Norbu responded:

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> With writers it has been true. What I meant specifically is writers who play the game, the official game . . . it's changed a bit now. When I wrote that, at the time, you know, writers who were in the good books of His Holiness, got everything. Everything opened up: translators, offices, assurances from the government to buy some of the first run. . . . Before, interviews with His Holiness were so hard to get for Tibetans. Forget it, you know. For Western writers it was much easier.

Certainly the fact that Fulbright or Wenner-Gren grants for doctoral research surpass the salary of an Indian University president provides freedom and comfort in everyday living. Donald Lopez has written of his graduate research in refugee monasteries in India. His access "would have seemed impossible in pre-1959 Tibet, but now the monastery was a stateless institution deprived of its past enormous wealth." He confesses he "exploited" this new and unequal situation to produce his text. But is there not a mutual "exploitation" -- or simply a new interaction -- occurring? Lopez writes that "I was welcomed, but chiefly (I suspected) for my potential as a patron. . . . I was frequently invited by individuals monks to elaborate meals which ended in the request that I become their 'sponsor,' one of the few English words they knew" (Lopez 1995: 274-5). The notion that our presence and money automatically "exploits" or "contaminates" the Other is a subtle form of Orientalism, one that exaggerates the power of Westerners -- who are often floundering and confused strangers in a strange land -- and denies agency to our research subjects/partners in dialogue who are often quite adept at manipulating difference to their advantage.

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In Dharamsala Anthropology students are, in fact, near the bottom of the long-term foreign resident status hierarchy. I was several times criticized by Western Buddhists for "exploiting" Tibetans or engaging in "Orientalism," something they automatically assumed in an anti-Anthropology that truly surprised me. In our post-modern era, the authority and romance of the Anthropologist is apparently dissolving in the minds of many educated travelers. The traveler Kim Bartlett informed me that "for the Metaphysical Tramp Anthropology is a priori. I mean we're looking for the absolute, the ontological instinct, whereas Anthropology goes and looks, or mines the relative." My research project seemed somewhat trivial and amusing to him, and he told me I might become a character in his novel (as he has become a subject of my dissertation). A Volunteer environmentalist told me that "we [environmentalists] are the only ones doing anything. A lot of others are just doing academic masturbation."

Graduate students with few aristocratic connections, with no access to media outlets, and with less disposable money for consuming, investing, and sponsoring than affluent travelers and spiritual seekers are not, in fact, given particularly favored treatment by Tibetan institutions. And why should they? Our aims -- to describe gender systems, for example, or to examine class relations -- are certainly not the aims of the Tibetan administration. The kind of empirical research among ordinary Tibetans pursued by socio-cultural ethnographers often seems quite irrelevant and even strange to the community. We are often told to ask the learned lamas and government officials, or to consult the Buddhist canon.

Because we must "produce" data, Anthropologists are often caught in an uncomfortable dilemma. If we are passive, we may never obtain the

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information we need. If we push, we can alienate potential informants. One young man who worked for the Tibetan Youth Council (TYC) told me that "some researchers come into the office at TYC and just march in and ask 'where's the boss?' They expect service and aren't even nice. They think 'I'm doing it for the Tibetans.'" In my experience, however, pushy and arrogant Westerners often gained greater access to official sources of information in part due to Tibetan discomfort with directly saying "No." While those with professional credentials, published books, and appropriate contacts can indeed enjoy a tremendous amount of cooperation, this may come with a significant cost. A high degree of self censorship is required to ensure the continued cooperation of exile institutions. For many researchers, the very ubiquity of "official" representatives of Tibetan culture in Dharamsala can lead to a kind of Anthropology as Public Relations. The Anthropologist scurries from office to monastery, interviewing this and that lamaor bureaucrat, without getting much of a feeling for everyday refugee life.

Research on gender is a particularly sensitive arena. Despite Aziz's (1987) influential call for a "sociology of Tibet" which could begin with the study of women, empirical data on the status of women in Tibetan societies remains patchy. Most accounts have relied on textual research, including those in the book Feminine Ground, in which Aziz's essay appears (Willis, 1987). Too many scholars, as well as many of the nonacademic practitioners one encounters in Dharamsala, seem to regard philosophic texts and religious prescriptions as representative of social practice. Thus, as mentioned earlier, perceptions and portrayals of women's status in Buddhism and in Tibetan societies has been highly idealized. As Willis notes, stories of miraculous yoginis are not sufficient

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to represent the status of Tibetan women. Contrary to the Chinese state propaganda, refugee women came from all strata in Tibetan and so we cannot rely solely on accounts penned by elite women, such as Princess in the Land of Snows (Sakya and Emery, 1990), to understand their lives prior to exile.

This bias towards the literate, aristocratic, and religious is now changing as every year young foreign women arrive in Dharamsala hoping to conduct research on Tibetan women. In 1992 and 1993, studying some aspect of gender-- marriage, nuns, or simply "Women"-- was clearly the most popular topic among the social scientists in Dharamsala. Such research, however, is not very popular with Tibetan institutions or intellectuals, concerned to present an idealized picture of a unified society to potential Western supporters, and counter Chinese propaganda about the evils of the old society (Majupuria, 1990). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, calls for women's empowerment are often seen by Tibetans as divisive intrusions which distract from the more important national struggle.

One Tibetan institution has recently encouraged the study of women. The Amnye Machen Institute, according to their publicly distributed proposal, is an "independent centre for research" on the culture, literature, history, and politics of Tibet, "with an emphasis on the neglected, the contemporary and the lay aspects of these subjects." It was organized "along liberal and humanist lines" outside official CTA channels on the initiative of four (male) Tibetan activist intellectuals: Jamyang Norbu, Tashi Tsering, Lasang Tsering, and Pema Bhum. The founders "obtained the full time services of a nun-scholar from Tibet" to head it's women's

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studies section "to research the history position and role of women in Tibetan society."

I asked Jamyang Norbu what he saw as the institute's role with regard to Tibetan women.

> It's not our business to tell women what to do. But maybe if we study this whole thing and involve women after a while, maybe we can disseminate enough literature that women can find role models, which there isn't at present -- to do things in a more scientific and cool, rational way. Of course there will have to be a lot of other programs and things, but maybe we can initiate some sort of scientific search of Tibetan women's' past that might give future Tibetan women some role models.

The institute is primarily oriented to research and publication, not any sort of feminist activism, and the goal of the four founders remain first and foremost Tibetan independence. Thus, "ethnographic" research into the present conditions under which Tibetan women live in exile is primarily conducted by Western women.

Anthropologist 2 was a thirty-five year old female American doctoral candidate and free lance writer on a dissertation reconnaissance trip. She was interested in studying "women" but had not yet formulated a specific topic. Anthropologist 2 was not a Buddhist, which is somewhat unusual for researchers of Tibetan culture. Anthropologist 2, like many researchers in search of informants, had volunteered to teach English and had approached the Tibetan Women's Association (TWA). Working through Tibetan institutions is a common source of bias, at the very least

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forcing researchers into self-censorship to protect these institutions and their informants. Another problem is that while women are employed in many offices of the Tibetan administration, men predominate at the highest levels of political, economic, cultural, and religious institutions. Research conducted with the support of these institutions -- often crucial for obtaining informants -- is thus filtered through a male lens. Educated women in exile institutions, concerned not to break ranks with the nationalist cause, tend to echo the "official line" regarding gender relations, while ordinary Tibetan women are less available than Tibetan men as informants or friends for Westerners. Most elderly refugee women speak little or no English, and young women tend to avoid too much contact with Westerners as this promotes gossip. Thus many Anthropologists rely primarily on male informants, and like other long term foreign residents, find that most of their Tibetan friends are male. Anthropologist 6 (discussed below) complained: "Women and men have segregated relations. Women are hidden at home. It's partly responsible for my lack of progress in research."

The case of Anthropologist 5, a thirty-two year old Dutch woman, illustrates the difficulties of studying sensitive areas of Tibetan gender systems, in part because of a Tibetan concern to maintain a positive image in the eyes of Westerners. She was planning to spend about four months in Dharamsala conducting research on polyandry, and two months in other Tibetan settlements. This was her fourth trip to India, and third time in Dharamsala. Anthropologist 5 became interested in Tibetans while recovering from the death of her mother and traveled to India seeking renewed purpose in life. She said she "had nursed [myself] here. I needed

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a break. I met Tibetans and that was it. I came home read books, started a language course. The teacher started a Tibet Support group and I got interested." Anthropologist 5 had worked with the TWA and had sponsored a child at one of the TCV schools.

Anthropologist 5 felt "let down a lot" because her research was hampered by research aides and informants showing up late or not at all to appointments. A more serious problem was the discomfort Tibetans had with her topic.

> I had met a polyandrous family in 1990, and wanted to know more. I thought marriage would be easy! I thought for some reason, I knew ten words in Tibetan and they'd want to talk to me, but they didn't! They didn't want to talk about my topic. They want to present to the world that everything's wonderful. Strong Tibetan identity. No problems. But in marriages there's problems and they don't want to talk about it. They always talk about how important it is to preserve their culture, but with polyandry, they're embarrassed about it. Well, we better understand it before it disappears, if preservation is so important!

**Work and Play**

> You know, now that I think of it, I've never had a conversation with a Tibetan outside of interviews. You know, never talked about their life, how they're doing. -- American Researcher

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Malcolm Crick asked if there are blind spots Anthropologists might develop because they are "at work" rather than "at play" like tourists (Crick, 1985). In Dharamsala, because most Tibetans are aware of the political and economic importance of impression management, and because Tibetans are increasingly taking control of their own cultural representation, foreigners investigating sensitive social and cultural issues are frustrated both by the lack of co-operation, and by a co-operation which hides as much as it conceals. There can be considerable suspicion of our motives and our political allegiances. Thus, other types of foreign visitors -- Volunteers, Dharmas, or Travelers -- may be granted greater access "backstage" precisely because they are not "after something" (other than an interesting experience or a purchase). For example, one Indian-American student, an archeologist working on Harappan sites, took breaks from his excavations to holiday in Dharamsala. One morning he was summoned from his hotel to a private audience with the Dalai Lama, who had learned of their mutual interest in Shambala (a sort of indigenous version of Shangri-la). The informal interview lasted hours, far longer than any of the graduate students conducting ethnographic research in Dharamsala obtained.

One Anthropologist said had she the time and money, she would like to "go to some wild, mountain resort with my own funding and study culture and philosophy." This is precisely what Dharamsala seems to offer: an exotic people in a scenic -- though an increasingly degraded -- mountain setting, and multiple opportunities for cultural and spiritual study, research, and entrepreneurship. However, the combination of the academic funding game, the politics of research, the neurotic, hyper-intense status competition among Western residents and researchers, and

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the considerable social pressures for self-censorship brought by the refugee community commonly lead to researcher burnout and anger. Many share a sneaking suspicion -- confessed by many Anthropologists interviewed -- that one might not only *enjoy* oneself in Dharamsala more if one were not conducting research, but that one might actually *learn* more as well.

Anthropologist 6 combined in one persona the type cases of the culture shocked ethnographer, the disillusioned Buddhist idealist, and the researcher desperate to hook and use informants, only to find herself used by them. Anthropologist 6 was an Australian women in her mid-thirties conducting doctoral research on "Tibetan identity." When she first informed me of her topic, I cringed inside, thinking not only was the topic too nebulous, but it had been done to death. She repaid me upon hearing that I was studying tourism, sarcastically chirping: "Clever boy! You can just talk to tourists; no problem with informants!"

Anthropologist 6 was a Buddhist practitioner who walked the *kora* (circumambulation) trail most days. Like so many tourists, her interest in Tibet had been sparked by exotica. As a sophisticated Anthropologist, however, she recognized the irony in this. She snickered as she recounted her first paper on Tibetans. "We had to pick a culture to study," she recalled, "and the Tibetans sprang to mind, because when I was eleven, I used to read Lobsang Rampa."

Rampa was the author of many "reminiscences" of a Tibetan monk, replete with levitating lamas and feats of magic and mystery. It was later discovered that Rampa was the nom de plume of a British plumber who had never been to Tibet. I must admit that my own first "encounter" with Tibet was also through one of his books, in which he recounted the surgical

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opening of his Third Eye. Spurred on by such literature, Anthropologist 6 eventually became a practitioner of the mystical arts.

> I was introduced to it through a grade seven teacher who used to read to us after lunch. She was obviously quite fascinated with it and she made it sound very mystical. Friends of mine used to dabble in the occult; it appealed. Ouija board, try to call up the dead, the usual things. We taught ourselves to meditate out of a book using a candle, which helped me when I went to the Dharma center later on.

Anthropologist 6 originally went to a center run by the FPMT to check out it's library, but soon became interested in practice. She had joined the organization three years prior to our interview. I did not mention that I considered the Foundation a bit too cult-like for my tastes. One woman's sect is another's cult. Like many Dharmas, Anthropologist 6 had been severely disillusioned with the Buddhism practiced by actual Tibetan institutions in contrast to the Dharma centers geared to Westerners. She had found exile politics to be vastly different than the idealistic Tibetan support group rhetoric she had believed before speaking with real Tibetans.

I asked: "What do you see as one of the more striking contradictions between the rhetoric [of exile institutions] and what you think is going on here?"

> Well, the key words come to mind, like democracy, egalitarianism . . . because now I feel like I'm immersed amongst the Lhasa aristocracy. I don't see it as an egalitarian society, I don't actually see it as a

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> Democracy at all. It's a theocracy. And also . . . religion is a contradiction. People say that . . . the officials are not practicing Dharma. But in the pro-Tibetan propaganda there is the claim that this is a Buddhist society, "pure" because of the Dalai Lama. They're trading on his image, and then, you know, you hear about [financial aid] scandals, receiving funds from various [unsavory] places. The rhetoric that a society can be practicing Buddhist society, it's just not on! I can see parallels with our Christian society, where the parliament starts with the lord's prayer but its really been reduced to formalities.

Although not politically active at home, Anthropologist 6 previously had considered working with a Tibetan support group. Now however, she said that were she to become "involved," she would "join Amnesty International rather than the Tibetan cause. . . . There are others much worse off than the Tibetans. I'd lobby for the Tibetans inside Tibet, not in exile."

I asked Anthropologist 6 if she had been approached for money, which gave her another opportunity to vent her anger.

> Yes, by a young lad in red rags [a monk] begging for money to go back to Tibet because he didn't like it here. I ended up in a near fight with a Tibetan teenager. He said he had no parents. He was telling lies, saying 'my friend is saving money to start up a taxi business,' which the Indians have a monopoly on. He became abusive when I said no. He was linking tourists to indiscriminate support. If I

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wouldn't give him money [he said] what was I doing here? It opened my eyes to the Tibeto-groupie scene.

"So you've been disillusioned?"

"Yeah! I've been considering going home."

"What were you expecting?"

"I was expecting more openness, and I think a little more accommodating attitude to student researchers. My opinion at the moment, I think this community is actually hostile to research, especially from non-professionals, like us graduate students."

"What do you mean by professional?"

Well, I've had what I call professional researchers, [with a doctorate], you know, as neighbors. And the treatment they receive is much better. Translators, services, meetings . . . the Tibetan cause . . . they gain some sort kudos from helping professionals, actors even! Because they [favored researchers] are seen as useful. And I've had that said to me in so many words. Like one chap, an undergraduate, received help because he brought a computer printer for [a certain official] and he said if he hadn't done that, doors wouldn't have opened. And a government official said to me, "Well, if you don't have computers to donate, why should we help you?"

Anthropologist 6 was accused of conducting a "fascist mind control thing" when she attempted to hand out a questionnaire in a Tibetan school. She was thus frustrated both in attempts to gain information through official sources as well as garner the cooperation of ordinary Tibetans

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without strings attached. She frequently complained that the "Tibetan youth" she approached for information about the "transmission of ethnic identity" were "only interested in one thing" [sex]. "I've dealt mainly with men," she said bitterly, "and I've had a gut load of it."

"How do you think they see Western women in the offices?"

"Prostitutes! They're little different than Indian men. I had suggestive comments made by officials, and they don't take Western women seriously. . . . The young men won't talk to you unless they can get a fuck out of it."

Had Anthropologist 6 been a little less concerned with "obtaining data," with using local individuals as raw materials, and had she been as playful and personally engaging as travelers who journey for more pleasurable purposes than producing a dissertation, I believe she would have enjoyed far more success.

**Jamyang Norbu: The Other Talks Back**

Jamyang Norbu, one of the founding directors of Amnye Machen, an indigenous Tibetan research institute, is often a sharp and witty critic of Anthropologists and other Westerners in Dharamsala. I asked him how he felt about the numerous Anthropologists poking around his community, and what he thought of their work.

"Well, I guess it's not right. It gives you a weird feeling," he responded. "I mean if someone is studying the political structure, or something that has got more edge, but with Anthropology the attraction is with 'primitive' cultures. . . . I don't subscribe to everything Edward Said says, but there is a certain amount of truth."

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He continued: "If there was a bit more edge . . . something that we could find useful. . . . Some things, legal Anthropology, like Rebecca French from Harvard, [is] useful for us." Norbu suggested research be made more available to the community, and discussed more fully, "so you weed out shoddy research, you know, gaga research that is just out of it."

Norbu seemed to have a somewhat ambiguous feeling about the role of critical Anthropology and who should be representing what. Tibetans, he said, "should do the criticizing . . . there will be more of a edge. They will have all of the basic facts. . . . They'll also be in the cultural milieu and when they criticize it will have value to their society. You would know the nuances. I think Tibetans really should be doing these kind of studies, more critical things. But in the meantime, it [Anthropology] isn't bad."

Unfortunately, "hard edged" data is difficult to obtain, particularly if one is working with the co-operation of Tibetan and Indian institutions, and publishing it is ethically problematic for Anthropologists who wish to report honestly but do no harm to their informants (and, perhaps, ensure future co-operation). Thus, it is the accounts of journalists and indigenous writers in journals such as The Tibetan Review that are often the most straightforward sources of information. Anthropologists who publish "negative" accounts of Tibetan society are likely to be criticized not only by Tibetan activists and intellectuals, but by Western Tibetologists, many of them Buddhists, who protest any "reduction" of Tibetan religious practices to social or political determinants. Criticisms of Tibetan society are seen as providing fuel for the People's Republic's propaganda machine, as the prolific ethnographer Melvyn Goldstein has discovered. His History of Modern Tibet (1989), for example, was criticized by a Western Buddhist

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writer in The Tibetan Review for it's presumed "distaste" for Tibetan religious institutions (Sparham, 1992), and his use of the term "serf" in describing the Tibetan agrarian system precipitated a series of rejoinders and counter-punches in the pages of the Tibet Journal (Goldstein, 1986, 1988; Miller, 1987, 1988; Michael, 1987). Anthropologists working in the People's Republic, as Goldstein has done, are particularly suspected as collaborators.

Tibetology -- like Anthropology in general -- is always political. However, as Norbu's story shows, it poses significant less risks to its practitioners than those faced by internal critics of Tibetan socieity.

Jamyang Norbu was born in 1949 and spent only spent a few months in Tibet during his childhood. His mother's family had served the Dalai Lamas in central Tibet since the time of the second Dalai Lama. "My father's family are Khampas from Terma," he said.

> My ancestor went to China and probably met Marco Polo. Then went to Sikkim and became a small time prince there, serving the Sikkimese rulers. But the family always married women from Tibet. . . . We went to Lhasa to stay, but about a month before the Chinese invasion we were telegrammed to leave and so we left in 1950, and ever since then, I stayed in Darjeeling.

Norbu was educated at St. Joseph's Jesuit college, and grew up speaking English and some Tibetan. The family owned land, so he didn't need to worry about finances. "But I was sort of dispossessed," Norbu said. "I broke off with my family. My father wanted me to go into the

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Indian foreign service, but I wanted to go join the Tibetan resistance and do other things. He wanted me to stay with the family, and be, you know, a big shot. After that we had a big fight."

Norbu left Darjeeling as a boy of seventeen and went to the new Tibetan settlement in Mungod. "I went to work on the 'dozers. I was good with machines. Helped plow the first crop. I tried to go to Mustang [Nepal] to join the resistance but was kicked out for being too young. They were [also] afraid my father would make trouble."

Norbu arrived in Dharamsala in 1969, and was a founding member of the Tibetan Youth Congress in 1970 (TYC). The TYC initially took a more radical approach to the independence struggle than the CTA. As a TYC representative, Norbu managed to get into Mustang again, but by then the resistance had fizzled after the withdrawal of American support.

Norbu said of the TYC:

> We were originally in the opposition, questioning the use of funds, the CTA political strategy. . . . We were very effective. The Indian government had changed and promised support for the Tibetan cause. We had people arrested. Strikes in front of UN offices everyday. We got a lot of support, but misunderstanding from the Tibetan government because they felt we were competing with them.

"What was the officials' idea of a proper strategy?" I asked.

"To do nothing! Not to annoy people -- indecisive, maintain the status quo, ask people for things and no more. They really didn't like us. I didn't want to join the establishment. I wanted to keep the Youth Congress separate, and to keep on its tactics. But the government was supporting its

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own candidates and co-opting people. So I was an odd man out." By the 1980's, many CTA staff were members of the TYC, and Norbu had resigned. "It was getting very ugly and so I thought of leaving. My sister was in Canada and she suggested going and getting a job, maybe in New York. But I had a lot of friends in TIPA and joined."

TIPA (the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts) aims to preserve and promote Tibetan theatrical arts. Its performances of Tibetan operas are a colorful highlight of Dharamsala public life. Although TIPA now tours globally, it was not always held in high regard by the Tibetan community. Under the direction of Norbu, it was involved in several political and cultural confrontations (see Calkowski, 1991).

> At that time they [TIPA] was very low. You know, Tibetans have this sort of medieval idea [about performers], so some of these TIPA people asked if I would take over. No one wanted to run TIPA. We really had a great time for 5 years, and it became prestigious. We also had super parties. We were the only organization that had a lot of fun. Even ministers and secretaries wanted invitations. It became sort of an "in" thing. We were doing well, making money. But again, I was writing a lot of articles against the Tibetan governments' policies, and they wanted me out. There was no direct way, but one way or another they managed to get me out.

"I've heard stories about you're being threatened, even beaten," I said.

"Oh yeah, but that's life," Norbu said dryly. "They conducted a sort of struggle session. . . . As long as I annoy certain sections of society, I'm

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happy. The threat [from those offended] is always there. For some people its very heavy, you never know what you're dealing with. But I guess that's the price you have to pay if you want to bring about any sort of change." Norbu left Dharamsala in 1985, and went to Japan to live with his wife. He returned in 1991, his marriage dissolving, to co-found the Amnye Machen Institute.

"I have your introductory pamphlet," I said, "but in your own words, what is the basic purpose of Amnye Machen?"

I sort of see it not just as Ivory Tower academics, but more as a platform to give people a chance to enter into a debate which will serve to move society into the future, especially to deal with the problems we have now. Maybe in a way . . . like the Fabian society, something like that. Secular, but also to bring something new. New ways of looking at things. So we have the newspaper [*Mantso* = Democracy] and we're trying to get some science books translated, to maybe widen the Tibetan world.

"What are the first publications you're bringing out?"

The absolute first one has been the *Mantso* , the paper. Now as a book, recitations from eastern Tibet. . . . You know, like in medieval Europe they had bards, telling who had married, the lines of kings and this and that. So in Tibet they had this traditions. . . . Then we have the first of a twelve volume series about secret operations in Tibet, with the CIA and everything. . .

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. . . And then, translations like Tom Paine's Common Sense, A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, and there's also Animal Farm. . . . We wanted the Tibetan people to know that their suffering is not unique. Other people have gone through the same sort of thing. . . . At the same time to show the Tibetans how one can write about one's traumatic experiences -- because a lot of Tibetans don't have the capacity. They've been through enormous things, a whole lot of shit, but the moment they are interviewed, it becomes too simple. 'Oh, nothing really happened to me, I didn't get shot.' Well, other things happened! You went through so much deprivation. It's interesting. A typical example: [question] 'So, how did you escape?' [Answer]: 'Well, I walked'. . .

. . . There are a number of heroes that the Amnye Machen institute has. Most of them people like George Orwell, Thomas Jefferson, Tom Paine. People who have sometimes been on the left, but who were basically humans. . . . We don't like people who are just fashionable. We want people whose work has lasting merit, people who suffered for what they say . . . to introduce Tibetans to the West that isn't just karma-karma types or just Michael Jackson and Madonna.

"What has the reaction to Institute been in Dharamsala?" I asked.

To be honest with you, there's a lot of cynicism in such a small community. A lot of jealousy. Everyone wants to be admired, but they don't want to pay the price. That price is a bit of ostracism, maybe violence, dislike from the establishment . . . . Certain people

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> see the need for it, but they don't want us to do it. Because we are too uncontrolled. We aren't going to play the game. But if you had people who were going to play the game, it wouldn't work. It doesn't make us happy to put up a with a lot of shit. . . . We're not that worried, though. Even though, for a while back, Pema [Amnye Machen co-founder, recent refugee from Kham] -- there were some people who had volunteered to beat him up . . . It has gotten pretty heavy for me [in the past]. I had to go around constantly armed. And that is why I deliberately try to annoy. It's the only way I can survive. I need to be really cocky. For me it's not too bad. OK, my mother gets frightened. But Lasang Tsering [another Amnye Machen founder], he has wife and kids. But it's the price we pay . . . in the end I think it's worth it.

Despite the political entanglements which the practice of honest ethnography entails for Westerners, the risks are basically intellectual. For Tibetans, the stakes are higher. Within the Tibetan community, criticism of the political-religious hierarchy can lead to serious professional difficulties and even endanger one's personal safety, as writers like Dawa Norbu, Pema Bhum, and Jamyang Norbu know.

**Differences That Make a Difference**

Adams (1996) writes that through a discourse of sameness and difference Westerners and Sherpas define themselves through the Other. This dialectic is characteristic of all identity formation, including the identities of Anthropologists and the presumed Other, tourists. If, as I've described, there are in fact many similarities in the behavior and

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consciousness of Anthropologists and travelers, and similarities in the production of touristic and Anthropological knowledge, such that Anthropology sometimes becomes part and parcel of commoditization, then just how do we distinguish between a tourist and an Anthropologist?

I presented a short version of this chapter at the American Anthropological Association conference in San Francisco in November, 1996. I received more requests for copies of the paper than I had ever enjoyed previously. This was, I think, in part due to Anthropological narcissism, and in part due to the humor (and relief?) in hearing that one's student colleagues suffer from the same problems one may also have endured in the field. I suspect, however, that it also had something to do with a loss of faith in our project.

Some of those who requested the paper wrote back to reiterate how interesting they found the ethnographic description, but balked at my attempt to conclude the paper by reiterating some differences between tourists and Anthropologists. These readers protested what they perceived as an attempt to privilege one way of knowing over another. They told me that my re-constructive conclusion was cluttering up an otherwise nice de-construction, and took umbrage at any possible hierarchy of value in the binary contrast "Anthropology/any-other-practice." In taking this (non)position, these readers valorized the post-structuralist preference for leaving meaning and distinctions "undecidable."

One of the great advantages of post-structuralism is that it provides one with a theoretical justification for not coming to any conclusions. Admittedly, it may be inappropriate to generalize from the case of Dharamsala, a rather unique site overrun with tourists, researchers, and official representatives of "Tibetan culture." Faced with incisive criticisms

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of whatever differences I proposed, it is tempting to simply conclude with that no distinctions are possible or needed. However, I remain committed to the notion that ethnography is, or should, remain distinguishable from travel advertisement. I also believe, despite the ultimate "incommensurability" of diverse discourses and practices, that it is possible for a Westerner to learn how to properly pick up a cup of Tibetan tea, and to know why it is proper.

To privilege undecidability would be akin to interpreting Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle -- that we cannot simultaneously know both the momentum and position of a particle -- such that we celebrate the moment of uncertainty and never make a measurement. We may thus avoid a "totalizing" hierarchy, placing position at the center and marginalizing momentum (or vice versa), but we couldn't do much engineering. As Stanley Fish has written, it is difficult to imagine actually *doing something* from principals of "opposition" or "textuality," since this would demand of a wholly situated agent a practice free from entanglements and lines of demarcation. "In the end you can't defy categorization, you can only categorize in another way" (Fish, 1989: 312).

Our difference as Anthropologists does not exist by virtue of some essential or natural opposition between our practices and those of other travelers, rather our differences must be intentionally practiced, and will reflect our specific values, interests, and purposes as Anthropologists. Only from clearly enunciated positions, from decisions -- "always already" contingent, partial, and political though they must be -- can we say anything positive or normative about the world.

With that apologia, I propose the following and perhaps rather obvious differences (and remaining similarities):

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1) Anthropologists confronted with tourists should take them as seriously as the indigenous peoples living in tourist locales *must*. Although deconstruction and anti-colonial critiques have unpacked the Orientalism of scholars, of the "discursive elite," we must begin describing and critiquing the everyday Orientalism of travelers that is far more significant to the people that live in tourism locales. To do that, we must allow tourists to speak and be heard in our monographs, rather than simply using them as foils or "traveling metaphors" for our texts.

We must take tourism and tourists seriously, even to the extent of interviewing travelers with the same depth we bring to our ethnically different informants. Tourists and other foreigners are an invaluable source of information precisely because they are at the front lines of transnational commoditization, because they move while we stay still, and because they may be privy to insights and experiences that may be concealed from those actively seeking information.

2) Tourists may or may not be seeking "authenticity," may or may not demand some "pristine" primitive Other. However, Anthropologists must always annihilate essentialist notions of authenticity, replacing them with empirical descriptions of how our subjects are always linked to wider social and political fields. To annihilate authenticity is to abandon the search for the isolated case, for the site uncontaminated by others like oneself and the global economy. Thus, confronted with tourists (or with other researchers) we should not avoid or ignore them, playing into the status games of other travelers. Rather, we must situate them and ourselves in our analysis of local and transnational politics and cultural flows.

3) Bourdieu claimed that the academic elite must maintain that its interests transcend class interests, that the interest in "truth" is distinct from

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economic interests (Bourdieu, 1984; Inglis, 1993). Obviously this is a myth, and the pursuit of ethnography in places like Dharamsala is crucial to our careers, to our ability to obtain grants, to our universities, etc. We must acknowledge that fieldwork always has political and economic significance both for ourselves and for the subjects of our research. Tourists may or may not acknowledge what they are up to, Anthropologists must.

However, while Anthropologists should involve ourselves at least as deeply in our host's culture and everyday life as do the best of other travelers, we should not engage in any entrepreneurial activity -- touristic or cultural -- that profits us personally (other than academically). Our ethnographic representations must remain as separate as possible from commercial interests in the construction and promotion of images of the Other. I would also, much more hesitantly, suggest that we generally avoid producing or assisting in the production of idealizing representations of our research subjects for the purpose of generating financial support. There are good reasons to conduct such projects, but I propose that we avoid this as Anthropologists. Again: ethnography must annihilate essentialisms, whomever it may benefit (and it tends to benefits elites).

We all know by now that the notion of absolute scientific objectivity is a myth, but it can be a pretty good myth, as is the myth (or goal) of human emancipation. Academic writing, charitable solicitation, and travel advertising are separate (though sometimes overlapping) "language games" with different rules, criteria of validity, and aims. To distinguish a language game and act within its boundaries is in no way to claim it's priority over others, simply to recognize its usefulness for particular purposes. Our interest as Anthropologists is to generate rigorous accounts

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that further pragmatic and theoretical understanding of human interactions which we hope will be of some use to other scholars as well as to the most oppressed of our research subjects, rather than useful to such interests as the Hilton corporation or Tibetan carpet moguls.

4) Nearly twenty years ago MacCannell noted the growing similarity between ethnography and travel writing, pointing out that tourist experiences and advertising are increasingly organized along the lines of Anthropological monographs -- History, Costume, Art, Ritual, etc. (MacCannell, 1989 [1976]). Travel literature can be quite sophisticated, and we may not be able to maintain any essential difference in kind between our monographs. There are, however, differences in aim, style, and framework. Travelers engaged in a search for the self in other places and people tend to produce texts with themselves as the focal point. The Other places the Self in context, and is used as a resource for overcoming alienation. Anthropologists, however, are (or should be) engaged in a search for the other rather than the self (at least when we are conducting ethnographic research). We too, are alienated, but our theoretical and methodological training and the length of our commitment to one site allows us to use our alienation as a tool to de-naturalize what is usually taken for granted, to ask the challenging questions, and to finally generate a uniquely detailed variety of traveler's tale that places both self and other into cultural, historical and political contexts. Travelers may or may not do this, we must. Thus, our narratives should not be primarily self-referential, as travelers' tales have always been and so much ethnographic writing is becoming.

5) Bourdieu wrote that the academic faction of the dominant class attempts to maintain symbolic power (where it cannot control political and

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economic power) through possession of a distinct "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1984; Inglis, 1993). Faced with competing discourses on "our" subjects, it seems that many academics are attempting to keep their cultural capital scarce by making their discourse obscure and difficult to master. This may be good for individual careers, but it is not so good for the long term health of our discipline.

Just as tourism has finally been treated with the seriousness it deserves, just as full-length ethnographies of specific tourism locales have started appearing, the discursive turn of our discipline has disembodied our subjects, dissolving tourists and diasporas into nomadic metaphors for the post-modern condition. This has encouraged us to "do theory," to focus on discursive formations while allowing us to hear few tourists or tourees actually speak. Perhaps this is partially the point.

Because travel literature is more widely appealing to the general public and increasingly crowds our books off the shelves, our only hope in being heard is to write with equal clarity and passion. If we are interested in communicating our insights outside the academy, we must largely forgo the impenetrable post-structuralist jargonizing that is rampant in current academic discourse, and that conceals that much of our sound and fury signifies very little. Our representations must remain foremost representations of human activity, rather than endlessly multiplying representations of other representations. Although we know will never touch down on any "objective referents," this in no way relieves us of our distinguishing responsibility as Anthropologists: the practice of *ethnographic* research.

While the boom in tourism and travel literature is particularly threatening in a period when the Anthropological project is under question,

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it remains unlikely that armies of tourists will soon invade the academy and take over our teaching posts. Our research -- our "consumption" of the Other -- is a particular form of cultural production, distinct though overlapping from tourism. Our production of knowledge is always both constitutive and revealing of ourselves and the object/subject of study, and though it both We and They come to know ourselves/themselves. Increasingly, our Others, like Jamyang Norbu, are critical of our work, and aim to represent and thus construct themselves. We should support their efforts and accept that we are just another voice, but hopefully a particularly clear, detailed, and externally directed one. We can live with that and carry on our project.

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# CHAPTER TWELVE
# CONSUMING THINGS AND PEOPLE

I know I was a Tibetan in a past lifetime -- I've always liked their shirts. -- American Traveler

Tourists' consumption -- of goods and people -- is a form of cultural production that shapes both the material culture and the identities of both guests and hosts. The consumption of goods molds and expresses ideas about the Self, the moral order, the cosmos, and society (Miller, 1987; Rutz and Orlove, 1989). Travelers' consumption of crafts and tourist arts express notions of ethnicity and cultural difference, of spirituality and authenticity. Tourist consumption creates a market for both "authentic" material goods and for behavioral and spiritual qualities imagined to reside in the Other. We cannot assume, however, that touristic demand makes the culture of the Other merely an effect of our desires, transforming it into, in the words of Vincenne Adams (1996) a "virtual" culture. All culture is "always already" virtual: shifting, interactive, and increasingly transnational. Furthermore, as this chapter will show, the consumption of people and things runs in both directions, between hosts and guests. However, the opportunities and outcomes of consumption -- and its force in shaping production and people -- are differentiated along national, ethnic, and gender lines. This asymmetry is what must be specified.

## Tourist Demands for Authenticity

Tourist demand needs to be differentiated. Cohen's (1979) five (essentially psychological) types of traveler -- Recreational, Diversionary,

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Experiential, Experimental, and Existential -- are useful for describing variations in motivations for travel and demands for authenticity. However, I have found that ideas about travel do not co-vary closely with my (essentially) behavioral types nor predict consumption patterns in any simple way. Demands for authenticity vary not only between and within categories of consumers, but between different types of goods and cultural productions. Following Cohen, Dharma students are travelers who locate an "elective center" of spirituality in Tibetan culture. Yet despite Cohen's generalization that "authenticity" is important for these consumers, many Dharma students are quite aware of and satisfied with invented traditions and hybrid crafts, and are in fact often the source of innovation. A consumer may demand authenticity of spiritual teachings, but not of crafts. Consumers who commission thangkas or butter lamps also buy cheaper ready-made goods. For this reason, defining categories of travelers according to presumed unitary demands for authenticity can be misleading.

Authenticity is not generally thought through until the notion is challenged. Various criteria can operate simultaneously. I asked an American volunteer, who frequently referred to authenticity in our interviews, for a definition:

> It's difficult to ascertain. You do have powers of discrimination. Like if you want a skull cup, ideally you want one from Tibet, a really old one. You see stuff in the store and you see Tibetans wearing things and they're not the same. My coat [an old Bhutanese coat] is real, someone actually wore this. At least your purpose is to have had it made by a Tibetan, even if it wasn't made in Tibet. Like ordering a carpet from someone, you know, made in their home. That's real,

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> you're involved in its making. It's an ineffable quality -- you feel somehow like you put some work into it, that's it's yours. Of course a hat designed for Westerners but using traditional fabric and made by a Tibetan is not real, its surreal. But we have to face it, we're not living in Tibet. You can bring a chuba home, or a *pangden*, they're beautiful, but no one can use it in Chicago! Really, we all know once you take an object out of its milieu it changes its meaning anyway.

This statement illustrates that authenticity can derive from the history of the object, from the identity of the producer, from the involvement of the consumer in its design, and from the meaning of the object and the context of its consumption. It may derive from the object itself or from the consumer.

Criteria for authenticity and quality can differ with the intended recipient of the purchase or the anticipated function of the object. One American Volunteer told me that "things I want for myself are not like hats. . . . I don't want to bring home junk for myself, but for others they'll be happy, it's stuff I brought from India." On another occasion I watched an Israeli bargaining over a kitschy painting of an old Tibetan man.

"This is too much!" he protested, "In Manali it's cheap!"

"But the quality!" pointed out the merchant.

"I don't want quality, I want gifts!"

Consumers often assume the recipient of the gift will not know what constitutes authenticity, and buy objects that are simply *different*. The same may apply to objects purchased for oneself which function as markers of sophistication and interesting experience. One Researcher, a neurophysiologist, told me he wasn't concerned that the ritual skull cup he

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purchased be authentic. He was quite honest about purchasing objects as an extension of ego. The skull cup, he said, would be a "cool" and "appropriate" adornment to his office. "Plus," he told me, "people will ask me about my experience." He also planned to have a picture of the view from a meditation cave blown up to poster size. When people ask what it is, he anticipated, he'd be able to tell them about the time he meditated in a cave in the Himalayas.

For some buyers, authenticity is extremely important, although it may be variously derived from inside or outside. The traveler's culture in India, with it's New Age sympathies and hippie apparel, offers many men the chance to experiment with jewelry. In the Himalayas, Buddhist men often wear heavy rings and chunks of turquoise around their necks, and adoption of this practice may allow travelers to feel more integrated into the local culture. Some travelers share the Tibetan (and New Age) belief that various stones hold a healing quality. Commodities bought on the tourist market can be "singularized" by the consumer (Kopytoff, 1986). They may be imbued with the vibrations of peoples and places, or may store the accumulated personal energy generated in travel. Once the traveler returns home these adornments are usually shed (as I can attest personally). They may retain a fetishistic function, or they may be forgotten. Often they seem to lose their spiritual powers once they are taken out of the New Age travel circuit, and primarily signify, like the neurophisiologist's skull cup, interesting and different experience.

Mauss wrote (1967 [1926]) that while the gift takes on attributes of the person from whom it is received, the market is impersonal and exchange requires no further involvement. Although "Tibetan" goods may indeed be singularized by the consumer and by the extraordinary

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circumstances of its purchase, thereby taking on some of the attributes of the gift, the market remains impersonal to the extent that some consumers are satisfied with cheaply produced, ready-made goods which are often mass manufactured outside the community. Some consumers simply do not know the conditions of production, and are in a sense "fooled" by the presence of Tibetan motifs and merchants. Others do not care. Tibetan motifs primarily identify the object and the purchaser as different, associated with special experiences whatever the actual origin of the goods. One afternoon I asked nineteen travelers in the McLeod Ganj market if they cared that their purchases be made by Tibetans. Contrary to notions that "the tourist" is always seeking authenticity, only seven said they cared, twelve said they did not, and two were equivocal. Some consumers are mostly concerned with price, and compare the values available in Dharamsala to those in other Third World markets or at home.

Thus, for many consumers objects are singularized primarily through their association with the self and it's experiences, and such consumers are not always concerned about the origin of the object. Others, however, require an authenticity that comes from a "spirit" that is already in the object. One filmmaker organized a film festival in Dharamsala in order to, as he put it, "break down the myth of Shangri-la." He too, however, held that Shangri-la could incarnate in Tibetan objects. "It's not just a souvenir," he said of a statue. "I know what is real or fake. I go to true friends and they tell me where to buy the true things that have real spirit." Spirit is often the result of actual *use* by Tibetans. This can be especially significant to Dharmas. One woman told me that her most prized Tibetan object was "one tiny [depiction of] Tara in an amulet box

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from Tibet . . . There's something special. It's been around practitioners a long time and seems to have absorbed some energy."

These consumers are searching for "use values," objects produced to be used in the community, rather than "exchange values," object produced to be exchanged on the tourist market. One of the best guarantee of this is *age*. Use and age imbue goods with spirit. These consumers thus locate spiritual power outside themselves, in another people, sometimes in another time, for Tibetans in Dharamsala are often thought to be "too Westernized" and "commercialized" to transmit spirit. Tibetans too value old things from Tibet, which are sometimes considered more "powerful." As Old Tibet increasingly becomes an idealized abstraction, we can expect the valorization of age to intensify, along with a denigration of the present.

The film maker said that "real" things "are old, connected with old Tibet. I do believe that things have spirit. I saw nomads with rosaries, real wild people with them, and I wanted one and I could afford it." The demand for use values, however, transforms them into exchange values, pulling antiques, heirlooms, and functioning ritual objects onto the market, often pricing them above the reach of indigenous consumers.

**Buying Thangkas**

As discussed in previous chapters, the sacred meanings attributed to certain objects by indigenous artisans, merchants, and consumers place limits on their sale and on formal innovation. The production and sale of secular objects such as carpets are not limited by such constraints. Carpets are widely available in the shops in Dharamsala, and designs are modified to suit foreign tastes. Thus, most carpets are bought ready-made rather than commissioned, even by long-term foreign residents, and standards of

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"authenticity" are loose. Foreigners often buy carpets in pastel colors, rather than in the synthetic dyes preferred by Tibetans, indicating that a "natural" or "ethnic" look is often more significant for consumers than an expression of the culture of the producers.

Thangkas are generally more expensive than carpets and there are few ready-made thangkas on the market. To be considered authentic, they must follow iconographic traditions, which limits innovation. The purchase of a thangka may thus demonstrate a commitment to Tibetan culture, religion, and its artistic forms. Not surprisingly, Dharma students were the most likely to buy thangkas. "Travelers," here defined as those staying in Dharamsala for at least three weeks, were less likely to buy thangkas, and "Tourists," those just passing through, were least likely. Researchers and Volunteers, involved with Tibetans and Tibetan culture, but not necessarily with Buddhism, fell in the middle.

**Bought/Will Buy Thangkas?**

| Type | Yes | No | Maybe |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dharma Students | 6 | 3 | |
| Volunteers | 6 | 7 | |
| Researchers | 4 | 7 | |
| "Travelers" | 3 | 12 | |
| "Tourists" | 0 | 29 | 1 |
| **Totals:** | 19 | 58 | 1 |

Bentor labels Western Buddhists an "intermediate" audience for Tibetan goods, as they generally remain socially external to producing communities but have partially internalized their religious culture. He

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claims that Western Buddhists are "fairly uniform" in considering "popular" Tibetan religious practices of worship, offering, and merit generation "unworthy of their serious attention." Bentor notes, however, that this attitude may be eroding as "appreciation of Buddhist religious culture deepens" (1993:115). In Dharamsala, while some Dharmas reject aspects of Tibetan religious culture as corruptions, many have adopted Tibetan devotional practices. Western Buddhists in Dharamsala tend to stay for prolonged periods and are probably more invested in Tibetan culture than the intermediate consumers of Kathmandu to whom Bentor refers. Nevertheless, in accord with their patchwork knowledge of Tibetan religious culture, some Dharma students interviewed had never heard of consecrating thangkas.

Intermediate consumers, Bentor claims, are highly concerned with "authenticity," and provide a demand for traditionally produced thangkas. Dharma students, Researchers, and Volunteers may be able to commission thangkas from Tibetan artists they know personally or through their social network. In contrast, Bentor reports that many intermediate consumers in Kathmandu must rely on the tourist market.

**May 23, 1993.**

I'm sitting in Friend's Corner. Fortunately, they've re-obtained their liquor license and I can wash down my mutton mo-mos with a cold Golden Eagle beer. Two young travelers sit at my table, and soon I've taken out my notebook and started interviewing. The woman is twenty-eight and American. Her pony-tailed partner is twenty-five, from New Zealand. He's a carpenter, she sells natural health products. They're on a motorcycle tour through India, part of a year long trip around the world.

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"We both have traveling spirits; we're not satisfied with the white picket fence and paying off our credit cards," the woman tells me. They'll spend about $15,000 on this voyage.

One reason they've come to Dharamsala is to look for thangka paintings. "We bought one in Pokhara [Nepal]," the man tells me. "I'm a painter. We bought from traditional thangka painters. They had a photo on the wall of the King of Nepal blessing them."

"We were blown away by them," the woman interjects.

"I'm an artist. I admire the practice and skill that goes into it. We bought a five by six Life of Buddha--sitting in the lotus position with scenes of his life around him. I wanted to find out what they meant but there was a problem with communication--well, not for buying! But for getting a description of what it meant."

"We spent $200 U.S," she adds.

"I just threw out that price and he accepted," he says.

They are surprised and a bit disappointed when I tell them about commissioning works in Dharamsala, and that selling for profits is considered a sin. It seems they won't be here long enough to order a thangka.

In Nepal, the man says, "they pump them out fast."

"But they are the real thing," says the woman.

"We were there for three weeks and would go back. It looked like painting by numbers. Layer upon layer. Sort of a simplistic technique but it's remarkable work. I was very impressed with the one of Durga in a sexual embrace grasping these other figures."

"The thangka is the most valuable object to us in our travels," the woman tells me. "That and a bunch of rose buds from an old man"

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"We're sympathetic with the teachings," says the man. "It'll do us some good."

Motivations for buying thangkas and criteria for evaluating them are quite different for Western consumers and Tibetans. Tibetans generally commission a thangka as a meritorious act, at the death of a relative, or to remove obstacles, often in consultation with a lama. Westerners describe a variety of motivations for buying thangkas. Some Westerners desire, as with other crafts, "to support the Tibetan cause" as a self-described "crypto-Buddhist humanist" explained. Some simply want a beautiful reminder of their experiences in Dharamsala. A volunteer told me: "I've seen all the art around and it's the only thing I like. To me thangkas best represent Tibetan religious art. For me, though, it's mostly a souvenir."

Antique thangkas may appeal to Westerners both because age is associated with "spirit" and authenticity, as discussed above, and because it increases value. In Kathmandu, thangkas are made "old" by holding them over lamps to give them the appearance of having hung in smoky temples, or by rolling thangkas up and bending them to crack the paint. Touch ups were done on old paintings to keep them fresh. Old thangkas are very expensive and difficult to find on the market. Few Westerners, however, are interested in such an investment.

Because Western involvement with Tibetan cultural productions is generally tied to projects of the individual self, aesthetic criteria are nearly always important to Westerners -- the good must please them. Said one thangka dealer: "Most people look for the quality, not for the age. They look at the art, at the colors." When I asked the two motorcyclists why they had bought their Life of Buddha, the man laughed: "It was the

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biggest!" His partner amended: "Well, it was, but it was so beautiful." One Dharma told me he looked for a particular thangka in Kathmandu to help his visualization, but when his search was unsuccessful, he bought two that were "pleasing."

Even Dharmas who commission thangkas for a particular practice may specify colors and motifs that diverge from Tibetan artistic traditions and the iconographic canon. Perhaps because Western buyers have been more deeply integrated into an individualist "consumer society" for a longer period than Tibetans, goods must express creativity and individuality, while Tibetans tend to value the continuity of forms that express a more communal and religious identity. Thus, even as Westerners become intermediate consumers, incorporating pieces of Tibetan culture, they introduce change.

## Meanings

> [The] barrage of constantly revised representations and simulations and the meanings they put into circulation does not leave us with an absence of meaning but rather with a panoply of meanings that all have to be sustained at once and taken as in some sense "accurate." [Vincent Adams, 1996: 227]

Nelson Graburn (1984) and Paula Ben-Amos (1977) have claimed that the interaction of tourist consumers and local artisans and merchants produces a code akin to a pidgin language, in which a few motifs come to represent a community to outsiders. They encourage us to look at tourist

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arts as a system of communication. But what, exactly, is being communicated?

Jules- Rossette (1984 ) challenged the pidgin hypothesis, pointing out that it disparaged pidgin languages as simplistic, reduced, and degenerate codes. She noted that while there is often standardization of tourist arts, they should not be considered simplified "messages" derived from original "elaborated codes," but creative responses to new situations. In Dharamsala, there has been little simplification of arts, though there is sometimes standardization, such as with *drilbu* and *dorje.* Some artistic forms may, in fact, become more elaborate, as have the thangkas of Kathmandu that swarm with new details.

The presence of new consumers along with the maintenance of an internal market has diversified the production and consumption of Tibetan arts and the meanings they communicate. Jules-Rossette rightly observed that the meaning of souvenirs was not the same to producers and tourists, and Sally Price was correct, I believe, in claiming that meaning is less "negotiated" between cultures than defined separately. The divergence of meanings between producers and consumers, suggests Cohen (1993), may divest the meaning of the craft for the producer.

However, commoditization, even of sacred arts, does not always lead to a loss of meaning, rather to additional layers of meaning. As Miller notes, different groups who may see themselves in social conflict may not conflict over divergent interpretations of objects simply because they are unaware that different interpretations exist. Certainly the meanings of Tibetan crafts are dramatically altered by Western consumers, and producers have little or no control of how they are used. One traveler bought colorful *pangden*, aprons that indicate a woman is married, to use

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as place mats at home. Prayer flags are commonly bought for decorations. I commissioned a butter lamp which I use in multiple ways: as a souvenir, a decoration, and a change holder. In tourist locales, objects need not travel over spatial and cultural distances to function in divergent ways for different audiences. At the Tibetan Library's museum, for example, objects are simultaneously examples of the preservation and transmission of artistry in exile, historical objects, aesthetic objects, and functioning sacred objects.

Western consumption can serve the purposes of Western consumers for the production of experiences, self, status, and careers, as well as the aims of Tibetan artisans, merchants and institutions. Some "touristic" motifs that have come to represent Tibetans, for example the English word "Tibet," or a representation of the Potala, are consumed not only by Westerners, but sometimes by the Tibetans themselves. The alienation of producers is not primarily a function of how external consumers understand objects differently, but how political and economic asymmetries structure production, exchange and consumption.

For handicraft production in Dharamsala, the most significant differences between consumers are probably money and time -- the money and/or time to support high quality craft production or even commission goods, or only to buy ready-made goods in the shops. Low budget and short term travelers provide much of the market for ready made, inexpensive, mass manufactured goods. Those who remain "tourists," passing though Dharamsala quickly, find meaning in the consumption of varied experiences through travel. Large objects weigh them down, and they are likely to buy only those goods they can carry or wear, such as clothing or jewelry. Designs may be quite innovative, targeted directly at

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the tastes of external consumers. Profits then flow primarily to capitalists and vendors, and artisans are alienated both from the form of the goods and from the returns on their labor. However, the low budget market also provides opportunities for merchants with little capital to sell petty goods in competition with the larger producers and vendors.

Finding meaning in a deep experience of one locale, longer term travelers and Volunteers, Dharmas, and Researchers are more likely to buy relatively expensive commissioned goods. Buying a product that was manufactured during their stay, perhaps by a refugee with whom they had established a relationship, is both an extension and a souvenir of participation in the community. Some buyers, both long and short-term travelers and residents, consider their purchases charitable or political acts. For them, artistic or technical authenticity is not as important as whether the producers are Tibetan and benefit from the exchange. An American Volunteer told me that whether producers were Tibetan "matters for economic development, to help the community, but not from a personal perspective. And there's nothing wrong with helping the Nepalis and Indians, as long as it isn't advertised as being traditional, then it's exploiting people's suffering." The problem for short-term travelers is that it is difficult for them to know the conditions under which goods are produced. Long-term foreign residents can buy goods from specific artisans in the community, and may even be pressured to do so. Almost every person I interviewed who had long-standing ties to the refugees had purchased a carpet or thangka to help an artist, whether the particular object appealed to them or not. Money from commissioned goods flows more directly to the producer, and innovations may be introduced by the artisan or the consumer, rather than indirectly through the vendor.

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## Consuming the Other

> Identity is largely constituted through the process of othering. What can a return to the original be, indeed, when the original is always already something other than where it is thought to be: when 'stay home' also means 'reach out,' and native cultures themselves are constantly subject to intrinsic forms of translation'? [Trinh T. Minh-ha (1994:18)]

> The subtle yet powerful influence of exposure to different cultures and lifestyles is slowly but surely gnawing at our entrails, making us weak and dim of vision. [Nawang Dorjee, 1992:11]

Shopping in foreign climes, write Curtis and Pajackowska (1994), is an "incorporation" of the Other. But who is this Other? Vincenne Adams, in Tigers of the Snow and Other Virtual Sherpas, tells us to avoid thinking of "Sherpa" as something sui generis, for identity is constructed in relationship to others. Sherpas have become "virtual" through mimesis, by which she means "the imitation of what is taken to be one's 'natural' self by way of the Other" (1996:17). Virtual Sherpas become more "real," more truly Sherpa, than reality itself, they become, in Eco's terms "hyperreal." Westerners desire Sherpas to be *different* , and Sherpas construct themselves in part through mirroring this desire.

Adams points are well taken, though hardly new, despite her (sometimes muddying) deployment of the newish post-structuralist vocabulary of seduction and mimesis. That identity, both personal and communal, is constructed in dialogue (or conflict) with "the Other" is an

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old insight, systematically applied to ethnicity as least since Barth (1969). Adams cautions that the situation of "virtual" Sherpas may be unique. The relationships of Sherpas to tourists, anthropologists, development agents, and other Westerners are not necessarily similar to those of other peoples. They are certainly more than analogous for Tibetan refugees, and I would hazard, for any people who are a favored focus of Westerner consumers' search for spirituality, harmony, and timelessness.

Moreover, unless we are to posit that there is anywhere some natural, essential Self or culture to be expressed, we must regard the construction of Self through Other as a universal, though the varied dialogues and conflicts through which this construction occurs need to be particularized. To posit a "virtual" identity, though Adams does not intend this, seems to demand some more "real" identity that could exist in pristine isolation, that is not formed in dialogue with the Ohter. Perhaps the term signifies that relations through which identity is now formed have widened tremendously, and are engaged through new media -- film, advertising, tourism -- as indigenous peoples are pulled further into the global economy of things and meanings. Thus, the construction of difference has become "post-modern" in David Harvey's sense: not different in kind but degree. There is new intensification of capitalist "space-time compression," the reproduction and consumption of images, and a hyper degree of commoditization (Harvey, 1989). One might argue that the new hyper-economy of imagery that tourism introduces makes for a wholly new situation demanding a new vocabulary. But distinguishing new eras and inventing new jargons is not, I believe, nearly so significant as beginning an empirical description and an analysis of the politics of the production, exchange, and consumption of ethnic goods, imagery, and identity.

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MacCannell, writing just before poststructuralist discourse won its current near hegemony in the cultural sciences, recognized that ethnicity is always already relational, but differentiated between the "constructed ethnicity" of the colonial era, a dynamic product of resistance, and the "re-constructed" ethnicity that is a product of tourism, in which identity becomes a commodity for the consumption of others (MacCannell, 1992 [1984]). The end result, he claimed, was the final victory of "white cultural totalization" (p. 167). Edward Bruner (1991) writes that "tourist discourse" claims travel will change the self, but that natives remain untouched (authentic), but the truth is just the contrary. The natives are radically altered at the same time they become signs of themselves, frozen in time.

There is much truth in these critiques, confirmed by the fact that many Tibetans are eager to conform to the desires of the observing other while others are critical of the modification of cultural production for outsiders. One Namgyal monk worried that Dharamsala had outgrown itself, and that the Tibetans had become too successful, too haughty, and were no longer giving a favorable impression to Westerners. He told me that:

> Soon Dharamsala will be a mass and then the attraction will be out balanced by the distraction. . . . We must think we are not so proud, and be very friendly and smile. Then people will still want to come here. We must work hard.

Jamyang Norbu, as might be expected, took an opposing view. With regard to Tibetan Opera he said:

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> The only audience that is worthwhile at all is a Tibetan audience, because no matter how simple they are, they are an informed audience. They're critical. They've seen the show so many times, they criticize, they make noise, the actors need to be on their toes. Western audiences, they just see the novelty. "Wow, wow!" It's not critical. And then you just become a show, you begin to repeat yourself.

However, if Tibetans are "virtual," so are Westerners. We all identify ourselves at least partially through the mirroring the desires of others, and through the consumption of goods and imagery shaped both by "our" culture and "theirs." MacCannell wrote that when members of "superior groups" (Westerners) "costume themselves" as members of "inferior groups" (Third World peoples, "ex-primitives") then the "reconstructed ethnic forms" have been completely "incorporated and neutralized" (1992:167). But when a Westerner dons a chuba, or buys a thangka, this does not annihilate their "internal" functions and meanings. Commoditization is never total, and indigenous producers, some more than others, retain some control over various cultural productions, some more than others. The meanings internal consumers attribute to objects and spectacles remain as more than mere "traces" even as new meanings are added by intermediate and external consumers.

When a Tibetan boy wears a Madonna T-shirt, has he incorporated and neutralized "our" culture? Is he practicing "mimesis"? Tibetans, like "us," are part of a transnational culture and economy that is both determined from above and constructed from below. It is increasingly

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difficult to say just what is "our" culture and "theirs," and just who has the authority to make those definitions. Madonna is really not much more mine than theirs, except so far as I am relatively privileged by the economic and political structures that allow Madonna and the media conglomerates to profit from us all.

Tibetans and Westerners consume and produce each other, but the relations are asymmetric. Adams writes that among the Sherpas, "Western others are recruited to become sponsors in part in response to the Western desire to become part of their world. . . . so Westerners too become mirrors reflecting Sherpa interests and desires" (Adams, 1996:9). Tibetans also consume Westerners in this fashion, not only because of political and economic dependence, but also as economic and status competition within their own community. Although I would emphasize the monetary significance of the exchange, which can subsidize education or business enterprises, Kleiger notes that collecting "dedicated, high quality patrons and exhibiting the gifts, photos, and letters from individual Westerners in Dharamsala is an important means of achieving status in the community" (1992: 103).

A Tibetan woman showed a Volunteer her photo albums one day. In it, there were three photographs of Westerners.

"Who are they?" the Volunteer asked.

The Tibetan answered: "I don't know; I found these photographs in the road."

Travelers are not only "consumed" as providers and markers of status, but as deviants who mark the boundaries of the community by transgressing the rules (Sarup, 1994). The "freaky" people, and even "decent" Westerners, are different and sometimes dangerous. Though

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many Tibetans depend on them, others get burned, like the merchant family ripped off of $500 in goods by a German "sponsor." Some are more vulnerable than others.

If Orientalism is practiced by Westerners (and Tibetans), there is also an Occidentalism practiced by Tibetans (and Westerners). Virtual Tibetans and virtual Westerners consume and construct, idealize and demonize themselves and others through the medium of cultural productions and through intimate encounters, touristic and romantic, spiritual and selfish. The remainder of this chapter will describe a few of these encounters, which are always sites of struggle and differentiated by gender, class, and ethnicity.

## The West Orients the East

> A critique of Orientalism in East Asian pedagogy neither implies that only "natives" of East Asian culture are entitled to speaking about those cutlures truthfully nor that "natives" themselves are atuomatically innocent of Orientalism as a mode of discourse. [Rey Chow 1993:7]

> The sweeping generalization that the West is bad, degenerate and materialistic while the East is good, wholesome and spiritual is a load of cowdung spread around by institutions of dubious merit such as the Hindi film industry. Given half a chance, most people in the East would gladly outdo Westerners in pursuit of wealth and pleasure through fair and foul means. ["Occidentalism," editorial in Tibetan Review, Tsering Wangyal, ed. 1992: p.?]

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With the sponsorship of Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) the Immigration Act of 1990 reserved 1000 Visas for Tibetan refugees to emigrate to the United States. The refugees were given Green Cards, and many were provided with jobs and temporary room and board with sponsors in nineteen "cluster sites" organized through the Tibetan United States Resettlement project based in New York. Immigrants were selected by a lottery operated by the CTA.

The project was not without critics in the Tibetan community. Families were broken apart, although most saw it as an opportunity to send money home, to earn and return to India, or eventually to bring their families to the West. Some Tibetans argued that the project would make their political cause and cultural productions more visible. Others felt it was simply opportunism and an admission of defeat, a surrender to permanent exile that would further disperse and weaken the diaspora. Jamyang Norbu told me:

> The more Tibetans leave, well, you need a sort of critical mass to generate a culture. It's hard to do a literary journal when your readership is 300 or 400. To do a national newspaper when all you are selling is a couple of thousand! So people are leaving, and that will be the death of it; just not enough people to keep up the culture.

Despite the controversy, the Tibetans were going, and I decided to help with the "Orientations" to life in the United States provided to the émigrés. My job was to round up Americans -- Travelers, Researchers, Volunteers -- to speak to the Tibetans about the specific cities to which they

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were heading and about American life in general. It was also an opportunity as an anthropologist to observe the projection and consumption of images and stereotypes between Orient and Occident. Both "us" and "they" increasingly base our fears and fantasies about the Other on stories told in media -- though literature, film, video, and newspapers. And we largely see ourselves this way too.

"Tibetan culture" and "American culture" were presented and contrasted as undifferentiated wholes in the orientations. The American orienters generally seemed to disdain "their" culture, which was represented as a generalized middle class white culture, and often criticized just those aspects attractive to many Tibetans. Americans are shallow, materialistic, racist, meat and junk food eating consumers said the orienters, largely ignorant of Tibetan diet, ethnic attitudes, and aspirations.

The orientations were held in the building housing the Department of Information. Americanisms and "American Cultural Traits" compiled by an American woman were written on a blackboard in the front of the room. They included: "Help yourself," "Let us get together," "Drop by anytime." "Individual rights, "Be yourself," "Do what you want," "All men are created equal," "Freedom of speech," "Make own decisions," "Call by first name," "Competition." These traits were contrasted to Tibetan communal values and to the responsibilities that each émigré had as a "Transmitter of culture." On the Tibetan side were written "Faith," "Must keep link to past," and "Practicing traditions and teaching them to our children."

After an introduction, we would break up into groups, and each orienter spoke with some eight Tibetans headed to a specific city. Sometimes, I could find orienters who had lived in that city, but other

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times, we had to make do with a rough familiarity. One afternoon I spoke to the Salt Lake City and St. Louis groups, two cities I had only passed through briefly. The Tibetans generally had poor English skills, although one man was a medical student and translated for them. It was always a man who acted as an the unofficial spokesperson for the group, and the women rarely asked questions. The group seemed frightened about the violence in America they had heard about or seen in films. They wondered how similar the United States might be to Tibet and India. Their questions included "Are there any nomads in St. Louis?" and "How many Muslims are in Salt Lake City?" The question of how many Chinese they might encounter always came up, and they asked if there were Chinatowns in the cities. In the midst of the discussion, two scruffy young Canadian travelers jumped in (uninvited). One said "We've traveled in forty-eight of fifty states, so we can answer any questions!" They kept trying to make jokes, addressing satirical remarks to me in a non-stop banter while I was trying to draw out the Tibetans. "Yeah, there's lots of TV in the States," said one of the Canadians. "Yeah, fifty channels and nothing on!" said the other. "That's a new song by Springstein, you know?" I wondered what kind of picture of Americans was forming in the Tibetans' minds when one of them asked me: "Are there freaky people there, you know, with lights and colors on their pants? We look at them and they get angry!"

After the separate group discussions, everyone returned to the main orientation room, and the Americans sat up front facing the Tibetans, a young, all white panel ready to field questions on all things American. A representative from the San Francisco cluster site did a lot of the talking, making huge generalizations which were protested by some of the other orienters. The Americans, assuming all Tibetans must be pacifists, argued

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about whether you could be a conscientious objector if you had a Green card. Another time there had been quite a debate on how one contracts AIDS. The Tibetans definitely got the idea that Americans are an argumentative lot, and sometimes seemed more confused after the discussion than before.

On many occasions, an orienter warned the Tibetans that "Americans are very racist." The Tibetans always asked where black people lived and if they should be afraid of them. When I first mentioned "black people" to one group, one young woman practically jumped out of her chair. I tried to say that the action films some of them had seen weren't a fair representation of American city life. The Tibetans listened and smiled, but I think they were reserving judgment.

A least one orienter always focused on the evils of consumer culture and the American diet. That diet, said one man, is "very fatty, you gotta watch your health," and another added: "Don't change your diet, stick to rice and lots of fresh vegetables!" apparently unaware that Tibetans drink copious amounts of butter tea and prefer meat to salads. Another told the group, many of them merchants going to the United States for the economic reasons, that the "American dream may not be your dream, your goals may not be so materialistic." Again and again, the orienters told the Tibetans how spiritual they are, and how they needed to preserve this against the corrupting onslaught of consumer society.

Westerners who theoretically rejected their societies but enjoyed its privileges, traveled to the East to seek (sometimes imaginary) differences, and enjoined those moving to an imagined West to seek a share of its privileges to "remain themselves," selves the West imagines them to be.

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**Postcard August 16, 1993**

Visited a silversmith today. He asked about factories in America, and if everything was made by machines. I explained that some things were still made by hand, but these tended to more expensive. I tried to explain the concept of "artist" to him and told him he was one, which seemed to please him. He put on some reggae music for me; Bob Marley. He didn't know Marley was black. I told him about slavery and the meaning of the reggae songs he had heard so many times. He didn't know where Jamaica was and had never heard about slavery in the Americas. The smith said he thought black people had "bad character." I said I knew black people who were very good. Pushing him, the smith admitted he had never spoken to any blacks. He had seen three in Delhi who were drunk and causing problems in a restaurant, but his ideas were primarily based on American films. The smith finally said: "Of course there are good and bad people everywhere, even Tibetans."

**Transnational Buddhism: The Real Thing?**

> I had an audience with the Dalai Lama. It had no impact at all. Watching him was like watching a TV screen. I was shocked. I was expecting to be filled with joy or something. -- 21 year old Female traveler

Peter Bishop believes that for many practitioners, Tibetan Buddhism "is deeply involved in Western problems with the symbolic Father" (1993: 20). As we have seen, many "Dharmas" have problems with the authoritarianism and paternalism of the Tibetan clerical hierarchy, but

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simultaneously project their Utopian ideals upon Tibetans. Revulsion with the materialism and corrupt politics and religions of the West leads, as Bishop writes, to the production and consumption of an "export quality mysticism" (p.46) cleaned up of the inequalities and political struggles of the East.

The attractive surfaces of the Hollywood film Little Buddha, directed by Bernardo Bertolucci, exemplifies the contemporary construction of export quality mysticism. When I called a theater in San Francisco in 1994 to find out about playing times, the recorded voice (dis)informed me that the movie had been shot on location in Tibet, when in fact it had been shot in Nepal and Bhutan. Tibet is the all purpose stand in for the exotic Himalayas. The picture postcard presentation of Buddhism in the film was, in the words of Dave Kehr, critic for the New York Daily News, "packed with the chic multi-culturalism of a Benneton ad" (date?). Cleansed of sexism and ethnic chauvinism, a Tibetan nun is represented as enjoying equal status to the monks. The three candidates under consideration as the reincarnation of "Lama Dorje" are an American boy, a dark Nepali street kid, and an Indian girl. The American boy is somewhat believable.

The entire movie is a pastiche. Some of the monks are portrayed by real monks, although the chief monk is played by a Chinese actor, formerly the Minister of Culture in the People's Republic of China. There's the American boy's easy-on-the-eyes Mom and Dad: singer Chris Isaak and Brigitt Fonda. Keanu Reeves plays the young Siddhartha as surfer dude. Elements of the Buddha's story are mixed and matched as needed; for example, the cobra shelters Siddhartha as he meditates and begins his spiritual path, not after his enlightenment as in the traditional narrative.

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Bertolucci's previous film, The Last Emperor, sparked a tourism boom in China in 1988. Nepal was hoping Little Buddha would have a similar effect (Jain, 1992).

It is difficult for real Tibetans to live up to the image projected upon them. It is often a shock for Westerners to see just those aspects of consumer culture they have rejected being eagerly consumed by the Tibetans. One monk confessed that Namgyal monastery's video library was not all ritual and chanting.

"We also shave some action movies; Jackie Chan. These are good to pass time, really! It's refreshing, like Indiana Jones. We are human like everyone else, not totally enlightened, always like this," he said, putting his hands together in prayer, bowing his head, then bursting into laughter.

**May 4, 1993**

Went over to Pema's rooms at the Library to watch The Reincarnation of Khensur Rinpoche, a film is about smuggling a young Rinpoche out of China. Pema rented a big TV to show the video, and a Jackie Chan kung fu extravaganza for afterwards. I claimed the only chair in the place, got comfy and ready for the show when in walked the little Rinpoche who's the subject of the film! Pema whispered that I had to leave the chair. I was a tad miffed -- a 35 year old man with a bad back has to get up for a five year old?! Well, when in Rome. . . He's a beautiful child, I admit. A monk about my age was there, and gently teased the little Rinpoche about the scenes in which he was crying. Pema bustled about attending to his needs, offering cookies and biscuits to everyone. The Rinpoche liked seeing himself, but definitely wanted to get to Jackie Chan.

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Finally, the kick-fest began, and the boy started punching the air in imitation. Like a good liberal, I left after 15 minutes of Jackie, wondering about the effects of violent films on innocent children. I also wondered about the impact of such respect heaped upon this child, and about this new situation where the kid sees himself "mediated" and projected around the world.

There were over 6,000 monasteries in Tibet prior to the Chinese occupation. Ekvall (1964) estimated that one fifth to one third of Tibet's resources were funneled to the support of religious practice and institutions. In exile, there are some 11,000 monks and nuns, constituting about 10% of the diaspora. Over a third of new arrivals are monastics (Roe, et. al, 1991). Stripped of landed estates and tenant farmers, monastic institutions in exile have relied on the support of Tibetan lay donors, on a relaxation of monastic rules (where once monks were restricted from cultivation, in South India they drive tractors [Lopez, 1995]), and on new foreign sponsors. Some of these sponsors are travelers, while others are reached through international tours of art and ritual and through hundreds of Dharma centers established in the West. I spoke with Seldin Kunga, the "English Secretary" at Namgyal monastery, and with Lobsang Dhargyay, the monastery's treasurer, about some of the monastery's adaptations to the new transnationalism.

Kunga told me he had previously been interviewed some ten times, and now sometimes sought other monks to do them "so they can get the experience which is very important now. If they leave Dharamsala on world tours they will get interviewed often." Seldin Kunga was born in exile, and educated at TCV. His English is excellent, and he is good

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humored and skilled in handling Westerners. He needs to be -- he is constantly running about helping important (and not so important) foreign guests, answering the phones, helping film crews. One of his jobs is keeping track of the monks' passports for their many trips abroad. "I am the only one whose passport is expired!" he laughs. "I have never been abroad. I am too busy in Dharamsala!"

Namgyal monastery traditionally held 175 monks in the Potala in Lhasa. Today, Kunga said, they have "expanded" a bit and had nearly 200 monks. The main source of money for the monastery, the abbot told me, was "22," the Tibetan unit in the Indian army, and "the West." Kunga and Dhargyay told me that the money came in different forms. Tibetans sponsor many pujas (prayer cycles), whereas Westerners generally sponsor individual monks (the money is pooled) or donate and buy goods on the tours.

"Tibetans sponsor many pujas, especially for the long life of His Holiness, or for the Palden Lhamo puja," one monk told me. "It's good for business, giving a bit of baksheesh to Palden Lhamo," he laughed. "No one gives donations for nothing, there's always a return." Some Westerners, he said, used to give "for nothing" but Tibetans expect merit and a positive influence on business, health, and family. It was my impression that as some Westerners became more deeply involved in Tibetan Buddhism, they too sponsored rituals and works for the accumulation of merit.

As refugee incomes have risen, the monks are doing more pujas than in the 1960s and 1970's. "There is less time for study now!" Younger people too are returning to temple. "They see all these Westerners coming here and want to see why the world cares," Kunga explained. A day long puja costs some 3500 Rs., and many sponsors offer additional pocket

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money to the monks. This is a continuation of practices in Tibet, where food and coin distributed during rituals were often a main source of a monastic's income. Rich Swiss and Kathmandu Tibetans are often sponsors, and may donate extra things such as video equipment (just about everything the monks do now is subject to both indigenous and foreign filming). "Nowadays the individual income of the monks has become quite a lot," said one monk. "Some save it, some take a holiday, some -- especially younger ones -- use it right away and will spend it in restaurants until it's gone!" Seldin Kunga thought the monasteries were a very good deal for poor families. Not only do they provide education, room and board, but help support households and bring status to the family. Money is thus recycled, Kunga said.

Namgyal also earns money from its two small guest houses and from its restaurant. However, I was told, much of their foreign income is generated though tours to the West in which monks perform ritual dances, construct sand mandalas in museums and galleries, and sell books, videos and music. On the last tour to the United States, Kunga told me in 1993, "we got fifty to sixty sponsors, though sometimes they send money two or three times then stop." I asked Kunga about the significance of displaying ritual sand mandalas to the uninitiated.

> The mandalas do good advertising for Tibetans. Without initiation you can't really *see* the mandala, but for non-initiates, just for showing the culture it's all right to make income and advertise our cause. They (Westerners) just believe it is art so I don't think it's so important. But later even if they don't understand it, in the next lifetime you may remember it. It makes an imprint. . .

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> . . . we do recite the Kalachakra [Tantra] before constructing it, and afterwards it must be destroyed. This dismantlement symbolizes impermanence. There is one in a temple in Japan we preserved because they requested it of His Holiness and he agreed. We consecrated the temple and maybe the monks there wanted a souvenir.

The monks at Namgyal are differentiated according to their skills. Some focus on studying text, those with good voices practice chanting, others perform office jobs or work in the kitchen. "Before the sand mandalas we could count on our fingers those who would travel abroad, " said Kunga. "Now we all study dances and mandalas and travel!" In 1994, monks from Namgyal opened each event of the Lollapalooza rock festival with prayers, later performed ritual dances on the second stage. One of that year's headliners, The Beastie Boys, donated some of the royalties from their album Ill Communication, to Tibetan support groups. (Two songs on the album had samples of Tibetan chanting). Kunga told me:

> Religion should not become a source of income. These days people are doing that even in our Tibetan community; giving teachings, lectures [for money]. Now some monasteries that had no tradition of doing Lama dances are doing them in the West to raise money. We [Namgyal] did that but we can say we had that tradition. Some who never had the tradition are doing sand mandalas.

Tibetan clerics establish teaching centers that expand internationally. Monasteries run carpet factories. Monks cut albums and sell videos. Does

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the fact that for some monks selling pizza takes precedence over study and prayer indicate a loss of authenticity?

Lopez points out that before the occupation, only about 25% of the monks engaged in study at the big monastic centers outside Lhasa (Ganden, Sera, Drepung), and very few advanced to high levels of philosophy. Most monks were occupied in their own businesses, in cooking, enforcing order, and serving the hierarchs (Lopez, 1995). One might argue that in exile the monasteries have only changed the means of earning income, not altered their souls. New income sources, in fact, has allowed more monks to study than ever before, and even nuns study philosophy in exile. Loss and adaptation can lead to innovation and efflorescence.

Kleiger (1992) writes that the *sbyin-bdag* patron-client relations between lamas and lay Tibetans remains basically unmodified. The laity and the CTA benefit from the entrepreneurial activities and cultural promotions of the monasteries. Kleiger notes that much of the money Westerners donate also gets redistributed to the CTA and furthers its social and nationalist goals (Kleiger, 1992). Some Tibetans, however (including, occasionally, the Dalai Lama) criticize the continuing material investment in the monasteries, and believe they should be taxed to support CTA investments in human resources.

The contrasting cultural and social assumptions, values, desires, and monetary power of Westerners and Tibetans inevitably lead to the translation of Tibetan Buddhism into a more Western idiom, and to struggles over who possesses the genuine practice. One woman, a long time practitioner and translator, told me that "the way Tibetans practice Buddhism is not really Buddhism. There's lots of ritual with no [philosophical] base."

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Tibetans tend to have faith in the tradition and demand less rational "proof" of it's validity. Tibetans assume the project of self-perfection is one that takes lifetimes. High level scholarly study was rare. Today, the most abstract texts are translated and disseminated broadly. Westerners tend to demand immediate access to the highest levels of Buddhist practice and thought, but often show little long-term commitment and patience. One translator said that in Dharma classes:

> The Tibetans don't speak up much and it [their questions] isn't very profound. They don't have the same spirit of inquiry. . . . Westerners are in such a hurry to get results, but we're butterflies and don't put a lot of energy into one thing, but we get disappointed when we don't get results. Also there's a great thirst for novelty and interest in the occult, power, and all that rather than doing the hard painful work of transforming our feelings and our real selves.

I asked the writer and activist Jamyang Norbu about the translation and sale of Tibetan religion, about the Western consumption of what he called "milk and water" (diluted) Buddhism.

> It's wishy-washy Buddhism, you know. . . . The lamas, I sort of blame them. . . . Everything is as to a consumer. . . . The people who are attracted to that sort of thing are people who are not really fit to take on Buddhist philosophy. This dilution, this New Agey Buddhism, I find really objectionable. It's flabby, it doesn't require you to make any sacrifices. . . . But I think its money and prestige. And the

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> westerners, I'm sure you know these sort of people, they see it as a sort of commodity. . .
>
> . . . Buddhism is a universal thing. Tibetans took it from India, and now others from us. But at the same time, one objects to . . . a certain decadence. Everything is a shortcut. No sort of muscle. . . . Not only are you ruining something for yourself, but you're ruining it for the Tibetans themselves, you're making it trivial. . .
>
> . . . Tibetans have very little left, you know, and what little we have, is being trivialized. Well, I'm not a *kora* [circumambulation] person, I'm not a great believer in these institutions, but I don't want to see them all become silly.

The conflict in cultural styles came to a head of sorts in 1982. At a Dharamsala performance by Vajra Hammer, a rock band of Westerners, some Western monks and nuns changed out of their robes and into jeans and T-shirts and, in the words of a Tibetan reporter, danced with "wild abandon" (1982: 11-12). Tsering Wangyal's article in the Tibetan Review , "Are Monks Permitted to Let it All Hang Out?," precipitated a storm of letters in following issues.

Western defenders noted that Tibetan monks have dances, ritual, and arts but that ordained Westerners had no such forms of release. They claimed that Rock and Roll could be spiritual and lead to an experience of the "now." Jamyang Norbu, then director of TIPA wrote that Rock is a fun and decadent fertility rite and should be kept that way. Vajra Hammer bassist Glenn Mullin, a scholar and Buddhist practitioner who later appeared in magazine ads for Apple computers with the Namgyal monks, argued that Westerners pay attention to the actual words of Buddha, not the

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Tibetan cultural overlay, thus they were not bound by the same restrictions. Bhuchung Tsering retorted that when in Rome, one does as the Romans do. If one is going to leave Tibetan culture to the Tibetans, then why don maroon robes?

Mullin responded, noting that there are different levels of vows, and that Tibetan monks are technically not supposed to eat after midday, but do anyway. Buddhism changes from one country to another, and the whole episode, he wrote, revealed the "subconscious touch of the chronic jealousy that almost all religiously uneducated Tibetans seem to have toward Western Dharma practitioners . . . still, the mysterious shadow of Tibetan thought runs its own course. . . " Another Western Buddhist wrote that Tibetans have no right to disparage Western culture. Tibetans, he claimed are "under obligation" to Westerners for "their superlative treatment." Taking an entirely different view was the elder Buddhist scholar John Blofield, who weighed in with a call for punishment of this "outrageous behavior" (Tibetan Review, July 1982: 23-26).

Jamyang Norbu followed in a letter in the next issue of the Tibetan Review, wondering if the Westerners had no sense of humor, since they had responded so strongly to a minor rebuke. Gratitude, he argued, was uncalled for as Western Dharma centers tend to shy away from political support of the Tibetan cause, and show a "sectarian selectivity" in their aid. Tibetans, he wrote, are proud of the "few odd serious Western" practitioners, but "the emotions aroused in most of us Tibetans towards the general run of Dharma practitioners is one of tolerant amusement. . . . when you have seen Westerners majestically meditating in crowded tea shops, dropping names . . . discussing loudly in Tahsi Restaurant ('this Ghuyasamaja tantra is heavy stuff man') or been subjected to unsolicited

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sermons on milk-and-water Buddhism by some 'blissed out' Western nun, then the feeling aroused" is not jealousy but irritation (Tibetan Review, August 1982:25-6).

Since the early 1980's, many Western practioners have become more deeply immersed in Tibetan culture, and some Dharma centers have been more active in supporting the Tibetan cause. However, as tourism increases and new Buddhists dilattentes flow into Dharamsala, new misunderstandings and conflicts arise. Opportunities abroad and new consumers continue to shape Tibetan religious "production" and exchange. Where once the monasteries established networks throughout the Himalayas, serving and extracting resources from land based communities that shared basic cultural and linguistic similarities, some sects and teachers are now establishing transnational networks. Old secrets are revealed and transmitted far and wide to new practitioners who demand instant access to enlightenment, and have the ability to pay a higher price than traditional clients. Kleiger writes that the long-term patron-client relation between Tibetan clergy and laity seems to be tending towards immediate cash for services. A Summary Report on the Regional Integrated Development Plan (1993?) by the CTA's Planning Council (no date) states:

> many of the small groups on religion and culture [in refugee settlements] reported that . . . the settlers had complained that the lamas were not giving adequate religious and cultural teachings to the community; they seemed to prefer to travel abroad to teach foreigners, rather than seek to preserve and promote Tibetan religion and culture in their own community.

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**The Erotic Exotic Other**

As there is no essential ethnicity to be "passed on," ethnic identity must be reinvented each generation. Camino (1994) writes that examining refugee adolescence is a good place to look at the construction of ethnicity, for adolescents are in a "double liminal" state -- they are refugees attempting to maintain ethnic or national identity and are simultaneously in transition to an adult self identity. Like women, young refugees are a source and site of cultural struggle, with different outcomes for men and women. This is particularly clear in the arena of inter-ethnic romances, a key arena in which Tibetans and Westerners consume and produce one another.

Avedon (1984) reports that a young Tibetan claimed that when they first danced to the Beatles in the Byllakuppe refugee settlement, their parents came out and threw stones. Concern over the corruption of Tibetan youth by Western pop culture continues. In January 1993, the Tibetan Review carried a cartoon by Gyatso (p.7) titled "Tibetan Youth: Then and Now." It pictured two Tibetan male adolescents in side by side panels. One panel was labeled "Yarlung Valley" and depicted a warrior of the past, dressed in full armor. The other, labeled "Kangra Valley," depicted a fashionably dressed youth holding a guitar. The text contrasted the meanings of differences in dress: "Tightly tied shoelaces say 'I'm ready for anything" while "Untied shoelaces say 'I'm ready to copy anything on MTV.'" The warrior "Knows 50 songs on Tibetan heroes and the beauty of Tibetan women" while the hipster "Knows 6 Hindi songs, 2 Madonnas, 1 Tom Jones, and 1 Milli Vanilli." An arrow pointing to their heads indicated receptively: "Thinking about fighting for Tibet" and "Not thinking too much generally."

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Tourists sometimes complain about the lack of "authenticity" among Tibetan youth. Said one traveler indignantly: "Just compare the Westernized youth here to the ones in Ladakh who remain traditional, remain purely Tibetan!" A young Israeli informed me that "the influx of tourists has caused them to try to imitate Western culture to the hilt, and to sell their cause for money and lose all their Tibetan heritage. I know this, for in Tibet it is not so." For some travelers, the criteria for authenticity is more rigorous with regard to people than to objects.

Tibetans disagree as to just what constitutes an "authentic Tibetan." Newcomers claim that the Indian-born refugees are too influenced by India and the West, while longtime refugees claim that the Newcomers have been ruined by Chinese influences. The influence of "freaky" Western tourists, particularly drug use, is widely considered a problem in the refugee community. Part of the problem is that young Tibetans see Westerners on vacation rather than at work, and may believe that holiday behaviors of leisure, experimentation, and consumption is the norm for Westerners, and aspire to share it.

Tibetan boys are much freer to experiment with and publicly consume Western popular culture than girls. Girls take on more household responsibilities than boys. If not attending school, girls are likely to be helping in the home or in shops. By contrast, several informants told me that local Tibetan "boys" did not seem to become "men" until at least their mid-twenties. Some Tibetan boys hang out idly on the steps of restaurants, strumming guitars with young travelers drifting through town. Many young men attend the video halls, while young women stay home watching Hindi movies on television. Women often seen in restaurants and with Westerners become the subject of negative gossip.

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**August 27, 1993**

Drinking beer at the Hotel Tibet, sat with Rob, a UNICEF worker from a working class Brit background and a real partyer. He and his wife had been traveling through Kashmir, and he seemed rather unconcerned that his wife had been knocked over by a grenade blast at a bus stand. Rob was tired of traveling and wanted to put down "roots." He thought they'd stay in Dharamsala a few months and teach English. Dorje, the alcoholic silversmith, came over, and a bit later Bill the toothless druggie staggered to the table. Bill and Rob did an opium transaction right in the open, and Bill slid a 100 Rs. note under Rob's plate of tofu pakora.

Dorje returned from the bar and lifted the plate and was shocked to see at the 100 Rs. note. "Well, that is your business. But I don't have to like it! But we are still friends, Rob and I, that is his business, no? And I have my business," he said, sipping his drink.

Drugs are not so bad I guess, but then Rob asked if it was "taboo" to go out with Tibetan girls. "Oh! Don't spoil our girls here, sir, I ask you!" said Dorje very seriously. "They see you have money and you'll promise them the West, and leave them here alone with no reputation! Don't do this to our poor girls, I beg you!"

Relative to surrounding Asian societies, women in pre-occupation Tibet enjoyed a fair degree of sexual license. Divorce was possible, premarital sex largely tolerated, and illegitimacy did not cause tremendous scandal, although is was unfavorable to a child's life chances, particularly if female (Aziz, 1987). Aziz reports that in the Ding' ri border area of Tibet, where many of the refugees in Dharamsala originate, discretion was

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more important than fidelity in marriage. However, while drunk and disorderly public conduct by men was tolerated, not only were women expected to remain "decorous," male misbehavior was often blamed on wives. Urban women were considered less virtuous. The farmers of the D'ingri region saw the Ganggar trading center as "a decadent community infested with thieves, suspect migrants of dubious origins, loose women following the single traders. . . . In contrast to rural areas where girls are guarded by their families . . . sexual liaisons here cannot be controlled" (Aziz, 1978: 37-8).

Dharamsala and Delhi might be considered such a center, like Delhi, where the presence of loose Western women, "freaks," and drugs contribute to the corruption of Tibetan youth. In the Tibetan settlement of Manu Ka Tila near Delhi University, chang (Tibetan barley beer) is served to rickshaw drivers and university students by women in mini-skirts. Prostitutes are available in some areas. Tibetan women from other settlements engaged in petty trade are often assumed to be prostitutes and sexually harassed. In Dharamsala, however, the chang houses operate very discretely, and in those I frequented, chang was either served by men or by older women in chubas.

India-born refugee women are generally modest, and affairs with Western men are rare. One might conclude that a new puritanism is developing in exile. In traditional Tibet, women might bare their breasts while working, or urinate in public. However, in Dharamsala the presence of the Dalai Lama and the monasteries, as well as numbers of the old aristocratic elite, are partially responsible for a new decorum in female behavior. A further influence is the concern for the opinion of the Indians and visiting Westerners. "Modern" attitudes are encouraged, including

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modesty in behavior and dress, attention to manners, and cleanliness. These changes are similar to those among the Tibetan Buddhist Nyeshangte in Kathmandu. Adolescent girls, reports JoAnne Watkins, "have less autonomy than their male peers in the city or their female cohorts in the valley" [outside the urban area] (Watkins, 1996:94).

Nowak (1980) notes that in Tibetan schools, both girls and boys wear "modern" uniforms most days, and Tibetan chubas for special occasions. However, casual dress outside school is generally Western for boys, and (modified) Tibetan for girls. Boys have more flexible options. They can wear a short Tibetan chuba over T-shirts and jeans, throw it off and go "modern" at a dance, whereas for girls a chuba is a total commitment for the day. Nowak also notes that young refugee women have "newly learned unease when having to walk or travel unescorted" (Nowak 1980:223).

Refugees newly arrived from Tibet, not yet accustomed to exile standards, are considered "raw" and unruly. New refugee women sometimes wear make-up and bright, tight-fitting clothes. One Researcher who had taught for a year in Tibet said: "One thing I am struck by here in Dharamsala -- looking at the young here -- is how Indianized they have become. Lhasa women strut their stuff, cut a fine figure. Here, they're like Victorian bubbleheads looking for a husband." A young Tibetan friend, a new arrival himself, told me he thought recently arrived women were "cheap." Because they had no relatives in Dharamsala, he complained, they "can do anything, and go wild." He saw no irony in the fact that he had himself participated in several "Full Moon parties" above town, staying up all night drumming and smoking hash with Westerners.

Most young India-born refugee women are shy with foreigners, and other than brief interactions in shops, have much fewer opportunities than

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their male counterparts to form intimate friendships with Westerners. Said one Canadian volunteer: "Tibetan men are capable of talking to Western women. Tibetan women less so. Tibetan women seem shy or antagonistic." One young American woman volunteer went to a lot of Tibetan parties, and complained that "at 90% of them I'm the only woman." Occasionally, however, India-born women are assertive about initiating relationships with Westerners. Sometimes they have an ulterior motive: to escape poverty and go to the West.

"James," a 20 year old Canadian Dharma student, lived in a room rented from an Indian family on a small piece of land on the edge of McLeod Ganj. I interviewed him for several hours and he told me of his plans to marry a young Tibetan woman.

> She came to me when I was sitting on the stairs and showed me a book. She wanted to make friends and didn't know how. She had watched me go up to my room and back and forth for a month. I asked her to come up to my room and talk. Initially we were just friends. She invited me to dinner when her mom was gone. It was her and her little brother. She said she was alone and afraid, and asked me to sleep over. I felt more like a Dad. That night we slept together, fully clothed. I felt she trusted me. I did think, if we continue, no way we'll just be friends. . . .
>
> . . . Her mother really tries to talk with me; she really trusts me a lot. She lets me sleep with "Drolma" when she's here. She was friendly smiling right away . . . but, I feel like the Tibetans don't like us getting together, especially the older ones, forty and over, they

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frown on it a lot. The first month, you know, we were never allowed to be seen together. Drolma said we couldn't go to the market together. She said "other men are seeing." She's been a good girl and doesn't want to get a bad reputation. She never goes to a cafe or restaurant. Only older women with husbands can do that. . . .
. . . Her friends are shy. They look at the ground, you know, and feel really uncomfortable. When they're alone I think they think it's exciting. They ask her a lot of questions; what do Injees do, sexually; how they treat her. . . . Tibetan boys, she says, uh, it takes them a long time to be, um, calm. It takes them a long time to get out of the boy stage, twenty-five or thirty, you know.

I asked him about the pending marriage. "I met her father in Dehra Dun, " said James. "At first he said yes, but he was very sober -- didn't smile. The second night we had a drink and he got more friendly. I stayed at his restaurant. At the end of the week he seemed quite happy with me."

"Why are you getting married?"

"Well, I like her, and in order to go to my country. . . . You know, when I work in the forest, she can wash my clothes, organize the tent, go to town. I'll teach her to drive. She can be really useful as a partner."

A few months later my friend Yangchen informed me that the marriage had been called off by the woman's family. "Too many people talking," she told me. I asked her how she would feel if she had a daughter marrying a foreigner.

"I never think about this. But I don't like if people are bad *rik* ["race," kind]. Like people who kill animals."

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"If your son or daughter were getting married, you'd want to check on who the parents were?"

"Yes, I must check. Ask other people, which country [region], which family [are they from]. This is very important. Other thing: is this a good man, bad man? And how many brothers. Many brothers, many family -- this is not good for a woman!"

"How about foreigners?"

"This I cannot tell you. Because my mother had a bad husband before. So she cannot have a happy life. Foreigner -- he give good life to a child, then I think this is good, I like it!"

"How about other Tibetans? Do they think the same way?"

"No. Some people they say it's bad. For me, I'm not saying this. If you love each other, for life, this is better. It doesn't matter what [kind of] people."

One of the CTA officials in charge of the Resettlement project said he thought most Tibetans going to the United States would marry other Tibetans. "It's different when Tibetans marry Westerners here. You know," he said, looking at me with a little smile, "they really don't love the tall American man, they just want to go and become an American themselves."

As with economic relations, personal relations structured through tourism are asymmetric. Because of differing concepts of gender and sexuality and inequalities in money, power, and mobility, local and foreign men and women enjoy different options, different access to each another, and different impacts on one another. The social and health disasters

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created by the sex tourism industries in Thailand and the Philippines are relatively well known. However, both male and female travelers create less obvious problems in their pursuit of romance and relationships abroad. The seemingly inconsequential actions of travelers often have long lasting local impacts not readily apparent to those with the freedom to experience and move on.

While sexual relationships between Tibetan women and Western men in Dharamsala are relatively uncommon, many female travelers enjoy erotic encounters with the exotic and handsome young Tibetan men. Foreign women are able to take more risks than local women. They can enter social arenas, such as bars, where local women may be out of place. One American volunteer commented that "Western women are treated as Westerners first, women second. They can go to chang stalls unaccompanied. Tibetan women are more decorous," she added, "but respected." Since their behavior is basically anonymous, it is not surprising that many travelers take advantage of the erotic possibilities of the "liminal" state produced by travel, and that female travelers may seek erotic encounters with exotic and handsome Tibetans.

Anonymity and mobility allow travelers the chance to experiment with sex, drugs, and appearance, opportunities that are differentiated by gender and ethnicity, as is the "tourist gaze." In Dharamsala, photographs of young Western female tourists, whose bizarre behavior and colorful, skimpy clothing can compete with exotics anywhere, are eagerly sought after by many Indian tourists. Indian men are sometimes seen posing with young Western women, or attempting to solicit photo opportunities. One Indian tourist told me that such a photograph was sure to arouse the envy

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of his friends, who might believe he had enjoyed the women's sexual favors.

**March 13, 1993**

Interviewed "George Gold," an old Dharamsala hand, in his rooms at the Potala hotel. One room was had a full machine shop, with an Enfield motorcycle in one corner, and the other room was residential, with a mix of Tibetan and Western furniture and goods. A television was tuned into STAR TV. Just a we started the interview, two Indian men came in asking for his help in getting a "group of Western women, not just young ones, all types" for a movie they were shooting. George said he'd try, and we continued.

After the interview, two other Indian men entered. One sported a silk scarf around his neck, a sports jacket, and flashy jewelry. He complained that the movie producers weren't giving him a good role. "I'd be especially good in the rape scene, " he laughed. He and George joked about how little they got laid, each claiming the other was too modest. The flashy Indian complained that Indian women "are too complicated. They don't open up [pointing to his crotch]. That's why I want Western women -- less complicated. Indian women don't open for three, four, five months, and when you do have relations, they want you to marry them. That's what happened with my wife. But she's a good wife, very submissive.

"George is famous in the Indian offices," the man continued. "He's brilliant, knows how to keeps up relations. If you have a problem go to George Scott-- we call him George Scott for Scott's Whiskey-- and he does the job quickly with no problems."

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The problem that George was being recruited to solve was finding a variety of Western women to "act" the role of travelers. They wanted a variety of women, young and old, but wanted a few beautiful ones too, and "not only hippies." The women were to be kidnapped by terrorists and saved by the Indian hero. The producers were offering 100 Rs. a day. My wife decided that wasn't enough -- especially since she didn't trust them -- so she passed on her chance to be a star.

Many women travelers complain that local men simply assume they are promiscuous, and that sexual harassment is common from Indian men. It is also the case that Indian men are stereotyped and compared unfavorably with the Tibetans, and Indian men in Dharamsala are less likely than Tibetan men to enjoy relationships with female travelers.

For Western women staying in Dharamsala for extended periods, having a Tibetan boyfriend is somewhat of a status symbol. Women volunteers from the West, working side by side with Tibetan men for the government-in-exile, are quite likely to form romantic relationships with their co-workers. Of nine female volunteers interviewed, six had engaged in sexual relations with a Tibetan. Only one had sex with an Indian, one with another Westerner, and one had not engaged in sex at all while in Dharamsala. For Tibetan men, relationships with foreign women can provide sexual and social experiences unavailable with more socially restricted Tibetan women, and such relationships sometimes lead to foreign money and travel.

Interethnic relationships meet with disapproval from many older Tibetan exiles. Romantic relationships with foreigners are seen to divide the community and "threaten the Tibetan race" already under assault from

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the Chinese. Tibetans often claim that the "Tibetan mind" and the "Western mind" are too different for long-term relationships to work, and many interethnic marriages do indeed fail because of the extremely divergent expectations of the partners. Western women, I heard frequently from Tibetans, were too independent. "They think they are like a man, and can do anything a man can do!" complained one young Tibetan man. He claimed he would "rather marry an Indian girl," a very unlikely prospect given the level of tensions between the communities. In several relationships, strong, independent Western woman tolerated behavior from Tibetan partners that they would never accept in the West, including alcoholism, sexual selfishness, and an expectation that a wife serve her husband. Several educated women rationalized their submission as a form of "cultural relativism." They continued to idealize Tibetan culture and blamed their own Western biases for underlying feelings of resentment. Despite inequality along gender lines, however, the greater power and options these women enjoy as relatively affluent Westerners remains.

Many foreigners are oblivious to long-term consequences of romantic relationships for their partners. A few take care that their relationships remain discreet, and some send money periodically to their partners when they leave. Most, however, get on with their own lives once they return to the West, sometimes leaving their partner in difficulty. This is particularly true for Tibetan women left by Western men. They may suffer from gossip and even harassment, and find it difficult to find a Tibetan husband. Because of men's greater status and social freedom in Tibetan society, marriages between Tibetan men and Western women meet with less overt disapproval, and are more common in Dharamsala. However, such marriages often do no live up to their promise, and Tibetan

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men may also be at a disadvantage in relations with travelers. Westerners, both men and women, are relatively privileged by the world system, and able to consume the Other with little risk to the Self, as a final postcard will demonstrate.

**Postcard from a Marriage**

Tashi was a 26 year old refugee from eastern Tibet. A bout of tuberculosis when he first came to India had left him very thin. Tall, enthusiastic, and sweet, he looked and acted like a Western teenager. Tashi had spent several years at a refugee school where he learned to read and write Tibetan and speak English. I agreed to tutor him privately, with an emphasis on American slang. Cracking jokes and always laughing, wearing his jeans and T-shirt, it was difficult to imagine Tashi looking as he did in an old photograph he carried: he and his friend on arrival, wearing Tibetan wool garments in the Indian heat, faces fat and rosy, staring unposed into the camera. I tried unsuccessfully to picture him riding a horse, a knife at his side, over the fields of eastern Tibet.

Tashi was not the studious type, and soon was transferred from school to train for a job in a medical dispensary run by the Tibetan administration. He was unused to regular working hours or formal procedures, and nearly lost his position for tardiness and unexcused absences, but soon became self-supporting. However, after Tashi fell in love with "Marian", an American woman, he quit his job and married her in order to gain permission to emigrate to the United States. He and his new wife rented rooms in Dharamsala while they ran from Tibetan office to Indian office to the American embassy and back again attempting to clear up the paperwork.

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After a civil ceremony conducted by Indian officials, Tashi and Marian had a modified Tibetan wedding in McLeod Ganj. The Tibetan official in charge of the public hall was a bit embarrassed by it all because everything had been arranged by the bride, not by family and friends. Marian was clearly in charge, as she was in all the couple's affairs. Tashi was becoming increasingly dependent. The wedding was well attended by Westerners and Tibetans, and even a few Indians. Tashi wore a fur-trimmed Tibetan shirt, colorful Tibetan boots, and a fox-pelt hat. Marian wore a silk Tibetan dress and blouse made for the occasion. After a presentation of gifts, everyone sat outside under the Tibetan canopy and ate Tibetan food and drank Tibetan barley beer. One of Tashi's friend began playing a *damyen*, a Tibetan stringed instrument, and a few Westerners joined in a circle of Tibetan dancing. Suddenly, from inside the hall, rap music drowned out the *damyen*, and a number of young Tibetan men and Westerners rushed inside and starting dancing. After a while, some young Tibetan women joined in the fun. Outside, old men and women and several nuns pressed their noses to the windows and watched the gyrations inside. Marian was a bit disappointed at the disruption of her "traditional" celebration

The next day, Tashi and Marian received a blessing from the abbot of one of the Buddhist monasteries. He told them it was good for Westerners and Tibetans to come together and learn about one another. The couple continued the visa chase for a few months, until Marian's money ran low despite an infusion from Dad back home. Then she left, promising to send money, write consistently, and come back for him as soon as she had saved more money and he had a visa. I wondered what exactly Tashi would do in the United States. Could he find work there?

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How would he react to the gay and "anarchist" friends with whom Marian lived?

One morning Tashi told me that a Tibetan official had made a speech criticizing Tibetans who marry Westerners. The official didn't say Westerners were bad, just that they were different, and that the refugees needed to preserve the race. It was shameful, the official said, that some Tibetans "deceived" Westerners to get to the West. Tashi told me that while this was true, no one could accuse him of that. "If members of the government can marry Westerners, why can't we?" Tashi demanded.

Checks and letters from Marian came less and less frequently. Tashi moved out of his apartment and into the room of a friend. He attended the philosophy classes at the Tibetan Library, took English lessons with me, and slept a lot. Tashi confessed he felt aimless, but was helpless to do anything about it. If he returned to Tibet, he feared, the Chinese would put him in jail. Strangers stopped him in the streets and sarcastically asked: "Where's your wife? When is she taking you to America?" My wife and I worried about him and gave him some money when we left Dharamsala.

We sent him a letter and a check when we returned to the United States, but he never replied, and the check was never cashed. Later we heard that his brother had come from Tibet and told him he was wasting his life in Dharamsala, that going to America was just a dream. Tashi returned to occupied Tibet with his brother, telling his Western friends they should not write.

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# CHAPTER THIRTEEN
# CONCLUDING REMARKS

Do Visit Again to the Valley of Peace and Love.
-- Billboard on the road out of McLeod Ganj

Tibetan refugees, like other communities cut off from their situated resources and history, have developed an economy that in large part relies on cultural productions marketed to more privileged external consumers. These cultural productions aim to "preserve" or re-produce the "authentic original," both as a means to construct and support a national community and to stake a political claim. But this re-production must be carried out with new means, and the original is subject to debate. The past is always reimagined to meet the needs of varied interests in the present, and today it must also meet the demands of distant markets.

The anthropological study of Tibetan (and other) communities must recognize the increasing degree to which the tourist interaction shapes material culture, the consciousness and representation of ethnic identity, and anthropological research itself. However, although tourism (and sometimes Anthropology) commoditizes an essentialized culture, generalizations claiming wholly negative effects from touristic development are misguided. The impacts of tourism are contradictory and complex, and must be specified for each locale and form of cultural production. The maintenance of the internal market in Dharamsala and the development of intermediate and external markets have led to diverse demands for Tibetan cultural productions. Social, political, and religious projects have meshed with the pursuit of profit and with national, class,

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ethnic, and gender relations to generate a shifting variety of productive structures -- domestic, capitalist, co-operative -- and varying degrees of economic benefit and exploitation, cultural alienation and autonomy.

In many studies of tourism, although producers are usually the focus of ethnography (partially a result of the requirements for building academic careers) there tends to be a reversal of the Marxian priority of production over consumption: foreign consumers are assumed to shape the producers and their productions. Thus, even for Vincenne Adams with her dialogic approach, "a way to move beyond the discourse of authenticity . . . [is] that we look instead for a discourse through which cultural differences are always reflective of desires of the purchasing observer" (1996:73). With the growth of global travel, the Third World has become a bargain basement of goods and services deployed for the Western production of leisure, adventure, sophisticated selves, spiritual selves, profit, and academic careers. Tourist arts and other cultural productions are an interface where the needs and desires of new consumers meet those of the producers.

This thesis has demonstrated that Tibetan cultural productions are no longer wholly "their own." Western consumers have adopted selected aspects of Tibetan cultures, becoming "intermediate" consumers and even producers and entrepreneurs. The greater wealth, technical expertise, and political status of external and intermediate consumers inevitably shapes production to meet their demands. Ironically, in such cases it is often external consumers who are most critical of artistic change, and who push for a return to "tradition," appointing themselves the guardians of an imagined original that largely reflects their own desires and projects.

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However, we must be careful not to exaggerate the power of the "purchasing observer" such that "they" are considered solely an effect of "us." Both tourists and tourees are entangled in global political and economic processes beyond their control. As Bruner writes, the "practices and behavior of the tourist and the native are defined for them by the dominant story" (1991: 240). The modification of cultural productions is not only an effect of tourism, but of the increasing integration of the exile community into a non-agrarian, monetized, "rationalized," media saturated transnational economy. Three day Tibetan Operas may be shortened not only for the convenience of the tourist gaze, but for the convenience of the Tibetan audience that must go to work the next morning.

Whether a group benefits from the commoditization of its culture is dependent on factors that foster self-managed development (Stephan, 1993; Tice, 1995). Small scale, locally controlled development of "ethnic" tourism may have essentially benign impacts. For example, van den Berghe claims that tourism in San Cristobal de las Casas is local, private, small scale, unplanned and almost "organic." As of the late 1980's, international fast food and hotel chains had not penetrated. Restaurants bought local food, enterprises sold local crafts, and tourism income trickled down and circulated widely. Thus, he wrote, while development was uneven, there had not developed a classic situation of political domination and economic exploitation (van den Berghe, 1992: 247).

The same claims could be made of Dharamsala, where tourist development is thus far relatively small and locally controlled. Although the Tibetans do not have the solid land base of non-refugee crafts producing communities, they have benefited from generally tolerant and generous host nations and have taken advantage of their special position in

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the Western imagination, one that grants their cultural productions a special value. The sale of tourist arts and the promotion of Tibetan religious teachings abroad have been crucial to the revitalization of old institutions and religious practices. The detachment of Tibetan culture from its historical ground and its new global circulation has led to rapid changes that might be embraced as a new creativity. Tourism has not led to a uniform degradation of the arts, rather to a diversification. New forms and meanings associated with transnational circulation co-exist with older forms and meanings. Integration with the global economy and culture has not only been thrust upon the Tibetan diaspora, but has been actively sought by elements within it, both for social and political aims and for personal gain.

The (thus far) small scale of tourism, the presence of religious institutions and values that limit commoditization, and the CTA's social welfare projects have reduced the degree of capitalist differentiation in Dharamsala relative to many tourism locales. However, as we have seen, the benefits and problems associated with the growth of handicraft industries are unequal along the interpenetrating axes of class, gender, ethnicity, and nation. The very success of Tibetan entrepreneurship, in large part contingent on constructing and maintaining cultural difference, has exacerbated local ethnic tensions. While women remain empowered at the household level, and increasingly on the community level, men dominate the Tibetans' international religious, cultural, and political networks. Success in eliciting Western support and interest has led to dependence, leaving some Tibetans vulnerable to the demands, experiments, and whims of Westerners who remain privileged in the world system.

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In the high status, low volume arts sustained both by historically continuous and new forms of patronage, artisans -- generally male -- largely retain control over their production and the income it generates. However, the production of high volume goods aimed directly at the tourist and export markets can alienate artisans, transforming them into piece workers producing goods designed by others. Workers in these industries tend to be poor women and unskilled new arrivals. Without social or cultural limits to this kind of production, class stratification is intensified, as has occurred with the growth of the carpet industry in Kathmandu. Production may be carried out by members of other communities.

As culture is reified and becomes a commodity, there are inevitably struggles over innovation and ownership within and between communities. "Tibetan" motifs -- some of them invented by outsiders -- come to signify the community internationally even as they are detached from it. What then is authenticity? The answer is more questioning. Changes in craft production, form, and markets brought about by tourism do not call for foreign experts to distinguish (for whom?) the "genuine" from the "spurious," nor for deconstructionists to continue beating the long-dead essentialist horse. Rather, social scientists must recognize indigenous forms of "emergent authenticity" as well as the different criteria by which various audiences define the authentic (Cohen, 1988b). Bruner (1994) argues that if the issue of authenticity arises, we need ask who has called it into doubt, and investigate struggles over cultural authority. We must investigate what is at stake in claims to authenticity, and what social relations are structured by the production, marketing, consumption -- and researching -- of authentic goods and culture. The question of authenticity is thus a political and economic issue. Given that culture is always changing and increasingly

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(and unstoppably) hybridizing, we should not seek "authenticity" in what, precisely, is being produced and consumed, but in the conditions that enable groups and individuals to construct themselves and their worlds autonomously through their cultural production and consumption (Tomlinson, 1991).

Dependent on external consumers and sponsors, the Tibetans have become highly image conscious. The idealized images promoted -- the myth of Shangri-la -- contrasts with the reality of an always transnational world, and the conflicts that new interethnic relations create. However, despite the critique of essentialisms currently popular among Western academics, such myths are often deployed by Third World peoples themselves. If the "postmodern" condition entails a hyperactive transnational circulation of things and meanings such that cultural boundaries, identity, and authenticity are increasingly difficult to define, this has by no means entailed an end to quests to construct and solidify a self, a status, a community, and to stake its claims. Representations of an idealized past, and assertions of cultural boundedness and authenticity are means by which the Tibetan diaspora, Tibetan elites, and even Westerners claim political rights and authority over Tibetan cultural productions. Shangri-la is a fantasy, a trademark, a hope, and a protest simultaneously.

It is now fashionable to posit that cultural productions are "mirrors" in which communities have come to see themselves. Perhaps it has always been so, but tourism multiplies the mirrors in which communities reflect the desiring gaze of others (Adams, 1996). The post-structuralists are right: we will not succeed in resurrecting some "original" identity that reflects only a true self. The original is "always already" contested, shifting, a reflection of various interests. But this does not imply we must

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celebrate, as Christopher Norris (1990) writes of Baudrillard, that we are "lost in the funhouse," endlessly describing the fragmented reflections. Rather, we must look at who constructs, controls, and benefits from the mirrors.

The Dalai Lama once remarked that he envisioned a future, free Tibet as a holiday resort for the world. I hope this study can help such plans be carried out with a fuller awareness of its possible impacts, and a maximum of control by the Tibetan people.

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