

What It Means to Be a Tibetan in India? On Consequences of Creating the Unified Pan-Tibetan Identity¹

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Abstract

The Tibetans living in India have frequently been described as a model diasporic community that despite difficult political and economic conditions managed to build over several decades not only an institutionalized administration but also something that might be called a welfare state. In my opinion, this positive image of Tibetan refugees is, on the one hand, an effect of Orientalist ideas according to which in the eyes of the people of the West Tibetans are still the spiritual representatives of the mythical land of Shangri-La. On the other hand, it is a certain form of Tibetans' self-representation – result of a meticulous, self-reflexive managing of their public image. I claim that essentializing the “national identity” and politicizing the “Tibetan ethnicity” started to be the cores of the project whose aim is to allow the CTA and exile elites to build in India a united Tibetan nation, are the core elements of the exiled government's project of building a united Tibetan nation in India. However, these identity unifying efforts and processes of homogenization more

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and more often take the form of identity regimes. They promote the stereotypical version of Tibetan culture and in this way lead to the creation of a *Tibetan hyperreality* in which a “genuine Tibetan” is speaking Lhasa dialect, is a spiritual and peaceful Buddhist, humble and kind vegetarian who restrains from violence. I believe that promoting one authorized version of “being Tibetan” acts as an instrument of oppression, a regime that decides which forms of identification can be accepted as authentic and genuinely Tibetan. As a result, many potential, alternative and syncretic forms of identification and expression have been devalued and criticized. It is said that Tibetans paradoxically became prisoners of their own affirmation policy – *prisoners of Shangri-La*. The project of “preserving traditional culture” in reality became a tool of exclusion, repressing innovations and creativity, and resulting in a proliferation of conflicts in Tibetan communities.

Key words: Tibetan diaspora, Tibetan-ness, refugees, identity polity, newcomers

When in the summer of 2013 at dawn I came by bus for the first time to Dharamsala and the vehicle climbed the steep and winding roads of the Himalayan foothills, I was more than certain that, unlike most scholars who are interested in the Tibetan exiled community, I would not deal with the “identity question” in my research. At that time I was not interested at all in identity issues or the structure of the administration in exile. The aspirations of the Tibetan Government in Exile (TGiE) were off the table for me. The aim of my journey to India was very precise: it was the study of the traditional Tibetan medicine called Sowa Rigpa (Tib. *bod kyi gso ba rig pa*)² – its medical theories, etiology of diseases, diagnostic techniques and treatments for particular ailments and disorders.

² In this paper I have used the Wylie standard system of Tibetan transcription.

It only took a few weeks of research, however, to realize that Sowa Rigpa was a system much more holistic than I had initially assumed. I became aware that I should actually start my research by discarding the biomedical concept of “disease” because what the Tibetans understood under this term was semantically much broader and it would probably be more accurate to translate it as an “obstacle.” And to grasp the intended meaning of this concept, it was not enough to just focus on the activities of Tibetan medical specialists. It was necessary to explore the daily praxis, step into the “Tibetan everyday life” and take a closer look at the heterogeneous conditions which have an impact on Tibetan concepts of “health”, “happiness” and “prosperity.” This, however, was impossible to achieve unless one embraced the material, social and political reality of everyday life – the situation of exile. It cannot be ignored that the Tibetans in India are a community frozen in a state of waiting. We might even say: imprisoned in liminality. Thus, my research slowly encompassed more issues and topics: from the problems of the exiled community to the structure of the Tibetan administration, the system of education, availability of jobs in India, the issue of protecting Tibetan “traditional culture” and Tibetan identity politics. And although the main topic of my anthropology research – conducted since 2013 among Tibetan communities (Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Ladakh) – is Sowa Rigpa, in this article I would like to share my findings on the secondary, socio-political issues pertaining to my project. And so in the following pages, I shall take a closer look at the unexpected consequences of the Tibetan exiled government’s project of constructing a pan-Tibetan identity in India. I will illustrate this through the example of a group which I call “the hungry ghosts.” But before I introduce the group itself, I would like to mention the context and circumstances of its coming into being, as well as a certain rationality which resulted in it becoming a separate group.

Ideal refugees?

The Tibetans living in India have frequently been described as a model diasporic community³, which despite difficult political and economic conditions managed to build over several decades not only an institutionalized administration but also something that might be called a welfare state⁴ – a “little Tibet” whose institutions are supposed to provide refugees with accommodation, education, medical care and assistance in finding jobs. The Tibetan Government in Exile (TGiE) – officially known as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) – considers itself to be a continuation of the former Government of Tibet operating in Lhasa up until 1959⁵. Basing on this consideration, CTA is the only legal Tibetan authority acting both on behalf of the Tibetan refugees and the Tibetans living inside the People’s Republic of China (in the Tibet Autonomous Region and provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan)⁶.

Since 1960 the reorganization of the structures of the refugee version of the Government of Tibet has been modeled on the institutions of western democratic countries. Currently, the CTA presents itself as an authority guided by the “rule of law” whose main goal is the rehabilitation of Tibetan refugees and restoring freedom and happiness in Tibet⁷. The heterogeneous activities undertaken in order to build in India a “Tibetan civil society” indicate that the TGiE’s aim – in spite of not being officially recognized and supported worldwide – is to gain in India some kind of “implied sovereignty” and be perceived as a

³ Dibyesh Anand claims that the term “diaspora” could be nowadays used also to describe Tibetan societies living in India (Anand, “A contemporary Story of ‘Diaspora’”, 219-220).

⁴ McConnell, “A state within a state?,” 304-306.

⁵ Kolas, “Tibetan nationalism,” 53.

⁶ tibet.net/about-cta/.

⁷ <http://tibet.net/finance/announcement/kalons-message/>.

foundation of the “democratic structures of the future Tibet.” It seems that this goal has to a large degree been achieved. The evidence of that can be not only friendly relations with the Government of India (GOI) whose local representatives (Hin. *panchayats*) consider CTA members to be “government representatives” and by extension official partners in talks and cooperation⁸, but also a huge financial support from “western” assistance organizations and tens of individual sponsors and donors⁹.

CTA has been widely praised by political scientists, anthropologists, journalists and even representatives of state organs¹⁰. This has been due to not only the *colossal economic success*¹¹ achieved by the TGIE within the past few decades, a huge “democratic transformation”¹² and *reterritorialization*¹³ of almost one hundred thousand people¹⁴ in a new socio-cultural environment, but also due to the fact that Tibetans have not developed any extremist movements and have maintained the image of a peaceful community governed by Buddhist values. Below I attempt to prove that this positive image of Tibetan refugees is, on the one hand, an effect of Orientalist ideas, according to which in the eyes of the people of the West, Tibetans are still the spiritual representatives of the mythical land of Shangri-la¹⁵. On the other hand, it is a certain form of Tibetans’

⁸ McConnell, *ibid.*, 299-300.

⁹ Prost, “The Problem with ‘Rich Refugees.’”

¹⁰ In 2001 “The Economist” recognized CTA as one of the most important exile governments in the world <http://www.economist.com/node/883955>.

¹¹ Goldstein, “Ethnogenesis and Resource Competition among Tibetan Refugees in South India,” 399.

¹² Bloch, *Urodzeni uchodźcy*,” 126-176.

¹³ See: Deleuze, Guattari, *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 508.

¹⁴ According to The Demographic Survey drawn up by CTA in 2009, officially there are 94203 Tibetan refugees living in India nowadays (*Planning Commission, Demographic Survey of Tibetans in exile-2009*).

¹⁵ Shangri-la – is a mystical place described in the 1933 novel *Lost Horizon* by James Hilton. Shangri-la is imagined as a earthly paradise, a harmonious, mountainous, sacred and permanently happy land, inhabited by immortal Buddhist community, who has got esoteric powers.

self-representation – result of a meticulous, self-reflexive managing of their public image, continued since 1950 when attempts to gain international and UN support failed¹⁶. Both approaches are basically essentializing and one of their “products” is the relatively new and somewhat problematic category of a “Tibetan citizen.” To determine who these “Tibetan citizens” the CTA would like to protect are, I will go back to the year 1959 when the Fourteenth Dalai Lama – followed by thousands of refugees – escaped to India in the hope of finding a temporary protection from the Chinese communists.

Refugees, foreigners or “Tibetan citizens”?

When the first wave of Tibetans, after a month-long walk over the snow-capped Himalayas, reached India in 1959, the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, after talking to the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, made a decision to place the Tibetan spiritual leader with his family and closest associates in Mussoorie (a former British hill station). The newly arrived groups of Tibetan refugees, whose number in 1960 was already estimated at eighty thousand people, were allowed to settle in two provisional camps – Missamari in Assam and Buxa Duar in West Bengal¹⁷. Upon their arrival in India, the Tibetans, who used to live in harsh climate of a high plateau, had difficulty adapting to new weather conditions, Indian cuisine, ubiquitous dust, noise and most of all – an overwhelming helplessness caused by the lack of knowledge of local languages and the unfamiliar socio-cultural environment. Furthermore, these provisional camps quickly became overpopulated, there was a shortage of drinking water and food, insects were all over the place and terrible sanitary

¹⁶ Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 52-91; Goldstein *A History of Modern Tibet*.

¹⁷ Phuntso, *Government in Exile*, 135.

conditions caused tuberculosis, hepatitis, cholera and dysentery, among other diseases¹⁸. The Dalai Lama, much concerned with this situation and a growing number of fatalities among his countrymen, turned to Indian authorities to find more stable settlements for the Tibetans¹⁹. And so in 1960, the first stable Tibetan camp was established at Bylakuppe in Karnataka. This was followed by other colonies in Karnataka, Orissa, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Ladakh. And although the Dalai Lama almost immediately began rebuilding Tibetan government structures, attempted to re-establish Tibetan educational system in exile²⁰, as well as brought to life a number of institutions whose aim was to provide the refugees with social and material aid, many of the people I spoke to admitted that at the time some of these initiatives seemed pointless to them.

Memories of Tibetans from the first wave of refugees in 1959 show that most of the exiles were convinced that their displacement was only temporary – a need of the moment – and that after several months or at most a few years all Tibetans would safely be back in their homes in Tibet. Jetsun Pema – the Dalai Lama’s younger sister – mentions in her memoir that when Indian and Swiss experts tried to help the refugees acclimatize to the tropical weather of Karnataka and wanted to teach them methods of planting and cultivating fruit trees, the latter arrogantly asked: *And how many years does it take for this coconut or banana tree to bear fruit?* When the answer was that it would take some seven years, they burst into laughter and added: *We will not even have the opportunity to taste them!*²¹ These observations have also been confirmed by my research conducted in Bylakuppe and Mundgod. One resident remarked:

¹⁸ Bentz, *Being a Tibetan Refugee in India*, 87-88, Kharat, *Tibetan Refugees in India*, 53-54, Dalai Lama, *Freedom in Exile*, 162-163.

¹⁹ Avedon, *In the Exile from the Land of Snow*, 72-78.

²⁰ See: Nowak, *Tibetan Refugees*, 55-56; Tsepak Rigzin, „The Tibetan Schools in Diaspora”, 267-268.

²¹ Jetsun Pema La, *Tibet – My Story. An Autobiography*.

*When the Indians tried to talk me – a Lhasa official – into learning how to cultivate mango, I felt frustration. I thought: “They don’t understand anything! We will soon – and surely not later than in several years – go back home.” I thought it was totally pointless*²². Those several years have unexpectedly turned into almost sixty years of Tibetan presence in India – a permanent liminal state, a constant inconstancy.

Being immersed in the multicultural society of India saved Tibetans from the obligation to assimilate. And although in India they have adapted well economically, culturally they have decided to stay separate and peacefully coexist with their host country²³. However, as stateless people they still remain in suspension. The Government of the Republic of India, not having signed either the 1951 Refugee Convention or its annex, Protocol of 1967, not only has not come up with a uniform legislation concerning refugees but literally does not accept the possibility of labeling with this term any group currently present in India. Thus, officially in India there are no refugees, and foreigners who have decided to seek asylum there, are simply treated as foreign nationals. Their rights are protected by the Foreigners Act (1946) and Article 21 of the Indian Constitution (it concerns protection of life and personal possessions)²⁴. It should be emphasized based on these documents that Tibetans living in India are only residents who are not officially protected by any international law and cannot count on the help of organizations such as UNHCR. Those who would like to stay in India permanently are obliged to have the so-called Registration Certificate (commonly referred to as “RC”) – a document issued by Indian authorities which needs to be renewed every year (in certain cases every five years). That, however, does not mean that all Tibetans

²² A fragment of an interview conducted on 19th September 2015 in Bylakuppe, Karnataka, India.

²³ Bloch, *ibid.*, 319.

²⁴ Bentz, *ibid.*, 83-84.

have the same status, as not every Tibetan living in India has the right to obtain an RC. Fiona McConnell points out in one of her articles that only those Tibetans who came to India as part of the first wave, i.e. between 1959 and 1979 are treated preferentially by Indian authorities – as the *de facto* refugees (their children can enjoy the same status)²⁵. People belonging to this group usually possess the RC which gives them a fairly unrestricted right to travel inside India, have a paid job, open a bank account, obtain a driving license and purchase motor vehicles. Moreover, only holders of valid RCs have the right to apply for an Identity Certificate (commonly known as IC or “the yellow book”) – basically a travel document, a kind of passport.

Tibetans who made it to India after 1979 (but before 2003), that is during the period of liberalization of the Chinese government’s policies and the improvement in Indian-Chinese relations in the 1980s, officially could not apply for the RC, not to mention the IC. Even though the GOI allowed them to stay temporarily in the country (usually for no longer than six months), those who wanted to extend their stay unofficially were treated like foreigners or illegal aliens who in India had no official legal status²⁶ whatsoever and were subject to deportation at any moment. Honey Vahali – Indian psychologist conducting research among Tibetan communities – found out that up until recently those Tibetans who were unable to obtain an RC in the illegal documents’ market in Dharamsala lived in constant fear. Like *homini sacri* described by Giorgio Agamben – these refugees were outlaws, they were invisible. If they disappeared, no one would notice, and often they fell victims to Indian police or aggressively-minded youth²⁷.

²⁵ McConnell, “De facto refugees”.

²⁶ Garratt, “Tibetan Refugees”.

²⁷ Vahali, *Lives in Exile*, 50-54. Pauline MacDonald adds that those Tibetan magazines, journals and newspapers (i.a. “Phayul”) that strove to publicize that problem – were „forced” to delete the unwelcome articles and papers from their websites (MacDonald, *Dharamsala Days Dharamsala Nights*).

I would like to stress, however, that the Tibetans I spoke to during my fieldwork (2013-2016) unanimously said that these dark days were now gone; the CTA some time ago solved the problem of RCs and currently all Tibetan refugees – including those who arrived in India after 1979 (and before 2003) – possess proper documents required by Indian law. I assume this has partly been the result of an unwritten agreement between the CTA and the GOI, according to which the latter, in order to cope with the problem of illegal residents, began to informally legalize their stay, pretending they were born on the Indian Territory²⁸. Another step undertaken to facilitate the new waves of Tibetans legalizing their presence in India was a 2002 regulation according to which every Tibetan who currently wishes to enter the territory of India must possess a Special Entry Permit (SEP) issued by the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu (Nepal)²⁹. Having the SEP usually makes it easier to obtain the RC. Yet, it should be emphasized that although the RC gives many rights and privileges to the refugees, it does not entitle them to vote in central or state elections, buy land or real estates, organize protests and peaceful anti-Chinese demonstrations, obtain Indian passports, and most importantly, it does not provide them with all kinds of freedom and safety guarantees that the Constitution of India and consular agreements provide the citizens of the Republic³⁰. While conducting my fieldwork, I often wondered why Tibetans who in India linger on in the state of suspension – trapped between the impossibility to settle permanently and the unfulfilled dreams of going “back” to Tibet – so rarely make the decision to apply for citizenship of a country in which they have lived for almost sixty years!

According to the *Indian Citizenship Act* (1995), most Tibetans currently residing in India can apply for Indian citizenship after meeting

²⁸ Hess, “Statelessness and the State”, 82-83; Bloch, *ibid.*, 324-325.

²⁹ Bentz, *ibid.*, 85.

³⁰ Bloch, *ibid.*, 325-326.

some provisional formal requirements³¹. However, only 2-4% of those eligible make that decision³². Other Tibetans deliberately reject that opportunity considering accepting Indian citizenship to be a form of treason³³. Calling themselves “citizens of Tibet” – a country which does not exist on any map – these people consciously decide to remain “stateless refugees.” Thus, the status of a stateless person is not a negative value imposed on them by the GOI. Moreover, my research has shown that for the majority of Tibetans it has become rather a source of agency³⁴ and one of the most crucial elements of constructing their Tibetan identity³⁵. Hence, what we have here is undoubtedly a powerful self-declaration of political identification as well as a significant patriotic act which ought to remind the Tibetans constantly that their presence in India is only temporary and their home will forever be Tibet. It should, however, be strongly emphasized that this attitude has not only been approved of by the CTA but actually recommended by it. That is why many Tibetans – fearing social ostracism and accusations of not being patriotic – do not even dare to consider accepting Indian citizenship. And although *The Charter of Tibetans-in-Exile* (1991) – the most important Tibetan legal act, a type of constitution – states that Tibetans have a right to accept citizenships of countries in which they live³⁶, in reality this has been encouraged only in the case of Tibetans in North America, Europe and Australia³⁷. The reason is that the CTA thinks of a citizenship as a symbolic capital. The belief is that Tibetans holding American, British or Canadian passports can become world “ambassadors” of the Tibetan cause, whereas accepting Indian citizenship by masses of Tibetans could

³¹ Falcone, Wangchuk, “We’re not Home,” 168.

³² McConnell, “A State within a State,” 310.

³³ Houston, Wright, “Making and remaking Tibetan diasporic identities,” 227.

³⁴ See: Malkki, *Purity and exile*, 35.

³⁵ Anand, “(Re)imagining Nationalism,” 275; Yeh, “Will the Real Tibetan Please Stand Up?,” 248; McConnell, “Governmentality to practice the state,” 88-89.

³⁶ Hess, *ibid.*, 84-85.

³⁷ Falcone, Wangchuk, *ibid.*, 171-173.

result in them becoming actually Indians in the eyes of the international law. Then the TGiE would lose its moral legitimization to continue its struggle for free Tibet, and practically also its fundamental justification for being in India³⁸.

And so in *The Charter of Tibetans-in-Exile* refugees are called *citizens of Tibet*³⁹. Physical attributes of Tibetan citizenship and main symbols of Tibetans' affiliation with the CTA are: the Green Book or Rangzen Lagteb (Tib. *rang btsan lag deb*) which provides Tibetans with access to free healthcare, education system and various benefits offered by the CTA, and chatrel (Tib. *bca' khral*) or "voluntary donations" (which are actually taxes) that every Tibetan citizen should annually pay to the TGiE. Although Tibetan citizenship has not been recognized internationally – and so does not guarantee any legal status to its holders – it undoubtedly constitutes a key element in the project of creating a unified Tibetan nation in exile. By introducing the category of "Tibetan citizens", the CTA has placed itself in the position of a "legitimate government" and for the first time in history invented the concept of Tibetan population. What is more, the idea of citizenship has become for the TGiE one of the crucial tools for combining many heterogeneous, regional identifications under the label of a coherent Tibetan national identity. One should be reminded though that such imposed processes of building an identity are never politically indifferent, neutral and morally correct. And so further on I am going to write about the darker elements of the Tibetan identity creating scheme.

³⁸ Falcone, Wangchuk, *ibid.*, 169-170.

³⁹ http://www.tibetjustice.org/?page_id=58.

Enslaved to Shangri-La? Tools for creating Tibetan identity

Most of the outstanding Tibetologists, such as Dawa Norbu and Tsering Shakya, believe that essentializing the “national identity” and politicizing the “Tibetan ethnicity” are the cores of the project whose aim is to allow the CTA and exile elites to build in India a united Tibetan nation⁴⁰. However, this project was started only when the Tibetans arrived in India and when they were confronted with the “significant Chinese and Indian Other.”⁴¹ Only having experienced the refugee life did they begin to “form” a nation. Before 1959 they were an amalgamation of regional and sectarian, often rival communities. As part of this project, the Tibetan elites have also worked out a peculiar affirmation plan – policy of identity, which on the one hand, is supposed to instill the feeling of unity and positive self-representations among the refugees, and on the other, “preserve the uniqueness of Tibetan culture.” As Tibetan language, traditional painting, lifestyle, art, religion, identity and even Tibetan population were deemed endangered, the CTA and exile elites came up with a discourse according to which the actual survival of Tibetans as a nation depends not only on practicing cultural endogamy and maintaining the birth rates⁴² but also on whether the refugees are able to “preserve” and successfully uphold the “Tibetan culture.” Its survival is a meticulously planned and structured undertaking,

⁴⁰ Norbu, “‘Otherness’ and the modern Tibetan Identity,” Shakya, “Whither the tsampa eaters?,” Anand, *ibid.*

⁴¹ Many contemporary researchers of Tibetan diaspora consider the idea of “the Tibetan nation” as a relatively new phenomenon, which appeared only after the Chinese occupation in Tibet. It is stated that the idea has been later elaborated in exile by the official discourse implemented by CTA. Before 1959 Tibetans have not been united by strong ethnic or national bonds, by rather by the sense of religious community and common culture (Anand, *ibid.*, 274-275, Bloch, *ibid.*, 245-258).

⁴² Childs, “Tempering Pronatalism,” 135-136; Lauer, “Between Desire and Duty,” 174-175.

implemented with the use of manifold sentiments, mythicized history, information and education tools – all to manipulate with symbols and intentionally invented traditions⁴³. The whole idea seems even more interesting when you take into account that only 3% of Tibetan population has been burdened with responsibility for its success⁴⁴. It is the refugees living in India who are now seen as a cultural reservoir (like a positive lens assembling all the “genuine” Tibetan values) whose traditions and identity ought to be “protected and preserved.” They are also the *population-frozen-in-suspense*, waiting for the right moment to return to Tibet⁴⁵. As part of this identity policy, emphasis has been put on generating positive group self-representations apparently aimed mostly at the *Yinjis*, i.e. representatives of the broadly understood “West.” The Dalai Lama speaking at the inauguration of the new Parliament building at Gangchen Kyishong in Dharamsala in March 2014 pointed out: *As Tibetans we must preserve our unique culture, identity and religion. If we manage to keep our genuine culture and identity, the international support for the Tibetan cause will be maintained*⁴⁶.

Thus, the identity policy in exile is for the CTA a tool in a much broader political project aimed at regaining the motherland. Failed attempts to win allies for the Tibetan cause in the UN in the 1950s led to Tibetan leaders realizing that in order to gain help and a right to self-determination, they would have to resort to the legal criteria of nationhood⁴⁷ and “objective identifiers” of the Western discourse of a nation. They also came to the realization that their voice would be heard better if they created a unified and coherent picture of their own

⁴³ Kolas, *ibid.*; Shakya, *ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁴ Tibetans living in India constitute only 3% of the whole Tibetan population (Norbu, “The Settlements: Participation and Integration.”).

⁴⁵ Norbu, “‘Otherness’ and the modern Tibetan Identity.”

⁴⁶ tibet.net/2014/03/11/sustenance-of-tibetan-culture-and-religion-crucial-says-his-holiness-the-dalai-lama.

⁴⁷ According to *Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States* signed 26 December 1933.

community and brought to life an entity which had never existed in the “historical Tibet” (and definitely not outside Lhasa). They understood that they had to prove they were a nation⁴⁸. That is why the Dalai Lama and the CTA along with the exile elites have been making endless efforts to bring all the particular and regional identifications under the name of one, united “Tibetan national identity.”⁴⁹

However, these identity unifying efforts and processes of homogenization, whose aim is to create a pan-Tibetan culture based on the Lhasa model, more and more often take the form of identity regimes. This, to a certain extent, stems out of the phantasmal expectations of the *Yinjis* towards the exile community. According to researchers such as Donald S. Lopez, Peter Bishop or Christian Klieger, in the eyes of the “West” Tibet has never been a sheer geographic category. Rather, it has always been perceived as an abstract construct, effect of Orientalist fantasies, repository of the most profound spiritual wisdom, a mythical land of Shangri-La populated by idyllic, peace-loving Buddhist society⁵⁰. Dibyesh Anand claims that representatives of the Tibetan diaspora quickly learnt to make use of and creatively reproduce these phantasmal ideas, which in daily contacts with potential Western sponsors and supporters of the Tibetan cause are enriched with modern day slogans of human rights, democracy, sustainable development and environmentalism⁵¹. One might get the impression that the CTA came to a conclusion that the financial and political support of the *Yinjis* can be maintained only if the Tibetans continue to meet the expectations of their Western sponsors. Help provided to the Tibetans has been entangled in a form of dependence, claimed by some to be a reformulated version of the

⁴⁸ Anand, *ibid.*; Klieger, *Tibetan Nationalism*; Kolas, *ibid.*, Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*.

⁴⁹ Bloch, *ibid.*, 344-358.

⁵⁰ Bishop, *The Myth of Shangri-la*, Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-la*; Klieger, “Shangri-la and Hyperreality”.

⁵¹ Anand, *ibid.*, 277-281; Kolas, *ibid.*, 59-60.

old patron-priest (Tib. *mchod yon*) relationship⁵², and by others, like Dorch Marie de Voe, to be a patriarchal (Hin. *ma-baap*) relation in which representatives of the West are the “father” figure, who has the right to control and check how the “child” spends his money but also to discontinue providing donations at any moment⁵³. All of this makes the idea of constructing a pan-Tibetan identity a problematic and highly politicized project in which aspects such as culture, language and race, usually created by societies, have become essentialized and naturalized⁵⁴. Moreover, the project maintains and promotes the stereotypical version of Tibetan culture which leads to the creation of a *Tibetan hyperreality*⁵⁵ in which a “genuine Tibetan” is speaking Lhasa dialect, is a spiritual and peaceful Buddhist, humble and kind vegetarian or “tsampa eater” who restrains from violence, has contempt for the material world and worries about the degradation of environment⁵⁶.

My interviews with young Tibetans living in India have shown that promoting this authorized version of “being Tibetan” acts as an instrument of oppression, a regime that decides which forms of identification can be accepted as authentic and genuinely Tibetan. As a result of this homogeneous image of the group and its identity promoted by the CTA as well as hyperliteral understanding of the concept of “preserving the culture” many potential, alternative and syncretic forms

⁵² Prost, *ibid.*, 243-249. This symbolic relationship between a religious figure and a lay patron was for the first time established between Kubilai Khan (1215-1294), the great founder of Yuan dynasty, and Drogön Chögyal Phagpa. In 1251 these two prominent figures divided power between themselves and established a new political order, which in scientific literature is known as “two bodies” (Tib. *lugs gnyis*). According to this concept, Tibetan Lamas provided religious instruction; performed rites, divination and astrology, and offered the khan flattering religious titles like “protector of religion” or “religious king”; the khan, in turn, protected and advanced the interests of the “lama”.

⁵³ De Voe, “Framing Refugees as Clients,” 90.

⁵⁴ Anand, *ibid.*, 278, Houston, Wright, *ibid.*, 224.

⁵⁵ Klieger, *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Bloch, *ibid.*, 331; Klieger, *Tibetan Nationalism*; Lopez, *ibid.*; MacDonald, *ibid.*

of identification and expression have been devalued and criticized. The fear of nontraditional ways of artistic and cultural expression which permeates Tibetan exile communities has been analyzed by Keith Diehl, Clare Harris, Heidi Swank and others, who have worked with Tibetan painters, poets and musicians⁵⁷. This does not concern only India but practically all places where members of the Tibetan diaspora live. Emily Yeh and Kunga Lama who conduct their research among Tibetan hip-hop fans in the US have observed that these people have often been accused by the American exile elites of contributing to the destruction of Tibetan culture with their appearance, behavior and musical tastes. Thus, young hip-hop fans have not only been left out of the official self-representation created by the Tibetan diaspora in America, they have also been treated by the exile elites as a problematic “cause of shame” which ought to be concealed and made invisible. They have often been publicly laughed at and labeled “niggers” who lost their authentic Tibetan-ness and should not have the right to call themselves “real Tibetans.”⁵⁸

Donald S. Lopez in one of his most famous books states that Tibetans have paradoxically become prisoners of their own affirmation policy – *prisoners of Shangri-La*⁵⁹. The project of “preserving traditional culture”, which was supposed to serve all Tibetans, in reality became a tool of exclusion, repressing innovations and creativity. The situation seems even more peculiar because the “identity tools” developed by the exile elite not only discriminate certain members of the refugee community (Tibetans who come from such regions as Amdo and Kham) and exclude alternative entities which may be established in TAR, US or Europe. These tools are becoming virtual controlling devices of attitudes and behaviors. In my opinion this leads to proliferation of tensions and

⁵⁷ Diehl, *Echoes from Dharamsala*; Harris, *In the image of Tibet*; Swank, “A Wanderer in a Distant Place.”

⁵⁸ Yeh, Lama, “Hip-hop gangsta or most deserving of victims?,” 810, 820.

⁵⁹ Lopez, *ibid.*

divisions inside the Tibetan diaspora.

Two Tibetan worlds

There is no doubt that the Tibetan refugee community in India – like many other similar communities – has to cope with various problems and conflicts of interests. The most surprising of these (during my first stay in India) were the complicated relations between the group of *settlers* and refugees newly arrived from Tibet – the *newcomers* (Tib. *gsar 'byor pa*). When I began my research among the exiles, I was convinced that they were one, big, integrated community, paying close attention to and worrying about the situation in Tibet and with great joy and enthusiasm awaiting new waves of those who decided to take up the dangerous journey across the Himalayas. I envisioned that as soon as the *newcomers* crossed the Indian border, there were affectionate and touching receptions – hours of talks, lively exchange of letters and information. I was more than sure that for the “Indian Tibetans” the *newcomers* were not only an invaluable source of information but also messengers and mediators linking them with their beloved Shangri-La – Tibet. But after several weeks of fieldwork, to my surprise, I discovered that the division into *settlers* and *newcomers* was not just a classification but an order bringing “device.” The *settlers* usually not only have no contact with the *newcomers* but often have no idea about their situation and even blame them for all kinds of political and economic failures of the refugee community.

Simplifying things much we can say that currently there are two Tibetan groups living in India: respected, educated and settled down *settlers*, i.e. “Tibetan citizens” and a group constituting an “embarrassing and disturbing element” – the poor and lost *newcomers*, who being neither “real” Tibetans nor “half” Chinese, exist on the borderlines of

these two worlds. This problem seems almost absent from Tibetan studies. Authors of most texts on the situation of Tibetans in India pass over this issue with silence and as a rule depict a homogeneous community of refugees. Nevertheless, several political scientists and anthropologists as well some independent observers of the Tibetan diaspora have noticed the problem⁶⁰. Among the latter, we should, first of all, mention Pauline MacDonald – authoress of one of the recently most popular books on the Tibetan community in Dharamsala: *Dharamsala Days, Dharamsala Nights. The Unexpected World of the Refugees from Tibet* (2013). She writes: *I'd be hard pressed to count on two hands Tibetans born in India, who haven't made some sort of bigoted comment about newcomers, if the subject came up: "Newcomers don't work", "Newcomers think like Chinese", "Newcomers live off Western sponsors", "Newcomers are always fighting", "Newcomers are drunk", "Newcomers are dishonest", "Newcomers are rude", "Newcomers can't speak Tibetan properly", "Newcomers want to marry foreigners so that they can have an easy life in the West". Sometimes the remarks are subtle, but they are endless, coming from settlers of all ages and from all walks of life, from the most uneducated to monks and university graduates*⁶¹.

Thus, Serin Houston and Richard Wright have noticed that *newcomers* are often depicted and treated by settlers as uneducated, primitive, lazy and aggressive persons who are: (...) *'very crude' and 'willing to pull out their knives and stab you! The conduct of the newly arrived bothers higher-class Tibetans as the actions of one person often typecast the entire group. Therefore, to preserve status and maintain positive business relations with non-Tibetans, relatively settled refugees strive to monitor (or at least separate themselves from) the newcomers*⁶². All the more

⁶⁰ Hess, *ibid.*; Houston, Wright, *ibid.*; MacDonald, *ibid.*; Prost, "Sa cha 'di ma 'phod na", Swank, *ibid.*; Yeh, "Will the Real Tibetan Please Stand Up?"

⁶¹ MacDonald, *ibid.*, 44.

⁶² Houston, Wright, *ibid.*, 226.

because with their behavior they shatter the image of a “model Tibetan.” Not only do they not embody Buddhist virtues but they often – as *settlers* informed me – become alcoholics, drug addicts, street fighters, are idle and ungrateful. They unwillingly take up jobs believing that the CTA should take care of them completely, they cannot speak proper Tibetan, they have no knowledge of an honorific register of the language⁶³ and they are unsuitable mates for the so-called born-refugees⁶⁴ as they are wastrels who use their refugee status to accept financial aid from their Western sponsors and just like “hungry ghosts” of the Buddhist Wheel of Life they lose themselves in the world of materialistic pleasures. *Newcomers* are even suspected of being spies for China and acting against the good image or even life of the Dalai Lama⁶⁵.

But there is another side to this story, too. The majority of *newcomers* – unlike the *settlers*, almost 70% of whom come from U-Tsang⁶⁶ – originate from the eastern provinces of Kham and Amdo which are the most destitute parts of the so-called ethnic Tibet and where for the last several decades the Sinicization has been extremely cruel. Refugees from those areas usually had no opportunity to attend schools with Tibetan as a language of instruction. Thus, they can fluently speak only one of the Amdo or Kham local dialects and often Chinese. And even though their education level is frequently much higher than that of the born-refugees, their academic diplomas turn out to be useless in India, and the fact that they do not speak the “official” diaspora dialect leads to them being

⁶³ Childs, “Tempering Pronatalism,” 147-148.

⁶⁴ See: Swank, *ibid.*, 56.

⁶⁵ *Newcomers* are also often associated with Dorje Shugden’s followers. Dorje Shugden is an entity associated with the Gelug school. Dorje Shugden is variously looked upon as a destroyed gyalpo, a minor mundane protector, or as an enlightened major protector whose outward appearance is enlightened. In 1996 the worship of Dorje Shigden deity was officially banned by the Fourteenth Dalailama. Those people, who still follow the practice are often accused of sectarian functions, and even some murders that took place in the closest environment of the Fourteenth Dalailama.

⁶⁶ Anand, *ibid.*, 30.

perceived by the “Indian Tibetans” as uneducated and Sinicized⁶⁷. Although they bring with them to India Tibetan new music recorded by young artists popular in TAR, lyrics of these songs are so full of neologisms and slang expressions that for most of the “born-refugees” they remain obscure. Heidi Swank – American anthropologist who conducted her research in Dharamsala – states that the poetry written by Tibetans from Amdo is not accepted or understood by the “born-refugees” because it has too many language novelties and is on a much higher literary level than poems composed by the “Indian Tibetans.” Hence, Amdo poets are ignored in exile and their poetry is considered Sinicized and not authentically Tibetan which by extension means – a threat to the idea of preserving the “traditional culture.”⁶⁸ It is a paradox but new musical styles, behavior patterns, fashion looks and language neologisms invented inside Tibet in fields like electronics to the *settlers* are not the creative innovations of their compatriots from TAR but rather consecutive phases of the “destruction” of Tibetan culture.

Thus, even though the majority of the “born-refugees” feels strong solidarity with the victims of the Chinese regime in Tibet and believes that the “real Tibetans” can be found first of all in the mountains of the *Bod* country, the actual physical contact with new refugees from those regions dramatically destroys this idyllic and nostalgic vision. *Newcomers* upon their arrival to India often bring bitter disappointment for the *settlers*. What they come with is a “troublesome” image of Tibet – one that does not fit the “visions” and “nostalgia” fueled by the CTA and exile elites. Thus, my research seems to confirm the intuition of Klieger, Lopez, Anand and Falzone and Wangchuk that Tibet and Tibetan identity are first and foremost rhetoric tools, made-up constructs, a certain hyperreality and perhaps even a self-reproducing simulacrum perceived

⁶⁷ Swank, *ibid.*, 55-56.

⁶⁸ Swank, *ibid.*, 63-64. See also: Diehl, *ibid.*, 138.

by each Tibetan somewhat differently. It is no wonder then that one of the effects of identity policies implemented by the TGIE are the current conflicts among different groups of Tibetans in India, TAR, US and Europe concerning the more genuine and more authentic vision of Tibet and Tibetan-ness. In my opinion, a group which suffered from this the most is that of the *newcomers*, many of who were sent to India as children by their parents. I call them “hungry ghosts.”

“Hungry ghosts”

During my first research in Dharamsala (2013), I noticed a group of young, fashionably dressed people sitting for hours in local cafés and lazily sipping *masala chai* (spiced Indian tea) or cappuccino. Most often they were smiling, friendly-looking young men (age 20-30) who joked and stared at their new iPhones while listening to music and posting comments on Facebook. If nothing interesting was happening in the town at this time, these men roamed its streets in groups, majestically went up and down between Gangkyi and McLeod Ganj on their Royal Enfields or, being “bored,” just did clubbing in local restaurants. They were everywhere. They were always at ease and with loads of free time at their disposal, thus great companions to talk to. The first contact with them was very interesting and uplifting. These new acquaintances told me passionately about their hobbies and future plans. They eagerly shared with me their thoughts on Buddhism, expressed gratitude to the Dalai Lama or planned details of their journey to Europe or the USA. Always joyous, dressed according to the latest trends, equipped with the newest electronic gadgets, they seemed the perfect exemplification of the refugee community’s success in India. To this day, however, I have the feeling that these young men became in a way their own biggest enemies. To many people from the outside it may seem that these smiling young

men, who have so much of free time and look resourceful and well-off do not need any help. The truth, however, turns out to be completely different.

Subsequent trips to India made me realize that the “colorful picture” that I “saw” during my early research was only an effect of positive self-representations by the Tibetans. Actually most of the *newcomers* I had talked to then lived in extreme poverty. Many did not even have a room. When one day I offered healing incense to one of my favorite interlocutors, Tashi, who at that time suffered from pneumonia, told me: *No, thank you. I would not even be able to burn it, you know... I... sleep in the forest*⁶⁹. These words astonished me. I could not understand how a person whom I always recognized from the distance by his costly Monster Beats headphones could sleep in the forest. Quickly it turned out Tashi was not an exception. Many young *newcomers* have been forced to live this kind of life. Having no place of their own, they stayed with their friends or relatives and when these possibilities were no longer there, they looked for a place to sleep in the misty cedar forests around McLeod Ganj. As they remind me of one type of beings living in one of the six realms of conditioned existence of the Buddhist Wheel of Life, I call them “hungry ghosts.”

In the *Tibetan Book of the Dead (Liberation through Hearing during the Intermediate State, Tib. Bar do thos grol)*, “hungry ghosts” (Sans. *preta*, Tib. *yi dwags*) are depicted as beings with needle-like thin gullets and huge bellies, and an insatiable appetite for material goods. As all of their activities are focused on obsessive attempts to consume those goods, their life is a torture of insatiability. The endless hunger of the *pretas* cannot be quenched because it originates from neurotic desires – a consequence of the inner emptiness which burns them from within. Thus, “hungry ghosts,” having lost themselves in the material world, look in it

⁶⁹ A fragment of fieldnotes noted in October 2013.

for that which – because of its nature – this world cannot provide them with. The *newcomers* possess many of the traits of these beings. Self-representations they devise and the “consumerist” life style are not merely materialistic compensations, but they become life on their own – life of people who possess nothing but themselves.

When during subsequent research trips I managed to go deeper into the “hungry ghosts” milieu, I was overwhelmed by the number of traumatic stories. I was surprised to learn that people whom I had earlier thought to be very joyful and optimistic in reality had very painful experiences. The majority of “hungry ghosts” were graduates of Tibetan Transit School (TTS) and Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV) who had been sent to India alone when they were a few years old. Many of them did not have contact with their relatives for years. Among them, there were some who did not even know the names of their parents or were not sure if parents were still alive. “Hungry ghosts” grew up lonely in overcrowded boarding schools among hundreds of similar “anonymous” kids⁷⁰. Young people who permanently stay in Tibetan educational institutions, deprived of contact with their parents and often even basic knowledge of their own history display traits of social orphans. The “hungry ghosts” on the one hand feel huge anger and frustration arising from their loneliness and on the other – a tormenting feeling of guilt which has usually been caused by self-accusations of disintegrating the family and conviction that they have failed their parents. Until they stay at TTS and TCV, symptoms of social orphanhood are repressed owing to the loving care of “mother superiors” and the non-stop company of other young people who become a refugee family for one other and give them the feeling of sharing the same trauma. When they graduate, however, the CTA takes away its protection. For these “hungry ghosts” unfortunately, this does

⁷⁰ Interestingly, these people, when asked about their date of birth, would say: 6th July (the Fourteenth Dalailama’s birthday). Generally they do not know the day or often even the year of their birth.

not mean enjoying full freedom and independence. People I talked to described that moment more as a height of anxiety and embitterment. The young Tibetans who in TCV and TTS were separated from a wider Indian reality and brought up in a more patriotic manner, begin to feel torn between gratitude towards the Dalai Lama and their teachers as well as love for their “absent” parents and envisioned Tibet, and bitterness and resentment felt for the CTA and most *settlers* to whom the existence of thousands of jobless “hungry ghosts” is unquestionably a problematic and embarrassing circumstance.

The feelings of rejection and alienation for most *newcomers* are paralyzing. Because of them hundreds of Tibetan school graduates are today in a state of suspension. Often they cannot and do not want to put down roots in India and their attempts – usually chaotic and desperate – to “find” themselves usually end up in disappointment and frustration. Lack of financial resources makes it impossible for them to study at Indian universities. And although young Tibetans try to find employment, their poor knowledge of Hindi, unfamiliarity with cultural realities, not the best reputation of TCV and TTS as well as fierce competition in the Indian job market result in almost 75% of young Tibetans defining themselves as unemployed⁷¹. Plenty of free time, everyday boredom, feelings of stagnation and pointlessness bring up in the majority of “hungry ghosts” I talked to symptoms of a dysfunctional personality. They admitted to having suffered from fear and depression. Low self-esteem, sleeping disorders, apathy, grief, sadness and indifference, incessant weariness, lack of energy and will to act intertwined with moments of excessive activity and enthusiastic planning of the future, constant remorse and dwelling on all failures, a number of somatic symptoms such as irritability and even aggression – all these were

⁷¹ Norbu, “The Settlements,” 201.

diagnosed in majority of “hungry ghosts.”⁷²

While conducting my research in Dharamsala I talked about the “hungry ghosts” to many representatives of the Tibetan Parliament, activists from NGOs, teachers, monks, doctors and even ministers. I went to the Tibetan Women’s Association, Lha Charitable Trust, Tibet Settlement Office, Tibetan Children’s Village, Tibetan Transit School, Tibet Hope Center and Tibetan Center for Conflict Resolution. I asked about social and psychological help available to the *newcomers* in exile. I wanted to know how the CTA and a number of charity institutions attempted to solve the problem of “hungry ghosts.” Almost always the answer began with: *The newcomers should be grateful. We provide them with rooms to live, help finding jobs, organize workshops... we also have scholarships for the best students! What else could we do?!⁷³* But when I asked about psychological help, I usually heard replies similar to the one given to me in the autumn of 2014 by a worker of the Tibetan Settlement Office: *Psychological help has nothing to do with this situation. They themselves should want to heal. A lot depends on karma (...) These young people have a weak life force. What is the use of me sending them to new workshops if I know that their life force is so weak, it will not do any good? Had these young people practiced Dharma, they would not have had these problems. The CTA cannot do anything about this⁷⁴.*

These statements seem surprising not only because the declared material and social help for the *newcomers* often turns out to be just a cliché prepared for Western “researcher” but mostly because the officers of the CTA have developed a discourse in which social change is being medicalized. It is believed that those responsible for the current state of the “hungry ghosts” and *newcomers* in general are not so much the TGiE and Tibetan institutions established for the very purpose of *rehabilitating*

⁷² Vahali, *ibid.*, 58-91.

⁷³ A fragment of fieldnotes noted in August 2014.

⁷⁴ A fragment of a conversation conducted in September 2013.

the refugees and helping them find their place in the situation of displacement but first and foremost passiveness and idleness of the *newcomers* themselves who by not practicing Dharma intensify the “disease of exile.” As Yeh and Lama have noted, identity tools created by the CTA do not consider a possibility of a Tibetan becoming the victim of materialism or turning into a drug addict, thief, rapist and somebody with mental afflictions. Such cases, as Yeh and Lama have written, are usually hushed up and swept under the carpet, and the Tibetans by and large pretend that their community is free of such ailments.⁷⁵

Giorgio Agamben opines that a man pushed away from what he can do can still put up a resistance by not doing anything, but the one who is isolated from his own powerlessness will first of all lose ability to resist⁷⁶. In my opinion, from the “hungry ghosts” their ability to be powerless or possibility to not act has been taken away. Their right to helplessness has been denied to them. The paradox is that this does mean that the TGiE would accept any form of activity taken up by the newly arrived refugees. Although representatives of the CTA expect the *newcomers* to show initiative, motivation and the will to take full responsibility for their lives, at the same time they expect it to be something suitable for the “real”, respected and settled down “Tibetan citizens.” And it seems not all Tibetans currently living in India meet these expectations. We might say that the TGiE fighting tirelessly for international recognition of political aspirations of the Tibetans does not see that at the same time it orientalizes and colonizes internally members of its own community by its attempts to take control over their domains of sovereignty and initiative. Not all Tibetans can agree to that.

⁷⁵ Yeh, Lama, “Hip-hop gangsta or most deserving of victims?,” 826-827.

⁷⁶ Agamben, *Nudities*, 45.

Messengers of hybrid identifications

I believe successive waves of refugees arriving in India from Tibet more and more vividly expose a utopia of the “pan-Tibetan identity policy.” *Newcomers*, often treated by the *settlers* as a *disturbing element* rarely fit the ideal of a “Tibetan citizen” created by the CTA and exile elites. Many do not feel good in India – they feel not needed and excluded. Their lives are full of struggle for day-to-day existence; they have no jobs and no perspectives. It seems surprising but the *newcomers* more often than before make the risky decision to return to their homes in Tibet. This exodus has already been noticed by some experts on the Tibetan diaspora who have attempted to explain it in the context of economic reasons. Pauline MacDonald, Janes Craig and Vincanne Adams have pointed out that owing to the dynamic development of the TAR, already several years ago economic roles in the India-Tibet relations were reversed. Now it is not the exiles who help those left behind in Tibet but rather those from Tibet send financial support to India⁷⁷. When in the fall of 2014, I went to the monumental building of the Refugee Reception Center – built with the support of the USA – I was surprised to learn that I would not be able to talk to anyone because there had been no new *newcomers* arriving in Dharamsala for months (during my visit all buildings were empty and the courtyard was quiet). Even data revealed by the Wikileaks suggest the Indian Tibetan community gets smaller every year⁷⁸. And it seems that this has been due to not only economic reasons⁷⁹.

⁷⁷ Adams, “Karaoke as Modern Lhasa, Tibet: Western Encounters with Cultural Politics,” “Suffering the Winds of Lhasa”; Craig, “The Transformations of Tibetan Medicine,” MacDonald, *ibid*.

⁷⁸ U.S. Embassy Cable, *10NewDelhi290, Tibet growing frustration alfter latest round, “Wikileaks,”* 11th February 2010.

⁷⁹ Although many Tibetans I spoke to claimed that the each year diminishing number of *newcomers* who decide to flee Tibet also results from the fact that since 2008 the Chinese have substantially consolidated border control and the process of applying

Communities in liminal or – as Victor Turner⁸⁰ put it – liminoid⁸¹ state are communities who fight for their identity, they have to protect, reproduce and prove it all the time. And this fight goes on in places which themselves are in a way borderline and marginal. As Karl Jaspers wrote – big changes are not attributed to the centers but to places seen as undefined margins, liminal areas. Homi Bhabha seems to be of a similar opinion when he claims that transformation of the way a national identity of a given group is constructed is inspired and coerced not so much by the country's elites but by minorities who invade the mental peripheries of what is universally accepted by the “center.” And although the moment of liminality – which includes also exile – is an antistructure or a time of pulling down all organized patterns and systems, it does by itself also create structures. And as my research shows, the effects of these changes might be surprising⁸²

The context of displacement was to serve creating new entities and forms of pan-Tibetan identity. It turns out, however, that the mechanisms introduced by the CTA and Tibetan elites in exile are defective and the TGIE policy has paradoxically led to the creation of an “exclusion tool.” Many *newcomers* not only do not feel any bond with the wider Tibetan community in India but they do not identify at all with the CTA policies. And although today the identity policies of the TGIE create more tensions and divisions in the exile community, I believe that paradoxically their result in a longer perspective can be an “accelerated” process of Tibetans maturing as a nation. This peculiar context of displacement and the discontent with the CTA policies have in fact

for the Registration Certificate in the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu has become much more difficult.

⁸⁰ Turner, *The Ritual Process*.

⁸¹ See also: Por. Szokolczai, “Living permanent liminality: the recent transition experience in Ireland,” 33-34.e also: Por. Szokolczai, “Living permanent liminality: the recent transition experience in Ireland,” 33-34.

⁸² Wagner, Zahn, *Nacja, dyseminacja i trzecia przestrzeń*, 20.

opened up for many Tibetans a space for a contact with “other” geographies and released potentiality and creativity so characteristic to liminalities. They also made it possible to create new, non-traditional *ethnoscapes* of Tibetannes as well as completely new forms of identity. In my opinion hundreds or perhaps even thousands of *newcomers* who currently make the conscious decision to go back to Tibet or go abroad (to USA, Canada, Europe or Australia) may soon become messengers of alternative forms of identification. These would not be, however, trapped in the mythical histories of Shangri-La (the identity based on a stereotypical image of the Tibetan community as a “spiritual”, “traditional” and “unified” collectivity) and not even compliant with the Sinicization programs (which would most readily bring the Tibetan identity down to a folkloristic curiosity). They would not simply go beyond these two identity regimes, either – but most probably be a totally new quality, a smooth “third space” created by cosmopolitan individuals who understand their agency and are able to make mature political and identity choices⁸³. In my opinion, every year more and more Tibetan refugees take on hybrid forms of identification which not only stray from the “old” identity regimes but also more eagerly open up to new geographies and phases of creating a community, collectivity or perhaps even a nation.

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⁸³ Bhabha, *The location of culture*.

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