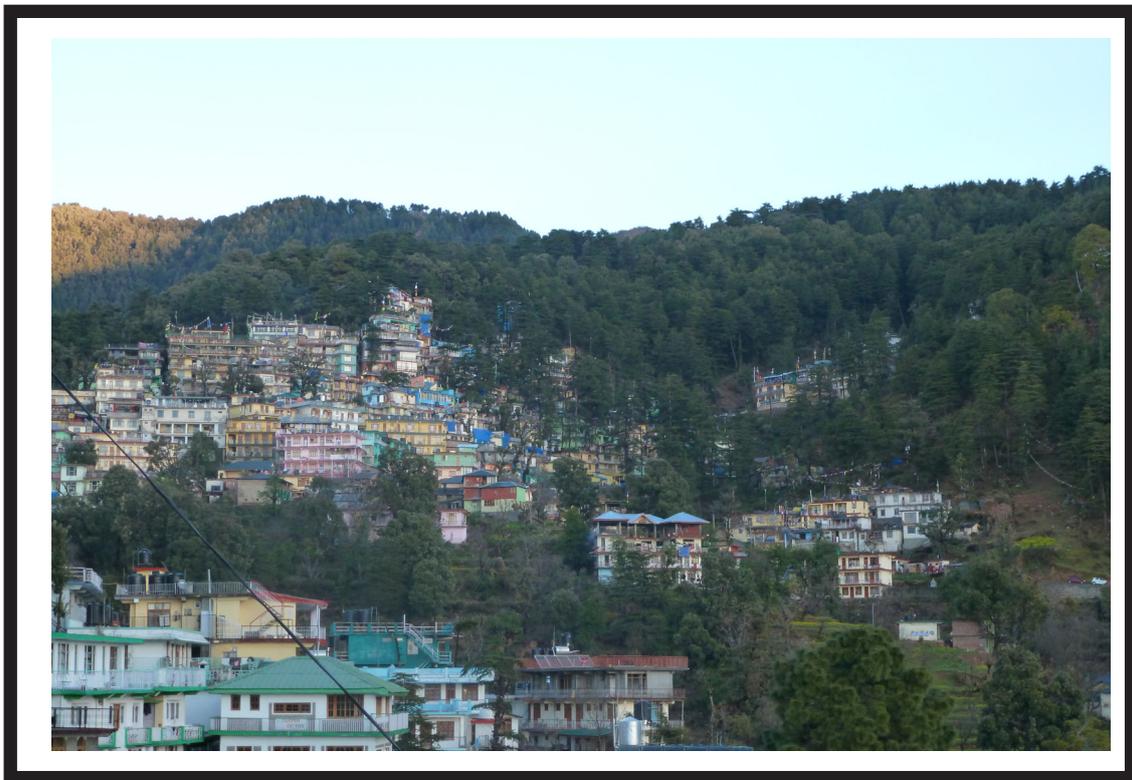


LENA BRÜLLS

TIBETAN YOUTH AND INDIAN EXILE

CULTURAL IDENTITIES AND CHALLENGES IN DHARAMSALA

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Lena Brülls

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ABSTRACT

In Dharamsala, Indien, wächst die dritte Generation von Tibetern im indischen Exil auf. Während im Heimatland Tibet kulturelle und religiöse Praktiken der systematischen Zerstörung ausgesetzt sind, versuchen viele Tibeter*innen in Indien ihr Bestes, diese zu bewahren. Während die tibetische kulturelle Identität Gegenstand zahlreicher Studien war, gibt es nur wenige akademische Veröffentlichungen, die sich speziell mit der Jugend in der Diaspora beschäftigen. Dies ist bedeutsam, da ein großer Teil der tibetischen Bevölkerung im Exil jung ist.

Basierend auf einer ethnographischen Feldforschung in Dharamsala in Nordindien, untersucht diese Arbeit die Erfahrungen und Lebensrealitäten junger Tibeter*innen. Durch die Analyse ihrer individuellen Konzepte von kultureller Identität konzentriert sich die Arbeit auf das Zusammenspiel von Wahrnehmungen des Heimatlandes Tibet, Indien als Gastland und der breiteren Diaspora. Dieses Zusammenspiel ist begründet in den politischen und sozialen Bedingungen des Exils und den daraus resultierenden Herausforderungen sowie den politischen und sozialen Sehnsüchten nach dem Heimatland. Die junge tibetische Generation in Dharamsala kämpft für den Fortbestand der tibetischen Traditionen, Religionen, Sprachen und Kultur in der Diaspora. Obwohl sie eine kollektive Erinnerung an die Geschichte und eine Sehnsucht nach dem Heimatland teilen, verfolgen sie individuelle und sehr heterogene Zukunftspläne. Diese Arbeit analysiert Variationen des „Tibetischseins“ in Dharamsala, indem sie verschiedene kulturelle Aspekte und Erfahrungen von Tibeter*innen in ihren beiden Herkunftsländern, Tibet oder Indien, auswertet.

In Dharamsala, India, the third generation of Tibetans is growing up in Indian exile. While in the homeland Tibet, cultural and religious practices face systematic destruction, many Tibetans in India try their best to preserve these. While Tibetan cultural identity has been the subject of numerous studies, few academic publications focused specifically on youth in the diaspora. This is significant because a large part of the Tibetan population in exile is young. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Dharamsala in northern India, this thesis examines the experiences and lived realities of young Tibetans. By analyzing their individual concepts of cultural identity, the work focuses on the interplay of perceptions of the homeland Tibet, India as hostland, and the broader diaspora. This interplay is grounded in political and social conditions of the exile and the resulting challenges, as well as the political and social desires for the homeland.

The young Tibetan generation in Dharamsala struggles for the continuation of Tibetan traditions, religions, languages, and culture in the diaspora. Although they share a collective memory of the history and a longing for the homeland, they pursue individual and highly heterogeneous plans for the future. This thesis analyzes variations of “being Tibetan” in Dharamsala by evaluating different cultural aspects and experiences by Tibetans in their two countries of origins, Tibet or India.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ask me where I'm from and I won't have an answer. I feel I never really belonged anywhere, never really had a home. I was born in Manali, but my parents live in Karnataka. [...] I like to speak in Tibetan, but prefer to write in English, I like to sing in Hindi but my tune and accent are all wrong. Every once in a while, someone walks up and demands to know where I come from... My defiant answer "Tibetan" raises more than just their eyebrows... I'm bombarded with questions and statements and doubts and sympathy. But none of them can ever empathise with the plain simple fact that I have nowhere to call home and in the world at large all I'll ever be is a 'political refugee' (Tsendue 2010:26).

This text passage was taken from the essay *My Kind of Exile* by Tenzin Tsendue, a famous Tibetan activist and writer. Today, the third generation of Tibetans is growing up in Indian exile. While in the homeland Tibet, cultural and religious practices face systematic destruction, many Tibetans in the hostland India try their best to preserve these. Tsendue's quote is rife with the tension between the homeland and the hostland and presents the challenges (young) Tibetans must face in Indian exile. In addition to those born in exile, many young Tibetans born in Tibet and who have escaped over the Himalayas more recently share many of the same difficulties.

This thesis is based on qualitative research that was conducted over seven weeks in September and October 2019 in Dharamsala. The collected fieldwork data consists of 17 qualitative guideline interviews and participant observation. The aim of the research was to learn about the young generation of Tibetans living in Dharamsala, their cultural identifications, and their perspectives on Indian exile and Tibet. The analysis of my data enabled me to answer the following research questions: how do young Tibetans in Indian exile identify with the Tibetan culture and their perceived homeland? In which facets does the interplay of perceptions of the homeland Tibet, India as hostland, and the broader diaspora influence the constructions of identity? And finally, to what extent do these perceptions in turn affect individual plans for the future and imaginations of the future of the homeland?

1.1. Historical Context

Before 1959, Tibet as a nation was geographically divided into three different provinces: U-Tsang (Central Tibet), Kham (Eastern Tibet), and Amdo (North Eastern Tibet). The Tibetan population lived in a heterogenic manner with different traditional customs, influenced by the different regions and the four different schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

The Dalai Lama constituted the political head of the Tibetan Government, as well as the spiritual head of the four Tibetan schools (Thinley and Phuntsok 2014:8). Soon after the People's Republic of China was proclaimed in 1949, Mao Tsetung declared that the People's Liberation Army would aim to "liberate" Tibet. Only one year later, over 40,000 soldiers marched into the country. The 7,000 less well-trained Tibetan troops on the opposite side found themselves outnumbered and surrendered soon (Norbu 2001:180). In 1951, the Seventeen Point Agreement was signed under pressure by Tibetan delegates. Even though these delegates were never authorized by the Tibetan Government, this document was seen as the confirmation for the Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. By this time, the 14th Dalai Lama had already escaped from Lhasa to Yatung, close to the Indian border (Laird 2006:401–409). The agreement prohibited the Chinese regime from interfering with Tibetan matters. Nevertheless, the situation of the Tibetan citizens changed dramatically. Due to the demand for Tibetan grain, the economic situation deteriorated, resulting in great famines. The Dalai Lama found himself forced to communicate with the Chinese Government but always refused any kind of armed resistance.

Nevertheless, resentment among the Tibetan population grew steadily, and the situation escalated in spring 1959. When the Dalai Lama was invited to a dance performance in the Chinese military headquarters, the Tibetan community feared for his safety. About 30,000 Tibetans assembled in front of the Dalai Lama's palace to prevent him from leaving the building. They rejected the Seventeen Point Agreement and declared Tibet's independence. On 17 March, 1959, the Chinese army started to attack the area around the Dalai Lama's residence, and he decided to escape to India. The same day, the Chinese Liberation Army violently suppressed the Tibetan revolt. It is estimated that over 86,000 Tibetans were killed in this conflict (Laird 2006:418–445). In the following decades, tens of thousands of Tibetans followed the Dalai Lama into exile.

Since the Dalai Lama escaped to India, Tibetan culture and religion have been incrementally suppressed in Tibet by the Chinese government. It is estimated that between 1950 and 1980, between 500,000 to 1.2 million Tibetans were killed through actions by the Chinese authorities (2006:464). The violation and suppression in Tibet affect human rights and all aspects of cultural and religious life. Tibetans are forbidden from practising their religion. During the Cultural Revolution, nearly all the Tibetan monasteries were destroyed. There is no freedom of speech or opinion, and possession of pictures and photographs of the Dalai Lama is prohibited.

In reality, forty years after the 'peaceful liberation' of Tibet, the goal of China's orthodox strategists has not changed. They remain intent on eliminating Tibet's tradition and customs (Donnet 1994:152).

In the 2010s, there were about 130,000 Tibetans living in the diaspora, most of whom live in India (Thinley and Phuntsok 2014:11).

1.2. Tibetan Diaspora Studies

The Tibetan diaspora and the construction of cultural identity have been subject to numerous studies and further research. In 1998, Donald S. Lopez published his popular and often criticized book *Prisoners of Shangri-La – Tibetan Buddhism and the West*. In this work, the author suggests that Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, as seen and lived in exile, were created in exile for the sake of a romanticized and idealized fantasy of Western people. He argues that there is a common tendency to think in terms of black and white when it comes to the original Tibet before the Chinese occupation. Therefore, he contrasts an originally peaceful and spiritual Tibet with powerful China. In his opinion, what is ignored is the fact that "traditional Tibet, like any complex society, had great inequalities, with power monopolized by an elite composed of a small aristocracy, the hierarchies of various sects

[...] and the great Geluk monasteries” (Lopez 1998:9). Lopez goes even further by suggesting that the 14th Dalai Lama deliberately promoted the image of the idyllic Tibetan society to the West.

Lopez’ book was intensively criticized by Robert Thurman, a leading US scholar in the field of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist studies. Thurman accuses Lopez of victim-blaming; “he argues basically that the Tibetans are victims of their own supporters, not their Chinese enemies” (Thurman 2001:200). Thurman supposes that while Lopez missed the political revision of the ‘old’ Tibet in the public discourse, he himself failed to speak about the political occupation of Tibet in his book. Therefore, he would find himself, again, thinking in black-and-white terms. Thurman further reminds readers that

it is clear that the Tibetan Government in Exile’s job is to win the world’s recognition of Tibet as an existing nation, its people as an existing people, its invasion as a flagrant breaking of international law, its continued occupation as a catastrophic injustice, and the genocide of its people as an appalling human tragedy. These are the ways in which Tibetans may hope to spur the world to recognize the fact of their existence, the truth of their nationhood, and the justness of their cause for freedom from China. The Chinese, with the collusion of the world’s governmental and corporate communities, do not only claim that old Tibet was bad. They also claim that it never existed as an independent nation (Thurman 2001:195–196).

Thurman emphasizes that the Chinese occupation, conducted through human rights violations tantamount to genocide, should not be underestimated. He, therefore, justifies every right of the Tibetans in exile to promote their cause and to raise awareness on a global scale.

Dibyesh Anand picks up this subject in his article *The Role of Symbolic Geography of Dharamsala in Constituting Tibetan Diasporic Identity* (2002). He emphasizes the problem of an excessive focus on the preservation of Tibetan culture. In this way, culture is instead seen as a static given rather than a process. In addition, Anand mentions that it is not only the Tibetan Government in Exile and Tibetans in exile who form the image of Tibetans in exile. As demonstrated by Dharamsala, the city often called “Little Lhasa”, tourism is a big economic factor for Tibetan citizens. Of course, it is also of economic interest to the Indian Government.

We must keep in mind that it is not only the Government in Exile that does so, but the Himachal Tourism Department too promotes it as so. While for the Tibetans it may reflect a desire to assert continuity from the pre-1959 Lhasa government, for the Himachal government it is yet another tourist destination (Anand 2002:24).

Tsering Shakya, Tibetan historian and Tibetologist, writes that the unified identity of Tibetans in exile is based “more on anti-Chinese ideology than on faith” (Shakya 1993). He first describes Tibet before the Chinese occupation. In this pre-invasion Tibet, people were united in various Tibetan languages, myths of origin, and shared cultural aspects. However, there were still the diverse regions of the country to which the certain citizens attached locality. Shakya suggests that the Chinese occupation in 1959 was commonly more feared for the suppression of religion and culture than the actual occupation of national borders. Today’s Tibetan community in exile is, therefore, a more homogenized community than the actual Tibetan population before 1959 ever was. Shakya continues by naming new rituals and traditions invented in exile, which shaped the common cultural consciousness and brought up a new sense of nationality.

Dawa Norbu, Tibetan political scientist and former professor of Central Asian studies, expresses ideas similar to Shakya’s. In his article *Otherness’ and the Modern Tibetan Identity* (1992), he highlights that Tibetan people have multiple identities. Before 1950, their identification mainly referred to the particular regions and sects. But since Tibetan ethnicity has been politicized, the consciousness for a “pan-Tibetan identity” is growing. According to Norbu,

ethnic identity must be understood functionally, and its primary function is to achieve the greatest degree of differentiation from the generalised “other”. In this sense, ethnic identity is an aggregation of ethnic variables such as tradition, culture, language and race (Norbu 1992).

He describes the Chinese occupation in 1959 as catalyzing a pan-Tibetan identity in Tibet.

1.3. Tibetan Youth in the Diaspora

When investigating research on youth and outlining previous research on youth, it is necessary to keep track of the concept’s temporality. The youth who were part of research in the past constitute today’s adolescents. As only 60 years have passed since the exodus from Tibet, the Tibetan diaspora is relatively young. Therefore, the same can be said about research on Tibetan youth in exile. Nevertheless, while Tibetan cultural identity has been the subject of numerous studies, relatively few academic discourses focused specifically on youth in the diaspora. This is significant because, in fact, a large portion of the Tibetan population in exile are relatively young. In 2002, the great majority of the Tibetan population in India was between the age of 10 and 24 years old (Bhatia 2002:413). Most of the Tibetans who left Tibet were quite young at the time of their flight. In 2004, Jetsun Pema, the younger sister of the present Dalai Lama and former president of the Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV), writes that since the early 80s, more than 7,000 Tibetan children were sent to Indian exile to achieve a better education, especially without indoctrination from the Chinese authorities. The education system for Tibetan children in Tibet is often insufficient. The children are forced to attend inferior schools or are even prevented from receiving education at all. Furthermore, the curriculum refers only to Chinese history, culture, and politics. According to Pema, Tibetan children in Tibet are forced to choose between the right of education and their Tibetan identity (Pema 2004:289–290). Therefore, Tibetan children, by the time they arrive in exile, are often less educated than the children born in India of the same age.

Some earlier studies on Tibetan youth’s identity constructions were conducted in Switzerland, as the country was one of the first to host Tibetan refugees, after India (see Gyaltzen and Gyaltag 1980; Brauen and Kantowsky 1982). Gyaltzen Gyaltag, who was born in Tibet and later moved to Switzerland, wrote several texts about young, exiled Tibetans of the first and second generation in Switzerland. In his essay *Exiled Tibetans in Europe and North America* (2004), he concludes that the cultural differences between the Tibetan children and youth and their parents would cause several sociocultural and psychosocial difficulties within the construction of identity and the relationship toward the family. As one example, he states that the young Tibetans in Switzerland would have little knowledge of their mother tongue and would only communicate in local languages (Gyaltang 2004:248–249).

In line with the increasing interest of social science researchers in Western academia in theories of culture, identity, and migration on the “second generation” diaspora, research on Tibetan youth in the context of diasporic communities has been undertaken in different countries. The following two studies presented were carried out by Master’s students. Georgia Sandberg Moustogianni (2007) conducted research on diasporic identities of second-generation Tibetans in two different Indian settlements and concluded that the Tibetan youth express Tibetan culture and identity in a mixture of tradition and modern change (Moustogianni 2007:24–25). Also, Sonam Nyanang (2016), who did her research in Toronto, Canada, referred to Tibetan youth born outside of Tibet. In her paper, she revealed

that the second generation are constantly negotiating their fluid and hybrid identities, as they are receiving different opposing ideas and information flows that allows them to connect with both their homeland in Tibet and Canada (Nyanang 2016:iii).

Regarding the current political situation in Tibet, China's one-child policy and the continuing number of Tibetan refugees leaving Tibet, it can be estimated that the future population of Tibetans in exile will also be born there, and not in Tibet. For this reason and regarding the anthropological interest in second generations worldwide, the motivation of conducting research only of the youth born in exile seems comprehensible. But what is often not considered is that due to the current situation in Tibet, many Tibetans are still leaving Tibet. Therefore, alongside the second generation in India, Tibetan-born children and youth reach India and find their space within the diaspora every year. Therefore, when writing about the Tibetan second generation in exile, the focus on this group, and the exclusion of Tibetans born in Tibet, should be made clear. To speak of Tibetan youth in exile in general should mean to include both groups. Tibetans born in Tibet have different experiences and notions of the homeland. These should not be excluded when talking about Tibetan youth in exile in general. A. K. Ström explains that "the difference is related to the issues of experience, memory and *habitus* on the one hand versus reflexivity and cultural construction on the other" (1995:35). Therefore, the (young) Tibetans, who came from Tibet, may seek to continue a similar way of life as they have lived in the homeland. The youth who were born in India, on the other hand, would have a less "experiential, more complex and often ambivalent relationship to tradition" (Ström 1995:36). They have often achieved a more secular education and the "recreation of Tibet" seems more of a structural motivation. Ström concludes that "tradition is for this group more of a conceptual than an embodied notion" (1995:36).

For my own research on which this thesis is based, I focused on both, Tibetan youth born in India and the Tibetans who were born in Tibet. I tried to gain a broader set of Tibetan youth and their individual and diverse views.

1.4. Structure of the Thesis

After this introduction, general theoretical approaches regarding the main topics are presented in the second chapter. This section will mainly focus on research by Safran (2004), Clifford (1994), Hall (1990), Bashkow (2004), Bucholtz (2002), and Bartram, Poros, and Mondforte (2014). The third chapter addresses the sociocultural context of the thesis. This especially refers to the political, current situations of (young) Tibetans in the homeland as well as the hostland India. Because of the importance of the institution of the Dalai Lama for both the home and the hostland, his position will be discussed in its own subchapter. The field study's course in Dharamsala and the methods used will be presented in Chapter 4. The transcribed interview material was analyzed by using methods from Mayring's qualitative content analysis (2015). Chapters 5, 6, and 7 describe the collected data, following the interview guideline questions. Each of these chapters end with a short summary. In Chapter 8, these conclusions will be brought together and set in the context of the theoretical approaches that are outlined in Chapter 2. In Chapter 9, a conclusion of the thesis will be provided.

2. DIASPORA STUDIES

In this chapter, general theoretical approaches that lay the groundwork for the data collection and analysis will be presented. First, I outline some of the common definitions of diaspora; these also delineate it from other forms of migration and transnational mobility. Furthermore, it is necessary to explain the terms “exile” and “diaspora”, as well as their relationship to one another, as both are used throughout this thesis. Subsequently, Williams Safran’s concept of diasporic communities, in which he describes the general characteristics of these communities, will be presented, followed by a short mention of James Clifford’s additions to the concept. Regarding “cultural identities”, this framework draws from Stuart Hall’s research, wherein he pursues two different approaches. The following approaches, as well as the description of the research informants’ interviews, often imply a notion of the “self” and the “other”. Therefore, a definition of the (cultural) boundaries drawn by communities will be presented. Finally, a brief overview of previous studies on research on youth, also in the context of diaspora will be given.

2.1. Identities and Boundaries

The term “diaspora” was originally only used in the context of the Jewish communities settling outside of Palestine or contemporary Israel. According to Sheffer (2006), the term first appeared in the Old Testament, again referring to the Jewish community. Regarding the Greek origin, the term is split into the segments *speiro*= to sow and *dia* = over (Sheffer 2006:9). Diaspora, therefore, is part of the concept of migration but requires a clear definition and distinction from other forms of migration. Avtar Brah suggests looking at the economic, political, and cultural angles of the term (Brah 1997:183). These elements of “diaspora” are expressed differently depending on the context and often vary depending on the specific historical background.

Therefore, it becomes apparent that even if there are some universal criteria for the concept of diaspora, each diasporic community still embodies unique characteristics and multiple meanings.

All diasporas are differentiated, heterogenic, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common ‘we’ (Brah 1997:184).

In *Key Concepts in Migration* (2014), the sociologists David Bartram, Maritsa Poros, and Pierre Monforte further distinguish the diaspora from transnationalism and transnational communities, as these concepts were often combined and compared. They mention three defining characteristics of a diaspora. The term “diaspora” must refer to a bounded

community, while transnational groups usually do not attach too much importance to maintaining boundaries. Furthermore, diasporic groups define themselves as communities based on their ethnicity or religion. Finally, they refer to a shared traumatic experience of dispersion and forced migration. In contrast, a transnational community is subject to a broader concept with more fluid and open boundaries (Bartram et al. 2014:50–51).

In the sense of forced migration, the term “diaspora” is often used interchangeably with the term “exile”. It seems impractical to draw a clear line between both concepts, as they often easily merge into one another. Nevertheless, several authors have written about similarities and differences between the terms (see Mohabbat-Kar 2015; Kuhlmann 2004). For the purposes of this research, exile and diaspora are understood as synonyms; the research informants and most of the authors in the literature review use the term “exile” as a synonym for “diaspora”. In the interviews the research is based on, the term “diaspora” was almost never used. In the following course of this thesis, both terms will be used interchangeably.

The delineation of the term “diaspora” provides a foundation for further definitions of the concept. The political scientist William Safran intensively engages with identity, diaspora, and multiculturalism. In his article *Deconstructing and Comparing Diasporas* (2004), he introduces often recited definitions and approaches of the concept of diaspora. In his words, diasporic communities define themselves by following the characteristics:

They have retained a memory of, a cultural connection with, and a general orientation toward their homeland; they have institutions reflecting something of a homeland culture and/or religion; they relate in some (symbolic or practical) way to their homeland; they harbour doubts about their full acceptance by their hostland; they are committed to their survival as a distinct community and many of them have retained a myth of return (Safran 2004:10).

Discussing this concept of diaspora requires a more detailed description of these mentioned aspects. First, the definition implies that diasporic communities, even if cultural aspects of the hostland’s culture may be adopted or integrated, do not seek to fully assimilate into it. For Safran, the most important element that distinguishes diasporic groups from other immigrant communities is the orientation towards the homeland. Safran, therefore, speaks of a tension field the diaspora implies: Living in one place while emotionally longing for another place.

In short, the members of a diaspora may or may not have adjusted to life in the hostland, but they have a spiritual, emotional, and/or cultural home that is outside the hostland (Safran 2004:13).

The use of the homeland’s language and alphabet while living in the hostland is another aspect of the expression of the orientation towards the homeland (Safran 2004:16). The next aspect Safran points out is that a diasporic community would mostly present a minority and has to deal with the local population’s acceptance. Therefore, he describes which factors enable groups in the diaspora to cope with their existence in the hostland. The first is the indispensable need for certain institutions that physically or symbolically relate in some way to the homeland. Obviously, these institutions can only be formed and continue to exist if the people living closely together in the hostland enable them. These institutions reproduce cultural attributes from the homeland, such as by making music and food, while remaining dependent on the political and social conditions in the respective hostland (Safran 2004:17).

Different types of hostland governance also facilitate or hinder the recreation of identity in a diaspora. Safran argues that “in principle, diasporic identity is easier to maintain in democratic countries than in authoritarian ones” (Safran 2004:18). It can be added that today, the internet can be considered a democratic institution for the purposes of identity creation. Diasporic identity also depends on certain policies in the hostland and on those of the homeland as well. Safran gives examples for hostland’s governments that use diasporic communities for their own politics, like “the Cuban exile community in the United States,

mobilized for a continuing struggle with Fidel Castro” (Safran 2004:20). Furthermore, the hostland’s ‘attitude’ towards the incoming diasporic communities affects the (re-) creation of diasporic identity. It determines how open the exiled groups are able to live and maintain their cultural identity and influences how the hostland’s other communities interact with minority groups. Furthermore, the immigration and citizenship policies of the host country are of critical importance for diasporic identities. Safran emphasizes that the relations to the homeland are also dependent on the hostland’s policies. In the case of the Tibetan exile communities, the Chinese Government suppresses any contacts to the homeland, thus exerting a significant influence over the community’s identity formation (Safran 2004:20).

The “myth of return” is a significant characteristic for diasporic communities and is described in detail in Safran’s article *Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return* (1991). He indicates that some diaspora communities would (or could) not return to their homeland because it does not exist (anymore) in the way the group wishes it did. The reason might be that there is “no welcoming place with which they can identify politically, ideologically, or socially” (Safran 1991:91). The myth of return thus functions to strengthen the solidarity among the individuals in a secular way, disregarding religious beliefs. It also implies an idealization of the homeland and the wish to (re)build it (Safran 1991:83–84).

Safran’s approach toward a concept of diaspora was later extended by James Clifford. Although he appreciates Safran’s urge to produce a definition of the concept of diaspora and the resulting comparative approach, Clifford advises against a strict classification of diasporic communities resulting in the attribution of being “more or less diasporic” (Clifford 1994:306). His own approach implies the focus on the borders of a certain diaspora, not its characteristics. Furthermore, Clifford agrees with Safran that diasporic communities share a history of displacement and transnational links, but he rejects the theory that there is an omnipresent orientation towards a localized, territorial homeland. To be more precise, Clifford argues that the focus on an actual nation ignores that a diasporic community does not have to be orientated towards a location as home (Clifford 1994:306–307).

Based on the concept that diaspora communities should be understood as heterogenic and differentiated groups, Clifford adds a broader view to Safran’s six characteristics of diasporic communities. Nevertheless, Clifford attaches less importance on the aspect of the forced dispersal and the possible resulting emotional connection towards the homeland. What should not be underestimated are the “ever-present forces of persecution and violent expulsion” (Kokot et al. 2004:2). The research this thesis is based on refers to the Tibetan diaspora. The homeland and Safran’s criteria towards an approach to the concept of the diaspora are appropriate for the context of the Tibetan exiled communities. Furthermore, the notion of the homeland refers to an actual territorial nation.

The double orientation towards homeland and hostland can also be found within Stuart Hall’s description of cultural identity construction in the diaspora. Hall is one of the founders and main representatives of the British Cultural Studies and spent most of his life living in a diaspora himself. In his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* (1990), he first emphasizes that identity is a produced construct, although there will never be a “final” product. Identity must be seen as a process. Before starting the discourse on cultural identity, one must be aware that “this view problematizes the very authority and authenticity to which the term ‘cultural identity’ lays claim” (Hall 1990:222). Hall introduces two approaches regarding the concept of cultural identities. The first refers to the assumption of cultural identity as a “oneness”, which implies a universal self-understanding the people of a certain group have in common.

Within the term of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as ‘one people’, with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual histories (Hall 1990:223).

This notion further implies that the shared cultural commonalities constitute a stable aspect during the changing and progressing history and substantiality.

Hall's second view of cultural identity focuses not on the shared commonalities but the differences which form identities. Relating to the first approach, they are based on shared histories but are also subject to individual processes, developments, and change:

Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time history and culture. Culture identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power (Hall 1990:225).

Hall mainly focuses on Caribbean identity and the black diaspora during his research. He uses this second approach to gain a broader understanding of the traumatic experiences in the context of colonialism. In general, the particular regimes used their power to create a feeling of difference and the notion to feel as 'other'. Therefore, next to the shared commonalities, what should not be disregarded is the forced exclusion and dispersal (Hall 1990:225–226). Cultural identities, in general, are comprised of a mixture of the past, sometimes specific historical experiences and the transforming ways of positioning, and notions of the current self, the narratives of the past, the ongoing present, and the future. Transferred to diasporic groups in general, Hall suggests that identity is constructed and revealed through notions of difference. Diaspora experience is certainly heterogenic and diverse and is lived in terms of hybridity (Hall 1990:235). Furthermore, the construction of cultural identity is an act of positioning and drawing individual boundaries. Using the examples of black diasporic identities in the Caribbean, Hall writes that diasporic groups, referring to the different positioning, hold different "presences". Multiple identities may refer to the respective hostland, the (imagined) nation of the homeland, and further ones may depend on the individual diasporic groups (Hall 1990:230–235). Thus, (diasporic) identities are always multiple, hybrid, and multicultural.

When investigating research on diasporic groups and communities that migrated out of various reasons, discussions are often concerned with the "self" and the "other". During the process of construction of (cultural) identities, communities and individuals draw cultural, social, and political boundaries. At the same time, the discourse involves persons who crossed territorial and national boundaries. Therefore, an explanation of the difference between imagined and stable "physical" boundaries is required. In his article *A Neo-Boasian Conception of Cultural Boundaries* (2004), the social and cultural anthropologist Ira Bashkow re-theorized and extended the concept of cultural boundaries. Based on the understanding that cultures are not territorially bounded and committed to a certain place, Bashkow emphasizes that cultural boundaries should also not be seen as fixed barriers. While earlier anthropologists often criticized the idea of "bounded cultures", Bashkow argues that this criticism is the result of a missing discourse. He furthermore explains that in this concept, boundaries are constructed, not naturally developed. In detail, "cultural boundaries are constructs created in large part through our own process of representation" (Bashkow 2004:443). Following Bashkow's concept, cultural boundaries are open and fluid, not stable lines which separate or block groups from one another. They "do not exclude or contain" (Bashkow 2004:450). Cultures can be differentiated from one another, not separated. Because of these resulting blurred boundaries, it is not always possible to present them in maps. Cultural boundaries are therefore often misunderstood when they are pictured as lines. Bashkow, referring to Sapir's writings, emphasizes that cultural boundaries are not only produced through actual shared aspects but further through the notion of "mutual comprehension" (Bashkow 2004:452). Therefore, the way people differentiate between the "self" and the "foreign" or "other" is also a component of the individual culture.

Waltraud Kokot, Khachig Tölölyan, and Carolin Alfonso close the introduction of their work *Diaspora, Identity and Religion: New directions in theory and research* (2004) with a general appeal for further research on diaspora and identity. This research endeavours to fulfil these principles.

Any research into identity and diaspora must therefore take into account a great variety and heterogeneity of identities at any given point in time, among which 'diaspora identity' is only one, albeit formative part. Even if one diaspora community still may serve as a focus of research, its transnational and global connections, the community's history and the means of communication used to maintain it, must equally be considered. Any ethnography of diaspora must lead to a multi-sited approach, thus widening the scope of anthropology's theory and methods (Kokot et al. 2004:7).

2.2. Diaspora Youth

The anthropological interest in studying youth increased in the first half of the last century. In the groundbreaking ethnography *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), Margaret Mead describes her later criticized and questioned research in the Samoan Islands, which focussed on the lives of youth and adolescent Samoan girls. Her work and later anthropological research on youth mainly sought to compare the stages of youth and its construction in Samoa with the equivalent in Western societies (Dracklé 1996:16). Further studies by various researchers mainly focussed on youth construction, especially in the US and the UK, using their particular approaches.

Defining youth has always been challenging for anthropological research and yet there is no single definition. In the process of determining youth and age groups, the boundaries are drawn differently by the cultures. Therefore, the question of whether youth should be seen as a social or a biologically determined category is often discussed in sociology, as well as in social and cultural anthropology. Maysoun Sukarieh and Stuart Tannock argue that:

[...] the concept of youth, like all social identities, is a social construction, and both its scope and meaning are continually changing. Youth is not biologically given or determined: rather, its duration in the lives of individuals may be said to be shorter or longer, and its social, cultural and political salience as a stage of life and category of identity may be stronger or weaker in different times and places (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015:4).

The authors introduce the approach that the understanding of youth is determined by different cultural and social factors, varies in different regions, and is subject to blurring boundaries. Nevertheless, youth does have a biological aspect when it comes to a certain stage of life and the concept of "being young" (Bucholtz 2002:526). Mary Bucholtz further introduces her approach in her article *Youth and Cultural Practices*:

[...] that the anthropology of youth is characterized by its attention to the agency of young people, its concern to document not just highly visible youth cultures but the entirety of youth cultural practice, and its interest in how identities emerge in new cultural formations that creatively combine elements of global capitalism, transnationalism, and local culture (Bucholtz 2002:525).

Therefore, she emphasizes seeing and studying the concept of youth in the context of individual and self-determined actors. It could be added that, like all social constructions regarding identity, youth cannot be seen as a fixed construction. Who is considered to be part of the "youth" across the globe and throughout history is contingent on the specific cultural, social, historical, and political context.

Another approach to study youth is to investigate single generations. Karl Mannheim writes about the unity of generations in his famous text *The Problem of Generations* (1972). Mannheim emphasizes that people of a similar age can be bound due to commonly experienced historical changes and events. In this sense, Mannheim does not speak of an actual physical community (Mannheim 1972:288–291). Instead, generations are bound in their “consciousness of belonging” (Mannheim 1972:288):

The social phenomenon ‘generation’ represents nothing more than a particular kind of identity of location, embracing related ‘age groups’ embedded in a historical-social process (Mannheim 1972:292).

To extend upon Mannheim’s approach, youth in the diaspora can be investigated in the context of general immigrant generations. An often-used approach is to engage with so-called second generations of migrants. According to Bartram, Poros, and Monforte, second generations refer to “the children of immigrants, born in the country to which their parents have migrated” (Bartram et al. 2014:124). Obviously, this definition does not have to apply to young persons but depends on the age of the particular diaspora. Referring to general forms of migration, the authors outline that second-generation immigrants hold multiple identities, according to their assimilation in the host country and a possible attachment to the parent’s homeland (Bartram et al. 2014:127).

3. SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXTS

The research questions of this thesis refer to the research informant's notions on the host and the homeland. In the following, the contexts of the certain topic will be provided. The Dalai Lama as a person and institution and the Gelug School of Tibetan Buddhism play a significant role in the historical, political, and cultural context. The following chapter discusses both the situation in Tibet as well as in India. To begin, subchapter 3.1 introduces the Dalai Lama's role(s) and relationship to the Tibetan and Indian context. This is followed by the presentation of the situation for Tibetans in Tibet, as well as in India. As the interview informants referred to different topics or difficulties in this context, a more detailed explanation is required.

3.1. The Dalai Lama

The history of the institution of the Dalai Lama in Tibet is over 700 years old. For most of this time, the respective incarnation has been the political and spiritual leader of the country. He is seen as the enlightened Bodhisattva of compassion. According to popular Tibetan mythology, he is believed to be the father of the Tibetan people (Klieger 1991:98). Nevertheless, the present 14th Dalai Lama constantly remarks that the institution of the Dalai Lama is a human 'invention', and he himself is a simple human monk. In exile, his symbolic range becomes even more important, as he is the only "anchor" to the homeland for many Tibetan people in the diaspora (Klieger 1991:105). Norbu argues that the Dalai Lama unified all Tibetan regions by embodying a pan-Tibetan symbol during the rising conflict in 1950. His significance becomes even more apparent because:

the first concern of the Lhasa Government was the defence, not so much of the territorial integrity of Tibet or the natural resources for the country, as of the sacred person of the Dalai Lama, who symbolized Tibetan culture (Norbu 2001:350).

The focus on the symbolic aspects of the Dalai Lama is important, as his decisions and his will to democratize and modernize the Tibetan society gave rise to discussions among the young Tibetan population in exile. Following the research questions and interests, the young Tibetans' perspectives on the (political) future of Tibet and of the Tibetans in exile played a significant role during the field study.

Since the Dalai Lama was forced into exile, he has constantly endeavoured to create a solid dialogue with the Chinese Government. In the early 70s, the Dalai Lama proposed not to seek out complete independence for Tibet anymore, introducing the "Middle Way Approach" as an alternative. This suggestion was adopted by the Central Tibetan Admin-

Approach” as an alternative. This suggestion was adopted by the Central Tibetan Administration and many Tibetan people in exile. The idea is to “peacefully resolve the issue of Tibet and to bring about stability and co-existence between the Tibetan and Chinese people based on quality and mutual co-operation” (DIIR 2006). The Middle Way Approach is a method

to achieve a genuine autonomy for all Tibetans living in the three traditional provinces of Tibet within the framework of the People’s Republic of China (DIIR 2006).

In 2011 the Dalai Lama chose to retire as the political leader. He aimed to pave the way for a self-reliant and democratically elected Tibetan Government. During a public lecture in Dharamsala, he stated:

So the system of one-man rule is not good. Therefore, it is not at all good if the Dalai Lama keeps on holding ultimate power. [...] The system has brought many benefits since then. But now as we are in the 21st century, sooner or later the time for change is imminent. [...] If we have to remain in exile for several more decades, a time will inevitably come when I will no longer be able to provide leadership. Therefore, it is necessary that we establish a sound system of governance while I remain able and healthy, in order that the exile Tibetan administration can become self-reliant rather than being dependent on the Dalai Lama. If we are able to implement such a system from this time onwards, I will still be able to help resolve problems if called upon to do so. But, if the implementation of such a system is delayed and a day comes when my leadership is suddenly unavailable, the consequent uncertainty might present an overwhelming challenge. Therefore, it is the duty of all Tibetans to make every effort to prevent such an eventuality (HH the Dalai Lama 2011b).

In the last years, the Chinese regime has repeatedly indicated that the search for the Dalai Lama reincarnation after the death of Tenzin Gyatso will be the responsibility of the Chinese authorities. In 2007, the People’s Republic of China released the State Religious Affair Bureau Order No. 5, which outlines that the reincarnation must be approved and legitimated by the government. The Dalai Lama responded with an order from his personal office in Dharamsala:

Bear in mind that, apart from the reincarnation recognized through such legitimate methods, no recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the People’s Republic of China (HH the Dalai Lama 2011a).

To connect this to the focus of this research, Tibetans in exile, as well as in the homeland, attach a great importance to the Dalai Lama as a symbolic embodiment of Tibet and its culture. Regarding Tibet’s political future and its leadership, the Dalai Lama is attempting to prepare the Tibetan exile community for the time after his death. I will address the informants’ perspectives and suggestions about these issues in the description of the research findings.

3.2. The Homeland

As this thesis focuses on the Tibetan youth living in exile, the description of the homeland will be kept short. Nevertheless, after introducing the historical context in Chapter 1, a short summary of the current and recent social, cultural, and political situation in Tibet is given, as these topics are also the basis of the informants’ perspectives, especially when it comes to the preservation of Tibetan culture and language in exile and the role of the Dalai Lama. Referring to the current situation in Tibet, the Central Tibetan Administration’s website states that, among others, universal human rights, culture, and religion are

the most endangered factors (CTA n.d.). Regarding the former, the Government in Exile lists that today in Tibet:

- “Any expression of opinion contrary to Chinese Communist Party ideology can result in arrest;
- The Chinese Government has systematically covered religious institutions in an attempt to eradicate allegiance to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tibetan nationalism, and any dissension;
- Tibetans are subject to arbitrary arrest and detention;
- Those imprisoned are often denied legal representation and Chinese legal proceedings fail to meet international standards;
- Torture still prevails in Chinese prisons and detention centres despite it being in contravention of the United Nations Convention Against Torture; [...]” (CTA n.d.).

Tibetan religion and culture still face continuous destruction and condemnation. Since the Chinese Government has taken control over the education system, the Tibetan languages have been excluded from many schools and public sectors. The Central Tibetan Administration argues that the lack of a proper Tibetan education, in particular, has forced thousands of Tibetan children into exile. Former statistics show that the majority of new arrivals from Tibet were below the age of 25.

The sole purpose of such a large number of young Tibetans fleeing their homeland — and more often than not negotiating a treacherous journey across the Himalayas — is to obtain a decent religious and secular education in a country far away from home (CTA n.d.).

As the freedom of speech is limited, the possibilities of communicating across the Chinese borders are, too. For diasporic communities, the usage of the internet and smartphones could normally provide a connection to their homelands. In the Tibetan case, it is not that simple. The Chinese Government disables popular apps and messenger services, such as Facebook and WhatsApp. The alternative is the Chinese messenger service WeChat, a commonly used communication app in Tibet and China (Chatalic 2015:96). In the last years, the Chinese authorities have increased their monitoring of online communication. The consequence of this is that Tibetans in exile face a high risk by communicating with friends and family in Tibet. Moreover, there are numerous reported cases in which Tibetans were arrested in Tibet for “spreading or achieving illegal information” via messenger services (ICT 2019).

When talking about the situation of Tibetans in Tibet, a precise picture can be drawn by the over 150 Tibetans who have self-immolated since the early 2000s. To commit suicide is always an act of hopelessness and desperation. These cases were furthermore motivated by political or religious issues and are understood as a response to the Chinese occupation. According to John Whalen-Bridge, there are three potential addressees of this public act (2015). First of all, the Chinese regime, which is actively suppressing the Tibetan people’s cultural and religious freedom, is a potential target audience of these self-immolations. The second addressee could be the populations and governments of Western countries; in this context, the suicides raise attention and are perceived as a call for help. And thirdly, Tibetan self-immolators could also address other Tibetans, especially those living in exile, not to turn their backs on Tibet and give up on the Tibetan culture (Whalen-Bridge 2015:4–5). The Tibetan writer and activist Tsering Woeser analyzed the statements and motivations of the persons who self-immolated and summarized that about a third of the persons took action “to offer beneficial wishes to the Dalai Lama” (Whalen-Bridge 2015:92). In many cases, people were calling for his return to Tibet. It is also notable that about two-thirds of the self-immolators were under 30 years old, and about half of these were still teenagers (CTA 2019). Consequently, while in the last decades the majority of the waves of refugees were of a young age, the same can be said about the majority of the persons who committed suicide for the future of their country.

3.3. The Hostland

There are many circumstances that influence the creation of diasporic identity. Safran's theoretical approach presents the respective policies a diasporic community depends on, the political situation in the hostland, the acceptance by the local community, and the use of power by the local government as relevant contextual factors. In the following, some conditions the Tibetans are facing in their hostland India will be described.

When the Dalai Lama reached the Indian border after the Tibetan revolt in 1959, he received asylum from the Indian Government, which was under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru at the time. Out of the 135,000 Tibetans living outside of Tibet in the 2000s, most of them live in India (Laird 2006:452). Soon after the Dalai Lama reached India, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) was founded under his leadership. Its main function was to structure and guide the Tibetan exile community. They also aimed to establish self-sustaining settlements. The CTA's and the Dalai Lama's main motives are to maintain the Tibetan culture, as well as to modernize and democratize the community. In a self-employed manner, the newly formed exile government managed to build up ministries and resorts, which deal with basic establishments like finance, health, culture, and education (Phuntso 2004:125–126). With this objective, the Tibetan leadership in exile never had the intended for the Tibetan community to assimilate within the Indian community. On the other side, the Indian Government also did not make much effort to integrate the community:

The Tibetan leadership, anxious that the Tibetan refugees should retain their culture and identity, did not want them to be scattered all over the subcontinent, but wanted them to live together in the settlements (Norbu 2004:189).

Today, there are 39 Tibetan settlements in India. Their main economic base is agriculture, handicraft, or business. Many of these settlements are only inhabited by Tibetans. In Dharamsala, in contrast, people live closely together with local Indian people. While the other settlements obtained land, this is not the case in Dharamsala. Therefore, Tibetans residing there mostly make a living by working in or owning restaurants, shops, and other small businesses. The town is also home to the Tibetan Buddhist religious leader, the 14th Dalai Lama, and the Central Tibetan Administration, the Tibetan Government in Exile. Tourism is one of the main economic drivers of Dharamsala.

The Dalai Lama's top priority for the Tibetan exile community in India has been the establishment of a proper Tibetan education system. Today, there are over 65 Tibetan schools in India with a total school enrolment of 85–90 per cent of the school-aged children (DoE n.d.). The main purpose of establishing separate schools for Tibetans in India was the provision of high quality and modern education, which should also imply the preparation to rebuild a free Tibet and the preservation of the Tibetan language and culture (DoE n.d.).

The commonly spoken Tibetan language in Indian exile is called 'Standard Tibetan', also known as 'Lhasa dialect'. It forms a koiné language and shares commonalities of the dialects in central Tibet, Amdo, and Kham (Tournadre 2013:14). The Tibetan scholar Tsepak Rigzin states that the Tibetan Government in Exile was successful in introducing their own education system, considering that it was built in a relatively short time and with no proper experience and funds. International organisations and the Indian Government helped, but according to Rigzin, the main success was achieved through the Tibetan people's ambition to settle in exile while maintaining Tibetan culture and language. 97 per cent of the 15 to 19-year old Tibetans in India are literate, boys as well as girls. English and Tibetan languages are taught from class one (Rigzin 2004:266–271).

Today, the third generation of Tibetans is growing up in Indian exile. Many Tibetan children have never seen their homeland. In response to this generational change, the Tibetan education system in India underwent a Tibetanisation reform, and now provides classes on the basics of Tibetan language and general cultural aspects (Pema 2004:292). The Department of Education further established teaching positions for Tibetan religion,

culture, music, and dance. The celebration of traditional Tibetan occasions and religious events are greatly involved in the schools' everyday life (2004:275). The other side of the well-structured Tibetan schools (compared to the Indian education system) is that the young Tibetans graduating from the system face a labour market with a smaller supply and a high demand (Rigzin 2004:277).

The Dalai Lama was not granted an unlimited right of residence for Tibetans living in India. He and all Tibetans living in India are seen as 'guests' or simply 'foreigners' by the Indian Government. Since they are not officially classified as 'refugees', their residence without official documentation is illegal (TJC 2016:6). Most of the Tibetans in India possess a Registration Certificate (RC) issued by the Indian authorities, but it remains nearly impossible for Tibetans to gain Indian citizenship. Even children who were born in India face the same problem. Different types of documents are provided, depending on the year the Tibetan came to India or the year in which the person was born in exile. The RC must be extended regularly (TJC 2016:40). The RC enables the holder to move freely in India and is needed for certain registration processes like opening bank accounts. Possessing the Registration Certificate allows to apply for an Identity Certificate (IC). With this document, Tibetans in India can apply for a visa to travel outside of the country. It is still not comparable to a passport (McConnell 2013:972).

According to Schuster, the refusal of Indian citizenship means that most of the Tibetans in India:

- "are not allowed to vote in India,
- face problems in gaining access to higher education, as they would have to pay the fees foreign students have to pay,
- have a limited right to acquire land,
- have limited options on the employment market,
- face numerous acts of discrimination because of their status as foreigners,
- are limited in their right to travel, as for international travels, an Identity Certificate is required (IC). But not all countries accept these documents, and even if they do, the owners often must declare themselves" (Schuster 2013:6-8).

4. FIELD RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION IN DHARAMSALA

This chapter describes the implementation of the field study. After giving an insight into the location of the research, the process of the selection of the research participants will be discussed, as it was influenced by the discourse of who is considered to be a part of the youth. Then, this section includes a detailed explanation of the methods used for data collection and data analyses. Finally, a reflection of my role as a researcher in the field provides transparency and coherence of the research process leading to the finished text.

4.1. The Place of Research

Dharamsala is located in the hills of Himachal Pradesh. Close to the domicile of the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration, about 8,000 Tibetans live in the suburb of Dharamsala called McLeod Ganj, where Tibetans are in the majority (DoH 2019). As mentioned, compared to other Tibetan settlements in India, Dharamsala is a quite diverse place, where local Indians and Tibetans live close together. Dharamsala is not only host to the Tibetan Government in Exile but is also the location of the largest Tibetan youth organisations in India. One is the Tibetan Youth Congress, one of the oldest Tibetan organisations in exile. The members are devoted to the Dalai Lama and his guidance. Nevertheless, one of their four main tasks is: "To struggle for the total independence of Tibet even at the cost of one's life" (TYC n.d.). Another important youth organisation is called "Students for a Free Tibet", which was founded in New York in 1994. Their Indian branch is situated in Dharamsala, informing and actively campaigning about the situation in Tibet and in exile. It can be emphasized that both of these popular Tibetan youth organisations are campaigning openly for the full independence for Tibet.

4.2. Selection of the Research Participants: Who is the Youth?

This thesis focuses on the cultural identifications and perspectives of the Tibetan youth in Dharamsala. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the young generation of Tibetans in India, especially referring to the Tibetans born in India, are highly literate and educated in the English language. While conducting the research, all of the interviews could be held in English. Therefore, during the process of contacting interview participants, a translator was not required. One informant who had also studied the German language wished to

speak in German. Furthermore, the selection of the interview participants happened at my discretion; this means that I had to decide who “belongs to the youth”. The question raised was, “who is young”? The UN describes youth as people between the ages of 15 and 24. The Indian National Youth Policy fixed the age group 13–35 years in 2002 and modified it to an age group of 15–29 years in 2014 (Central Statistics Office 2017:2).

I did not fix a specific maximum age limit so to provide a more open space for individual definitions of “being young”. Regardless of a person’s exact age, the research participants’ personal identification as “young” was the main criteria. Personally, I thought of an age maximum between the late twenties and beginning thirties. Rather than having a strict criteria and to provide instead a more open space for the individual identification as “youth”, a more objective selection of the research participants was provided. After I informed the potential research informants about the research project, its academic context, and the process and guarantee of anonymisation, I explained that the determining criterium for the interviews was that the persons identified as “young” themselves. Therefore, I often did not know the exact age of the interview partners until the interview. In a few cases, the request for an interview was rejected because the particular person did not identify as “young”. None of the people who self-identified as “not young” were under the age of 31. Furthermore, I chose not to conduct interviews with persons who were born after 2004, even though they might have identified as “youth”. The reason is that in the ethical context, a full understanding, not only of the research concern but also of the context of the recording and analyzing of personal data, should be required, even as each interview was later anonymized. In sum, a minimum age was determined. The maximum age was not fixed, but subject to the individual concepts and notions of youth.

4.3. Methodology

The qualitative research this thesis is based on was conducted in Dharamsala over a period of seven weeks in September and October of 2019. The methods consisted of participant observation and semi-structured interviews:

Participant observation is a central element of qualitative research and provides the opportunity to participate in daily routines and interpret out of the own experience (Rosenthal 2014:105).

The researcher is, therefore:

watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:2 in Rosenthal 2014:104).

Participant observation was a useful method to collect the initial data, get to know research participants, and gain deeper insight into the subject. In order to gain a broad perspective, I tried to participate in as many activities as possible, such as cultural and religious events and youth programs. However, as the aim was to learn about individually held ideas about Tibetan cultural identity and certain perspectives, semi-structured interviews were the most effective way to gain a broad set of different, personal views. This method enables the researcher to learn about a specific research interest but also leaves some space for new elements to arise during the interview. Another advantage is that the informants can answer in a broad way. This allows the interviewer to gather information about topics that were not previously on the research radar (Rosenthal 2014:140–141).

Before each interview, the research participants were informed about the complete anonymization of the collected data, as well as the recording. The respective names mentioned in this thesis are pseudonyms. At this point it is important to point out the conscious arbitrariness in which these pseudonyms were selected. Tibetan names were used but did

not refer to the specific origin or meaning of the original names. Therefore, the persons interviewed should not be seen to have a connection with characteristics the pseudonyms may have.

After the opening questions in which I asked some personal biographical questions, the semi-structured interviews consisted of three segments with quite open questions: 1. Cultural identification, 2. Perspectives on Exile, and 3. Perspectives on Tibet. For each interview, I attempted to follow this guideline but remained flexible about the interview as a whole.

The first question of the first segment, "What is Tibetan culture and what does it mean to you?" encouraged a variety of answers. Furthermore, at the end of each segment, I asked about a difference between the "younger and older generations" to gain insight into the different subjective tendencies and thoughts of the participants, for example, how they would engage with the Tibetan culture. These questions allowed me to gain insights into generational issues. The second block of questions referred to the situation in exile. I was interested in individual views on the perspectives in Indian exile and whether the informant had considered moving to another country or even back to Tibet in the future. Another important point was the personal opinion on whether aspects of Tibetan culture were at risk of 'getting lost' outside the Tibetan communities. In the third segment, the focus was on individual views on Tibet and its political future. The Dalai Lama and his Middle Way Approach are closely linked to this topic and were discussed in every interview.

The guideline was used to conduct interviews with 15 young Tibetans who were born between 1988 and 2004. The average age was about 24. Seven informants were female, eight were male. Seven were born in India, eight were born in Tibet. It is important to note that the sample is not representative of the whole population of Tibetan youth in Dharamsala.

Furthermore, two expert interviews were conducted. There is no universal definition of an expert interview in the literature, especially of the criteria that legitimate a person as an expert (Rosenthal 2018:130).

The first expert works for the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) in Dharamsala. The second expert interviewed for this investigation was the education secretary of a Tibetan NGO, where I also volunteered. As both experts' main occupation is to work with young Tibetans and guide them through their education, I chose them for their general knowledge and their expertise about topics related to education.

During my stay in Dharamsala, I generated field notes of different types. I loosely followed Russel H. Bernard's recommended structure keeping four types of notes; field jottings, field notes, a field diary, and a field log (Bernard 1989:181). While conducting research, I kept the basic principles of qualitative social research in mind. It is important to enter the field with a broad view and open mind:

The principle of openness implies that the researcher must be willing to make new discoveries, to get involved in the empirical field, and to modify their previous knowledge (Rosenthal 2018:44).

After the first week in the field, I gained an overview of the different Tibetan organisations in Dharamsala that deal with various Tibetan issues. These included Tibetan women's rights institutions, youth groups, social organisations, and other NGOs that provided language and computer classes for Tibetans of all ages. I decided to visit these different organisations to establish first contacts. This eased my entrance to the field, as these informants served as gatekeepers, provided information, and even participated in interviews. In one of the organisations that provided language classes for Tibetans, I started volunteering in the daily conversation class. I facilitated the course five days a week. Most of the students were Tibetan monks of a range of ages. I met some of the informants during this course. I found many of the later interview partners in restaurants and shops, where it was easy to start conversations with local people. Most of the interviews were carried out in the building of the organisation mentioned above, whose directors provided me with the space to use. Some other interviews took place in the offices of the particular persons, one

on a rooftop, and one in a café. The latter was the most difficult to transcribe due to the background noises. The occupations of the informants varied from shopkeepers, waiters, and secretaries to teachers. Furthermore, I interviewed two older students at the Tibetan Government in Exile school, where children can study in Tibetan, during a visit to the TCV in Dharamsala.

Alongside the data collected from the interviews, I was a participant-observer while visiting different cultural events, discussions, and public speeches. I was able to join two teachings of the Dalai Lama at the main temple. While I guided the English class, I built friendly connections with some Tibetan monks studying in the class. During personal meetings in restaurants and cafés, they spoke openly about the situation in Tibet and their opinions. I asked several monks and nuns if they would consent to an interview with me. However, they refused. Some of them argued that they would not speak about Tibet openly because they were afraid of getting in trouble with the Chinese Government if they ever went back to Tibet. Of course, every person was informed about the anonymity guaranteed in the thesis, but I naturally accepted their concern. On my last day in Dharamsala, a younger monk asked if I would like to conduct an interview with him.

The process of research was accompanied by an ongoing personal reflection. In Dharamsala, I was perceived as one of many European tourists. When I told people about the academic context of my stay, the research project and my longer stay compared to a typical tourist visit were mainly appreciated. After a few weeks in Dharamsala, I learned that my presence and project had been noticed. Some young Tibetans I met already knew who I was and mentioned, “sure, you are the woman asking about Tibetan culture”. Some informants told me that they would be happy about any release of information about the Tibet issue. Some even thanked me for telling their story and making the “Western countries” aware of the Tibetan’s situation. In these cases, I felt quite uncomfortable about these expectations and in my role as a master’s student on her first research trip.

4.4. Data Analyses

In preparation for the data analyses, the 17 recorded interviews were transcribed in two versions. The first served an exact written copy of the data. For readability, the written transcripts were later edited following the guidelines suggested by Thorsten Dresing and Thorsten Pehl (see Dresing and Pehl 2018). The data was analysed using the systematic qualitative content analyses method described by Philip Mayring (2015). This method, which enables an examination of large data sets, guided and structured the process. While coding, I developed categories from the material. The text segments were labelled and structured. Using the coding guideline, relevant contents were extracted from the data corpus. Regarding the research interest, I followed the topics of the guideline of the conducted interviews and examined the data by using the main categories of Tibetan culture, India, Tibet, and the exile community. The data was again divided into numerous subcategories. These categories were later analyzed in the context of the research questions and interest.

5. TIBETAN YOUTH IN DHARAMSALA

As described, the topics of research interest were divided into three segments. The first segment included the personal cultural identities and notions of the host and the homeland. This chapter will focus on the research informants' descriptions of their personal definitions of Tibetan culture and their own identification. It also includes comments and reflections regarding the preservation of Tibetan culture and language, two explicit goals of the Tibetan Government in Exile. The last subchapter is about new movements grown in exile and the use of new media to help maintain Tibetan identity.

5.1. Identities and Identity Struggle

In the following, the research informants' different notions of expressing Tibetan identity and their definitions of (Tibetan) culture will be introduced. It should be emphasized that people attached importance to different parts of cultural life and interpreted them in different ways. However, there were noticeable similarities in the answers of the persons born in Tibet and in those of the persons born in India. All the recorded interviews showed a strong identification with Tibetan culture. Every interviewee, whether born in India or in Tibet, strongly identified as Tibetan and claimed to feel closely linked to Tibetan culture. As already stated, culture is subject to constant changes and processes, and identifications are not tied to one single community. Therefore, it was also important not to start with the expectation of a universal understanding of the term 'culture'. For this reason, the intention was to first gain an idea of how the different persons would define Tibetan culture in their own way.

The 29 year-old Panang, president of a Tibetan NGO in Dharamsala was born in Kangra district, not far from Dharamsala. She went to different TCV schools and later graduated in New Delhi. After that, she came back to Dharamsala and has been living and working there since then. In the interview, she referred to a 'Tibetaness'. In this context, the suffix "-ness" creates a full embodiment of Tibetan cultural expressions like habits, symbols and identity. In this sense, people speak about a common Tibetan thinking. Panang described 'Tibetaness' in her words:

There are many reasons why we are unique in our own way; Tibetaness. That is our culture for me. How we think, how we feel. For our nation, for people, for the world (Interview Panang, October 10, 2019).

Panang, therefore, spoke of a shared feeling of Tibetaness, where traditions play a lesser role. The director of another NGO, who was born in Tibet, expressed himself similarly:

The culture is everything including the mind, the body, speech and what we think, what we talk and what body actions [we perform]. Whatever we are doing is connected with culture. So our Tibetan culture, I think, is a very compassionate culture (Interview Tenzin 09 20, 2019).

Both of these quotes refer to a common, more homogeneous way of thinking; something that unifies Tibetans. With the term “compassion”, Tenzin furthermore refers to a fundamental pillar of all Buddhist schools, including Tibetan Buddhism. In this sense, compassion is not only understood as a synonym of empathy but is a fundamental concept of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. Comments about compassion, therefore, have to be understood not only in the context of emotions and kindness but also in their religious and philosophical context. Gonpo, a 24 year-old English teacher, who came from Tibet when he was a child, said: “Kindness and compassion. These are the basics about Tibetan culture” (Interview Gonpo, September 27, 2019). A young waiter, Dawa, who left Tibet at the age of seven, also connected Tibetan culture directly with Tibetan Buddhism:

We have preserved religion for thousands of years. We are very religious. [...] Because of the culture we have a very broad mind. So our target is happiness, not violence. Peace. That is our target from very young. We were taught not to harm, not to kill. Even the insects have their own life. That is why our main focus in life has become the happiness (Interview, Dawa, September 27, 2019).

Another waiter, born in Tibet, said: “Culture means, I guess, going to monastery” (Interview Norbu, October 10, 2019). Tibetan Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy played an important role in the lives of nearly all of the research informants and is seen as an important part of Tibetan culture and identity. Only one of the informants mentioned that Tibetan Buddhism is not the only religion Tibetans identify with. Pema was born in India. As she had grown up in an Indian settlement and attended an Indian school, she had only learned about Tibetan culture and identity from her parents. She criticized the generalisation of Tibetans as being Buddhist:

Even when some certain elders give a speech, they refer to all of us as Buddhist. I don't appreciate it. Because we are not just Buddhist, there are other religions and Tibetans, who practice other religions. Tibetan Christians, Tibetan Muslims, so underrated! We notice all these things and in our daily lives we try not to do these discriminations. But the majority of the population thinks that Buddhist and nationalistic idea is the only idea we are supposed to carry (Interview Pema, September 26, 2019).

Pema spoke of a certain narrative existing within the Tibetan community about “how a Tibetan should be”. This pressure to identify with only one specific Tibetan identity could also be sensed in the next example wherein the interviewee discussed the importance of the Tibetan language. Many research informants attached importance to the Tibetan language, but even though people mentioned that the Tibetan language would be an important issue for identification, there were still diverse interpretations regarding the topic. Nyima was born in Tibet in 1995. She grew up in a small village and described her family and neighbours as “pure Tibetans”; they wore Tibetan clothes, spoke Tibetan, and consumed Tibetan butter tea and Tsampa¹. She came to India at the age of nine or ten and went to different Tibetan schools. Today, she runs a small café in Dharamsala together with her sister. Nyima commented on the importance of the Tibetan language and expressed her displeasure with Tibetans mixing different languages:

I'm seeing here Tibetan people. They are speaking Tibetan and English mixed. I'm so sad about that. I say, why are you not talking Tibetan? If you are Tibetan, you should talk properly. I wish they should take care of the Tibetan culture [...] (Interview Nyima, October 05, 2019).

¹ Tsampa is a Tibetan staple food. It is made from roasted grain and tea or water.

Nyima explained that she would speak English with other foreigners and local Indians but talks to Tibetan people exclusively in Tibetan. During other conversations and through daily observations, I sometimes noticed young Tibetans using English or Hindi words within Tibetan conversations.

Dolma was born in India and moved to Dharamsala with her parents when she was about three or four years old. She visited different Tibetan schools and later did her bachelor's degree in English literature. Dolma also strongly identified with Tibetan culture, although she had quite different opinions than Nyima. She mainly referred to the Tibetans born in India by saying:

Everyone who has grown up in India, who was born in India, we can speak the [local indian] language, like to a certain extent, not fluently, but we can understand it. And like the kind of food habits that we have, that has also drastically changed you know the kids who were born here, we eat roti and rice and dal. That's not a Tibetan thing, but we are still doing that which is like a very Indian side of our being. [...] It doesn't mean we are any less Tibetans who identifies with these things right? (Interview Dolma, September 18, 2019).

For Dolma, mixing Tibetan and Indian cultural aspects was part of her everyday life. However, she identified with Tibetan culture and attached importance to it. Nevertheless, comparing Dolma's and Nyima's answers again shows that there are different, sometimes fixed, notions of "how a Tibetan should be". Many of the research informants who were born in Tibet endeavoured to maintain what Nyima called "pure tibetan" and did not want to mix food, habits, or languages. When Pema settled in Dharamsala, this was the first time that she had settled in a Tibetan community. She told me about the difficulties she faced to feel accepted and how she felt "out of place" (Interview Pema, September 26, 2019) when she arrived. The fact that she had grown up in an Indian community, and therefore felt more comfortable with Hindi than Tibetan, also complicated her first job experiences:

When I started working [...] and I went to meetings, there was so much I wanted to contribute, but because I had the language barriers, I always stopped myself. Because they really judge you, and the treat you as non-Tibetan, if you don't speak fluently. [...] they have this idea, how a Tibetan should be (Interview Pema, September 26, 2019).

The case of Pema was unique within all the interviews, as she was the only person of the research informants who was born into a more Indian community than Tibetan and went to an Indian school. Her inner identity struggle presented in insecurity about her belonging when she arrived in Dharamsala. On the other hand, she had also never felt fully accepted while growing up in the Indian community:

We have been exiled and we should never forget our identity and our culture. These are things we grew up with here. The sad part is, I went to an Indian school, so it was hard for me to connect to all of those things (Interview Pema, September 26, 2019).

Therefore, arriving in a Tibetan community and feeling "out of place" again gave her the impression of not belonging to any cultural identity at all. Only after settling down in Dharamsala and becoming more fluent in the Tibetan language did she feel more accepted. Pema also attached importance to the place she was born and Indian cultural aspects. In her opinion, aspects like Indian food habits were generally accepted by the Tibetans living in India. For her, the discrimination within the Tibetan community was mostly related to the Tibetan language:

All of us are influenced in one way or another. All of us eat dal, all of us eat rice. So that part of the culture, this kind of change, they have accepted. But what they do, something they are not very kind about, is the language (Interview Pema, September 26, 2019).

Most of the informants who were born in Tibet arrived in India when they were under the age of ten. Yangdol, in contrast, came to India just a few years ago at the age of 17. Relating to Tibetan culture expressed in exile, she said:

In Tibet, we design our houses with Tibetan cultures, like gods' pictures, but here I don't see anything. In Tibet, the Losar² is very special, everyone can get together. But here I can't see. [...] maybe because it is not my motherland (Interview Yangdol, September 22, 2019).

Tsundue's comments show that it is not always possible to live out cultural aspects the way people did in the homeland. In this context, he spoke about traditional Tibetan clothes, like the Chuba, a woollen and warm robe. Tsundue explained that the different climatic conditions in India prevent many Tibetans in Indian exile to wear these warm dresses on a daily basis. In exile, they are usually only worn on special occasions and events. The young monk Tashi, who arrived in India a few years ago, similarly expressed himself. When he arrived in India, his expectations were not fulfilled: "Everything is different. [...] To be honest, this is not Tibetan culture. It is pretty much Indian society. People mix it up" (Interview Tashi, October 15, 2019). For Yangdol and Tashi, cultural aspects adapted by the Tibetans in Indian exile will not constitute Tibetan culture. Nevertheless, both distinguished between culture and identity. How people draw cultural boundaries in the diaspora depends on their historical background, how long people have lived in exile, and how intensely they have engaged with their local neighbours. Naturally, people migrating to foreign countries might adapt some cultural aspects and habits of the certain countries they live in. Some persons arriving from the homeland demonstrated a disappointment about how culture is lived outside of the homeland. The exile, therefore, creates new cultural identities.

Individual understanding of the markers of Tibetan culture also depends on a person's opinion of culture in general. Some of the informants differentiated between culture, religion, and language. Language was either included or excluded from respondents' personal definition of culture. Sometimes culture was specified through food and behavioural habits. Different ideas about how culture is lived grow from these personal definitions. It is important to remember, in all of these cases, that culture is dynamic.

5.2. Preserving Tibetan Culture and Identity

The preservation of the Tibetan culture was another important point for all research informants and is part of the construction of cultural identity. While cultural aspects like language, traditions, and religion face systematic destruction in Tibet, the efforts to maintain these features are visible in the diaspora.

As mentioned, I had the opportunity to conduct an expert interview with a staff member of the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV). He emphasized that the preservation of Tibetan culture is the "highest priority" and explained its success with the establishment of Tibetan schools, right after the Dalai Lama fled to India:

That time, the Indian prime minister was Pandit Nehru. His Holiness first priority was to give quality education to the children and to maintain the identity and culture in the foreign countries. So His Holiness urged Nehru to keep a proper education for the Tibetans in exile. [...] So this is how we started. From those schools so far we have still remained as Tibetans. Otherwise we might have been lost in the Indian melting pot of cultures (Interview Phuntsok, October 11, 2019).

² "Losar" is the Tibetan New Year, a festival in Tibetan Buddhism.

According to Phuntsok, about 50,000 Tibetan children have passed through a TCV school. This is equivalent to about one-third of the Tibetan population in exile. Phuntsok's story itself is closely linked to the TCV. After he lost his parents at the age of 10, one of the TCVs in India took care of him and his two sisters. At the end of the interview, he proudly said: "Now I work here. A product of TCV School. A community serves back to their community" (Interview Phuntsok, October 11, 2019).

In all the interviews, the informants were asked about the preservation of Tibetan culture, how much importance they attached to it, and why. Three issues that were mentioned the most were investigated further. First, the research informants referred to the importance of preserving Tibetan culture because it is under threat in the homeland. The 24 year-old Semkyi was born in India and is currently working for one of the oldest Tibetan institutions in Indian exile. She described the situation in Tibet:

We have to protect our religion, our culture. Right now, Tibetans are facing many worse situations under the Republic of China, but I think, we are here in a land of democracy. We can speak. We can say whatever we want. [...] There are still many Tibetans in Tibet who are voiceless. So I think, we are the voice of voiceless Tibetans in Tibet (Interview Semkyi, 09 20, 2019).

To Semkyi, being the voice of the voiceless means standing up for Tibetans in Tibet. During the analysis of the collected data, it became clear that the context of preserving Tibetan identity and culture in exile is always political as well. Lobsang, who was born in Dharamsala, described the Tibetan culture as a "weapon without violence" against the Chinese Regime. He emphasized the importance of Tibetan schools in exile and the clear separations of Tibetans and Indians (Interview Lobsang, September 21, 2019). He felt quite sure that the Tibetan culture would have been lost and forgotten if the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in Exile had not worked to create separated Tibetan settlements and schools in exile. The young TCV student Kunzang expressed similar thoughts: "The only thing that people cannot destroy is Tibetan culture". Her classmate Dorje went even further by saying: "If we lose our culture, I think we lose everything" (Interview Dorje, October 12, 2019). Because of this fear of the destruction of Tibetan culture in the homeland, the aim and pressure to hold up Tibetan culture, language, and religion is high. In addition, what grows out of this effort is a sense of responsibility to fulfil this aim. In this context, Phuntsok stated that it would be the duty of Tibetans in exile to revive Tibetan culture, as the "Chinese are doing their best in the destruction of the culture in Tibet" (Interview Phuntsok, October 11, 2019).

All research informants explained that they felt responsible for maintaining Tibetan culture and identity. Nevertheless, the data revealed a conflict of ideas between some young Tibetans born in India and others born in Tibet. Some of the Tibetan-born interview partners mentioned that the youth born in India did not embody the same sense of responsibility.

Thinley grew up in the eastern part of Tibet. At the age of 14, he came to India together with his sister. He stated that young Tibetans in Indian exile would attach greater importance to education than to Tibetan religion and family values:

In Tibet, to study is important, but beyond that, your parents will ask you to pray and chant mantras. So these are the differences. And the way we consider our family values, also different. In Tibet, your parents are like gods, so you do whatever it takes to take care of your parents (Interview Thinley, September 16, 2019).

Thinley clearly feared the Indian and Western influence on Tibetan culture. He went on about Tibetan youth watching Bollywood movies and their poor skills in speaking and writing Tibetan. He added, "maybe in 50 years, it won't be any kind of Tibetan identity" (Interview Thinley, September 16, 2019). Dawa was born in the same area in Tibet as Thinley but spent his childhood in Lhasa. He came to India on foot, an exhausting 15-day journey over the Himalaya Mountains. He also mentioned "a kind of inside-conflict in

Tibetan society” (Interview, Dawa, September 27, 2019). In his opinion, Tibetans, who were born in Tibet, would take much more responsibility in preserving Tibetan culture. As an explanation, he described the different circumstances that certain persons grew up with. Tibetans born in India would “enjoy a more easy life, with an excellent education” (Dawa, September 27, 2019). Because of this, they would not have a sense of responsibility to change anything. On the other side, Tibetans born in Tibet who took the risk to escape to India would have more courage to stand up for themselves and work harder. Gonpo, born in Tibet too, also spoke of “them”, referring to Tibetans born in India, and “us”, persons born in Tibet. However, he unified both groups when he spoke of the belief in His Holiness the Dalai Lama:

It is hard for them and us to come together. They have a different opinion. But what they do, they believe in His Holiness. Whenever His Holiness says something, they follow his teachings (Interview Gonpo, September 27, 2019).

The above-described examples show that some research informants spoke about different senses of responsibility of people who were born in India. Nevertheless, everyone attached high value to Tibetan culture.

After describing the first two often-mentioned reasons for the importance of preserving Tibetan culture, the fact that culture and language are under threat in the homeland and the resulting sense of responsibility to maintain cultural identity, the third topic that often came up in the interviews was a distinction between China and Chinese people. This originates, again, from the political context. Thinley first argued that the Chinese Government seeks to homogenize the Chinese population, and therefore attempts to destroy Tibetan culture: “Tibetans only differ from China in their culture” (Interview Thinley, September 16, 2019). The young TCV student Dorje expressed herself similarly:

If we lose our culture, the outside world is looking in the same faces of Chinese and Tibetans. There is no difference anymore. If we preserve our culture, there is a difference between us and the Chinese (Interview Dorje, October 12, 2019).

In this sense, identity becomes political, and the desire to preserve Tibetan culture and identity in exile is, to a large extent, of a political nature. Some informants born in Tibet mentioned that they did not differentiate between the Chinese when they lived in Tibet. Yangdol stated that she learned about an issue between Tibet and China only when she arrived in exile. She did feel discrimination back in Tibet from Chinese authorities, but she only started to realize and understand it fully when she learned about it in Dharamsala. She described a situation in a Chinese city where a restaurant was advertising jobs. The job description underlined that Chinese applicants would earn a lot more than Tibetan people.

At that time, I didn't know what that means. But now I see the discrimination. [...] When I was in Tibet, I didn't think that Tibet was another country. When I arrived in India, I learned a lot of things. Now I can really feel the discrimination under the Chinese Government (Interview Yangdol, September 22, 2019).

Yangdol learned about the suppressed Tibetan culture in her homeland and makes an effort to keep it alive in exile. My research informants listed the following as aspects of Tibetan culture they wanted to maintain: speaking Tibetan; following the Tibetan religion, specifically Tibetan Buddhist philosophy; wearing traditional clothes; eating Tibetan food; and embodying certain behaviours and habits. Culture and identity, therefore, were more valuable for certain persons as well as the community, which also creates a sense of duty among the Tibetan youth. The Tibetans born in exile, in that context, seem to face even higher expectations.

5.3. (New) Ways of Expression

New media and globalisation offer new extensive opportunities for communication and expression. The use of the internet enables communities to stay connected all over the world. Many persons I spoke to during the stay in Dharamsala mentioned the problems of staying connected with their families and friends in Tibet. Because of the control of social media, certain websites and apps in China, even some simple political information can get a person in Tibet in danger for communicating across the borders.

Tenzin mentioned:

I can't talk to my family freely. Because WeChat is controlled. My family is scared to talk over the phone. We are not free. Even here, we are not free, because I can't talk to my family (Interview Tenzin 09 20, 2019).

Therefore, while other diasporic communities benefit from new media to stay connected with persons in the homeland, in the case of the Tibetan diaspora, the benefits rather lie in the connection with Tibetans outside of Tibet. Media, therefore, can be used to connect with other Tibetan communities in exile. Dolma spoke very positively about Tibetan youth using social media to connect and unify in their Tibetan identity:

You know, all of us are different and unique but at the same time, we are all tied to this one common thing. No matter, whether you are in Lhasa or in Europe or Dharamsala, or Tokyo or whatever, there are such different lives. We have such different habits and ways of speaking, but there is always this common thing you know this "Yes I am a Tibetan", that feeling that unifies all of us and that is exactly what you could see when you observe the interactions in social media. You know the online platform is the main platform for engagement for like youth across the globe. Tibetan youth across the globe, youth in general but especially Tibetan youth, they kind of engagement style, we have online is so amazing. [...] That is the kind of culture that we are shaping right now, it is not like limited to particular it is it includes clothes, and language, and food habits. All of these are included, but it is not limited to that (Interview Dolma, September 18, 2019).

Dolma spoke of a shared feeling of tibetaness, where fixed traditions play a smaller role. Furthermore, she mentioned how youth in particular would use social media platforms to express and show their identity and way of life. Several informants told me about watching Losar celebrations on Instagram and YouTube from all over the globe. Kunzang expressed positive emotions about shared online experiences:

[...] there are some of my friends abroad. And when I view their stories on Instagram, I see them celebrating Losar, wearing Chuba, having Tibetans reunited (Interview Kunzang, October 12, 2019).

Blogs, chat rooms and internet forums furthermore provide opportunities to connect and discuss.

The Tibetan Government in Exile also uses the wide reach of the World Wide Web. For example, the teachings of the Dalai Lama were live-streamed. Some informants mentioned the possibility of watching the teachings online. As most of these teachings take place in Dharamsala itself, another informant thought of watching online streaming as something lazy. "Many young Tibetans say I can watch it on the internet. Some will do. Some are saying that, but then they forget" (Interview Norbu, October 10, 2019). Furthermore, demonstrations, cultural events and actions of the (new) solidarity movements take place in Dharamsala on a regular basis. These were often organized and arranged by Tibetan youth organisations like Students for a Free Tibet and the Tibetan Youth Congress. Movie screenings, discussions and talks were often arranged to inform tourists and interested

persons about Tibetan exile and the situation in Tibet and to support the organisations' goals.

An often-referenced movement is the "Lhakar movement", a self-reliance movement, which was started in Tibet. The name means "white Wednesday", which refers to the Dalai Lama's birthday, a Wednesday (Chatalic 2015: 100). The concept is to wear Tibetan clothes, speak Tibetan only, and refuse to buy and consume from Chinese shops or restaurants every Wednesday. Some of the informants mentioned this movement, and I could also observe this practice on my daily walks through the town. Nyima says: "On Wednesdays, we are only talking pure Tibetan. We are never talking English. We never mix it. [...] we only wear Tibetan clothes" (Interview Nyima, October 05, 2019).

5.4. Interim Summary

The Tibetan exile community only makes up a small percentage of the full Tibetan population. While Tibetans in Tibet cannot use their voice and hold up their identity freely, the Tibetan exile community, guided by the Tibetan Government in Exile, feels the responsibility and need to form a homogenous unity to stand up against the destruction of culture and ethnicity in their homeland. Some Tibetans arriving in Dharamsala seem to be disappointed in their expectation of a more homogenous Tibetan exile community. Alongside this narrative built in exile, some young Tibetans born in India take up a different position. They have created their own space within their drawn cultural boundaries that include Indian cultural aspects like food, music, or movies they grew up with. Nevertheless, they identify as Tibetans, just like those born in Tibet.

Every informant attached a high value to Tibetan culture and clearly identified as Tibetan. What differs is the personal definition of culture and the issues the individuals attach more or less importance to. Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan language are often seen as the most important aspects of Tibetan culture. As these issues are facing a growing threat in the homeland, the pressure to preserve these items is increasing among all of the exiled Tibetans. This also leads to increase identity conflicts among the youth. Tibetans born in India grew up in a multicultural context and are further influenced by westernization and globalisation. As a result, young Tibetans born in India are often blamed for being "impure Tibetans", for example, when they are not fluent speakers of a Tibetan language. Nevertheless, it seems that many young Tibetans are taking part in new movements, in person and online, to express and cherish Tibetan identity and culture. Therefore, new media provides further opportunities. In this context, the use of new media opens possibilities to connect with Tibetans in exile in other countries, especially those without existing Tibetan communities.

What unified all of the research informants is a shared common history, compassion for their homeland, and their participation in cultural aspects like language, religion, and tradition, to a certain extent. Nevertheless, the fact which is often ignored is that culture is neither static nor fixed but is subject to change and influence. Cultural boundaries were drawn differently by every interviewee, even though all of the informants identified as having the same nationality and ethnicity.

6. CHALLENGES IN EXILE

This chapter discusses the challenges and perspectives regarding exile. First, this section addresses the situation in India in general and Dharamsala in particular. Here, the inaccessibility of Indian citizenship and the resulting difficulties in finding work and travelling and how these challenges influence the processes of identification as Tibetans are addressed. Some informants asked rhetorically, how can someone feel “at home” in a country that does not permit them to become citizens?

6.1. Economic Situations in India

Chapter 3.2 described formal circumstances and political regulation of the refugee status of Tibetans in Indian exile. The problems and aspects were confirmed by the informants in numerous ways, although individuals find different perspectives or ways to deal with them. Most of the research informants confirmed that they experience a difficult economic situation in Dharamsala specifically or India in general. The Tibetan schools offer a quite well-structured education system. At the same time, there are far fewer employment opportunities for Tibetans than there are for Indian citizens. Nevertheless, some of the informants mentioned good chances in Dharamsala to get employment. Nyima, who works at a small café in Dharamsala, said:

It is very easy. There are cheap rooms. If you have no language skills. There is one girl and one boy, they work here, but they were farmers. They don't speak the language, but they work here (Interview Nyima, October 05, 2019).

The definition of a “good job” is, of course, subjective and also related to one's own qualifications. In general, there are opportunities for people with higher education to get a job that is commensurate with their education. Therefore, it also depends on the claim people have. Gonpo, in this context, mentioned: “you can have a job here. Because they start from the basis, like cleaning dishes and so on” (Interview Gonpo, September 27, 2019).

Tsundue, on the other hand, described the job market as being full of competition and low payment, especially in high education jobs. He has a bachelor's and master's in organic chemistry and worked for a big pharmacy company where he could have built a lucrative career. However, after one year, Tsundue decided to quit his job with the aim to contribute something to his community.

I realized, when I keep working there, I might make some money, but I won't be able to do much for my society. So, I decided to come here to Dharamsala. First, I volunteered here in this organisation (Interview Tsundue, October 08, 2019).

Tsundue now works as the education secretary of a Tibetan NGO in Dharamsala. Lobsang has a bachelor's and master's degree from Delhi University, where he studied the German language. Because of his German language skills, he wanted to give the interview in German. He told me that it was challenging to find a well-paying job, even after he gained an advantage because of his language skills. He took his first job in an Indian call centre, where he had to sell software items, but quit after one week because of moral concerns. Lobsang is currently working as a German teacher in a Tibetan NGO.

The challenges Tibetans face when trying to gain Indian citizenship does not only influence job opportunities but also education itself. Tibetans, even the ones born in India, are seen by the state as foreigners. Therefore, they have to pay the fees for foreign students for higher education studies at Indian universities. Another disadvantage is that a lack of a passport makes it difficult to travel legally outside of India. Lobsang, who had travelled to Germany a few years ago, told me about his experiences on his way back to India. At the airport in Germany, the airport personnel did not know about the IC, and it took some time until someone could confirm the legality of the document: "I got the strong feeling that this is happening because I'm stateless" (Interview Lobsang, September 21, 2019). The problems continued when he arrived at the Indian airport. At the immigration control, Lobsang struggled over whether to go in the line foreigners or in the line for Indian citizens. As someone who was born in India and spent all his life there, but without a proper passport, he just felt out of place. The situation became even more confusing for him, when the airport staff at the counters started to send him back and forth, because they were also unsure about which line Lobsang belonged in. "It was really hard to endure. At this time, I really felt like a second or even third-class citizen in this country" (Interview Lobsang, September 21, 2019).

Dolma described another case related to travelling and the problems of getting Indian citizenship:

I would give you an example: one of my friends who did not have citizenship before, he has always done really well in school and in college and he is a junior manager in one of the biggest branches of bank in Bombay. So, while he was really doing very well for himself and earning a lot and he is succeeding a lot in his career, he ran into a wall, when his work required travelling abroad to Singapore and all of these different countries. So, all over Asia. He had to travel. But because he didn't have a passport, he only had the Tibetan IC, the company told him 'you can't travel if you don't have a passport. The scope for achieving the potential that he could have was limited absolutely by that. Just because of one single document (Interview Dolma, September 18, 2019).

This example shows that a lot of young, well qualified, and ambitious Tibetans face numerous disadvantages on the labour market. Despite these challenges, many informants mentioned that they were very thankful to the Indian Government. Tsundue said:

We don't get an Indian passport. So, we can't feel really Indian. They gave us a separate land. So, we can preserve the culture. There are sometimes incidents with Indians, but that is normal. In a broad way we are extremely thankful for the Indian Government. Fortunately, we came to this country. India is very diverse, and they accepted us easily because they are used to so many different cultures and religions (Interview Tsundue, October 08, 2019).

6.2. Leaving India

India takes an important position in the context of the Tibetan diaspora as the hostland for most of the exiled Tibetans. In the following, when I talked to my research informants about leaving India to move to other countries, they spoke of 'going abroad' as if India itself was their homeland. According to most of the research informants, living in the hostland India means living closer to Tibetan culture compared to any other hostland, as it is the place of residence of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Government in Exile, and numerous Tibetan settlements. Regarding the notions on the hostland, these surely depend on how long the certain persons have been living in India or if they grew up in Tibet. In the first case, India is was not perceived as a fully foreign country itself, even though the previous chapter showed that many Tibetans in India struggle to feel 'at home' under the specific conditions in the country.

Furthermore, in the interviews, the issue of cultural preservation was picked up again when I was asking about the large number of (young) Tibetans who are leaving India in order to settle down in other countries (outside China), mostly in North America and Europe. I asked the informants if they would consider leaving India and if they saw a risk that Tibetan culture could be in danger of being 'forgotten' if they left, in contrast to the quite closed Tibetan communities in India, with their own education system.

A common opinion was that the (economic) conditions in "Western" countries would be much better. Dawa talked about the poor economic conditions for young Tibetans in India, referring especially to the young, well qualified Tibetans. Going abroad, he considered it as "the best way to do" (Interview, Dawa, September 27, 2019). Panang expressed herself similarly and added the issue of legal citizenships and the resulting sense of acceptance:

It is not just India, but Nepal, Bhutan etc. I think in terms of facility, in terms of future, security; the western countries provide better opportunities and better respect; equal citizenship. That is something, apart from the financial aspect, is pushing more and more Tibetans to go abroad to Western countries (Interview Panang, October 10, 2019).

Most of the informants spoke about the possibly better economic conditions abroad. In particular, informants with higher education hoped for occupations in academic institutions. The issue of leaving the Tibetan communities in India to move to European or North American countries can also produce inner conflicts relating to cultural identities. Some of the informants suggested that the wish for a better future and being financially stable contrasted with the responsibility to preserve Tibetan culture and identity. The reason is that in order to achieve the latter, they felt like they would need to live inside or with a Tibetan community, which is not possible in many countries. Nyima expressed herself very emotionally about Tibetan youth going abroad, as she was sure that these persons would never speak Tibetan again. Gonpo argued that many other young Tibetans would forget about the situation in Tibet because of their freedom in India and the presence of the Dalai Lama.

We are in a foreign country. I came from Tibet to a foreign country, and they still want to leave to (another) foreign country. [...] They forget that they are from Tibet, so they go abroad (Interview Gonpo, September 27, 2019).

It can be assumed that, in the context of the interview, Gonpo was mainly referring to young Tibetans born in India. Thinley described both positive and negative factors regarding the issue. He understands that young Tibetans prefer to move to other countries. He argued that besides the responsibility of preserving cultural identity, every human being would still be an individual with the right to live life in a personal manner, apart from the certain community and ethnic group one feels responsible for. On the other hand, Thinley was also worried that aspects of Tibetan culture could become forgotten and would not be available for the next generations. In this sense, he mainly referred to the risk of the

disappearance of the Tibetan language when moving abroad: “Somehow we are losing the whole generations. That’s what I feel. But I understand when it attracts many people (Interview Thinley, September 16, 2019). Panang took a different view and was optimistic about the preservation of Tibetan culture outside of India’s Tibetan communities:

After all the travelling and after all the studies I have done, I don’t think so. I felt like, in India we were able to conserve ourselves in a very different manner, and I see Tibetan communities being established and instead of Tibetaness being destroyed, I see it becoming a foundation. I see different countries providing a platform for this. This is the unique thing I see, with Tibetans going abroad. So, I feel that this preservation of Tibetan culture is being pushed and upheld instead of being pushed down. When I look at the younger generation, I see many Tibetans these days; I see more and more celebrating the Tibetaness. Celebrating the culture and falling in love with it. Abroad – I think when we live in a Tibetan community. We feel like, ok what is Tibetaness, what a big deal? But when you are abroad, and feel like you are the only Tibetan, then we think, how we are different, how we are unique. So you tend to preserve it more, you tend to identify more with one identity (Interview Panang, October 10, 2019).

Panang responded that people would also engage with Tibetan culture, identity, and its preservation when living in a community where these aspects are not common. Like one of the above-mentioned reasons for preserving culture in the Tibetan diaspora, because it is under threat in the homeland, this motive could be used again in the case of moving to countries that do not currently host insulated Tibetan communities. More precisely, the sense of responsibility felt by Tibetan to maintain their own cultural identity is growing.

6.3. Interim Summary

The challenges faced by Tibetan youth in exile are continuously overshadowed by the regulations of the Indian citizenship laws and the situation in the Indian job market. The Tibetan schools provide a high-quality education for young people who later struggle to find work or achieve higher education at universities and have limited rights to get positions in official departments. The limited rights to travel outside of the country is just another factor that contributed to a feeling of not being fully accepted. Besides the disadvantages resulting from official regulations, the mentioned challenges are also emotionally charged. During the interviews, respondents had a palpable desire to feel at home in the hostland, especially for those who were born in India. Instead, young Tibetans face barriers created by the Indian state and sometimes discrimination from Indian citizens. However, respondents also conveyed gratefulness towards the Indian Government for providing help after the Dalai Lama’s flight. Furthermore, it has to be added that there could be a large number of Tibetans who would not even take Indian citizenship if it was possible, again for the sake of preserving their Tibetan identity. But there still are many Tibetans who would take the chance, maybe not to become “Indian”, but to get the opportunities associated with an Indian passport.

Most of the informants understood the growing migration away from India as the result of the mentioned economic and social reasons. Nevertheless, when it comes to the preservation of Tibetan culture outside of Tibet and India, some informants feared a decline of Tibetan cultural aspects, like the Tibetan language, would result from migration to other countries. Others were optimistic about Tibetan youth cherishing Tibetan identity all around the globe. The feeling of responsibility for maintaining Tibetan cultural aspects and language and the pressure some informants felt to identify only with the Tibetan identity therefore also influence Tibetan youth’s plans to go abroad.

7. THE HOMELAND: TIBET (AN) 'S FUTURE

A multitude of factors influence the life and identity politics of Tibetan youth, Tibet's future, and the future of the Tibetan people in both Tibet and India. This chapter first addresses the role of the Dalai Lama, as his position often influences the opinion and views of the informants on Tibet. Regarding the Dalai Lama, interviewees often mentioned the Dalai Lama's age, the potential consequences of his death, and the potential for a peaceful solution for Tibet. Regarding a peaceful solution, the Tibetan communities are divided into the followers of the Middle Way Approach and those who support full independence for Tibet. The following chapter will show that the importance of the Dalai Lama for the Tibetan communities clearly influences this debate. The role of the Dalai Lama is closely involved with the perspectives of Tibetans in and outside Tibet.

7.1. The Role of the Dalai Lama

At the time of writing, the current 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso is 85 years old. In Chapter 3.1, the importance of the institution of the Dalai Lama for Tibetan people in a historical, political, religious, and cultural context was described. These issues arose when the informants were asked about their personal thoughts and beliefs about him.

The Dalai Lama is believed to be an enlightened Bodhisattva, reincarnated out of compassion. Today, more and more people believe in him in a different way. They also see him as a highly respected and wise human being. During the interviews, both beliefs were mentioned. Some of the informants clearly drew a line between the beliefs of the older generations and the younger. Thinley said:

[...] elder people, they believe in him no matter what, even if he does a mistake, they wouldn't consider it as a mistake. 100 per cent belief in him. The younger generation [...] they believe in his decisions because he is a good man. [...] So, people like me, I don't believe the Dalai Lama is going to send me somewhere, these spiritual things, or if I die, he is going to help me. But I really respect him, because he has worked hard for Tibet (Interview Thinley, September 16, 2019).

Thinley furthermore described that the older generations would believe in the Dalai Lama without question and even without knowing a lot about his decisions. In contrast, he depicted the younger generation's belief as more "rational". Thinley was the only informant born in Tibet who openly took the position of the Dalai Lama being a human being. In contrast, several research informants, born in India, expressed a similar perspective. Dolma told me:

The Dalai Lama actually did try to tell Tibetan people, again and again that we should be the ones taking our own responsibility for our own future, and not just completely blindly saying “ok if the Dalai Lama wishes, then we will go there.” Because that was never his desire (Interview Dolma, September 18, 2019).

With these words, Dolma intended to say that the Dalai Lama tried and still tries to prepare Tibetans for the future without him as their spiritual leader. Despite these views, I did speak to young Tibetans, who believe in the Dalai Lama as a god. All of these persons were born in Tibet: “We believe he is a reincarnation, a god. He always says he is a simple monk, a simple human being. He cares for us” (Interview Gonpo, September 27, 2019).

Whether or not the informants believed in the divine reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, everyone spoke about his general importance for the Tibetan community. Many of them expressed their high respect and talked about being very thankful for his effort for Tibet and Tibetan people in exile. Some mentioned that he keeps all Tibetans together and is the main reason for the preservation of Tibetan culture in exile: “He is not only our spiritual leader, he is not only important for the religious aspect, but our Tibetan culture. He is the one who promotes it” (Interview Kunzang, October 12, 2019). Therefore, the Dalai Lama is seen as the embodiment of Tibetan culture and Tibetan Buddhism. As the spiritual leader and the former political leader of Tibet, he exerts a significant amount of influence. Since his flight to India, he has actively informed the world about the situation in and outside Tibet and openly talked in numerous countries about human rights violations. Furthermore, he is a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize and gives teachings about Tibetan Buddhism and Philosophy all around the world.

The varied beliefs held about the Dalai Lama influence the different perspectives people have on the future of Tibet and the Tibetan exile. Some informants believed that the Dalai Lama, as a powerful reincarnation, will not leave the earth until Tibet gets its autonomous status. But no matter whether the informants believe him to be a god or not, all the persons who spoke about him were united in their worries about how the situation for Tibetans will change after his death. “If we would not have him, we would have nothing now”, said Dorje, referring to the situation of Tibetans in exile (Interview Dorje, October 12, 2019). Therefore, Tibetan people take his advice and because of his effort, Tibetans were able to settle in Indian exile. “Once he is gone, Tibet will be China I think” (Interview Norbu, October 10, 2019). Norbu expressed that “other people” would first think of the Dalai Lama when they heard of Tibetans. His institution would therefore represent all Tibetans in and outside of Tibet and their cultural entirety. People consequently fear that the outside world will forget about the Tibet issue after the Dalai Lama’s death, which would provide an easy way for the Chinese regime’s plans. Further concerns refer to different possible situations in the future after the Dalai Lama’s death. One is that the Chinese Government will present “their” Dalai Lama, who will be installed as the spiritual leader of Tibetans but will be a representative of the Chinese Government’s doctrine. Gonpo worried that this will happen:

It is hard for us. China will bring an own Dalai Lama. But His Holiness promised us that we will have our own autonomous region, while he is still here. [...] We have to stay positive. We believe in him. He can decide if he will reincarnate. Maybe he will be the last Dalai Lama. It is our time to stay united as Tibetans (Interview Gonpo, September 27, 2019).

I learned about another possible consequence of the Dalai Lama’s death when I attended a documentary screening about Tibet and its subsequent discussion. There, the young Tibetan moderator compared the “inside of the Tibetan youth” as a “shaken bottle of Coca-Cola, whose cap would fall off, in the moment the Dalai Lama dies” (author’s field notes, September 27, 2019). He implied that the Dalai Lama is the only one who is currently preventing the non-violent movements from turning into armed resistance. None of the interview informants mentioned this possibility, but I heard about this issue a few times

during daily conversations. Furthermore, this indicates again the possible discrepancies existing among the young Tibetan community in Dharamsala, described previously.

Another concern about the Dalai Lama's death is that the political situation for Tibetans in Indian exile could change. Many Tibetans fear that they are only allowed to stay in India, albeit as guests and not as citizens, because of the importance and global influence of the Dalai Lama. Dorje mentioned his fear about the future:

It is going to be difficult for us. At that time His Holiness, he is right now very old. So, one day, he won't be here, and who knows if the Indian Government will let us stay in India (Interview Dorje, October 12, 2019).

Gonpo shared similar thoughts. The concern implies that the given benefits are only provided because of the Dalai Lama:

After the [the Dalai Lama] is gone, I think India won't let stay us here anymore. India is giving this to His Holiness. If we don't try to stand as a united front in following His holiness, we are dumped (Interview Gonpo, September 27, 2019).

All research informants attached high importance to the Dalai Lama, whether as their spiritual leader, a divine being, or just a simple human. Furthermore, he promotes and embodies Tibetan culture and identity. Regardless of these opinions, they were unified in their concern about a changing situation after the Dalai Lama's death. The Dalai Lama functions as the link between Tibet and Tibetan exile, and the voice of both.

7.2. Tibet's Future and Future Desires

The diverse feelings for the Dalai Lama also influenced the answers about the ongoing debate about the Middle Way Approach and full independence. 15 of the 17 informants spoke about their position in the debate. This topic was not mentioned in the two expert interviews. Nine persons supported the Middle Way Approach, while six were demanding full independence for Tibet. It was noticeable that only one person who was born in Tibet advocated for independence. At the same time, this person, Thinley, was the only informant born in Tibet, who clearly considered the Dalai Lama as a human being, not divine.

Most of the persons who follow the Middle Way Approach mentioned that they would do so because they would follow the Dalai Lama and his will. Norbu stated that they followed the Dalai Lama out of deep trust and belief in him. Kunzang shared this opinion about the Dalai Lama's approach to find a peaceful solution for Tibet: "Middle Way Approach is what His Holiness favours. [...] He thinks it is the way of eliminating conflicts" (Interview Kunzang, October 12, 2019). Others mentioned the possible deterioration of the economic situation in Tibet when becoming independent. Lobsang wanted to make clear that he would not vote for the Middle Way Approach only because the Dalai Lama prefers it. He considered that Tibet, as a free and independent country, would have to start building a completely new economy and industry. He thought that this would be much easier and faster to achieve under Chinese authority and with the help of the Chinese regime. Gonpo shared the opinion that the Middle Way is the easier solution because he considered the fight for independence to be completely hopeless:

If we fight for independence, it will be a long and hard fight. We have nothing at all. They will kill us directly. It is better the Middle Way Approach (Interview Gonpo, September 27, 2019).

Panang also mentioned economic reasons. She was afraid that China and Tibet would never be able to build a trading partnership if Tibet were to become independent. Tenzin

at first struggled to decide between these two approaches before he expressed himself in favour of full independence for Tibet.

Tibet was independent. So at least we need to ask for this. We need to think. Maybe fighting independence is right for Tibetans. And also the Middle Way Approach, maybe it is very good. It is easier for all countries. But still, for me, at a deeper heart, I don't think China would change, when we have autonomy. [...] I'm still observing, Middle Way or independence. It is difficult, also for the community. People who talk about complete independence; they will say [about them] "oh he is against the Dalai Lama" (Interview Tenzin, September 20, 2019).

The main argument by the people supporting independence is that they felt they would never be able to trust the Chinese Government to let Tibet live freely in an autonomous way. In fact, when the Tibetan delegates signed the Seventeen Point Agreement, the Chinese Government already promised autonomous rights and political and religious freedom. These promises were never kept. Thinley added to his decision: "In terms of the Middle Way, if we step down a little, China is going to step over us. They will not going to have mercy with us" (Interview Thinley, September 16, 2019). Dolma expressed similar views. In her opinion, the Chinese authorities could never be trusted:

The Middle Way sounds really nice [...] but then you also have to realise, who we are trying to negotiate with. We are trying to negotiate with a bully (Interview Dolma, September 18, 2019).

These statements show the extreme distrust in the Chinese Government, as well as the great fear of the total destruction of Tibetan culture and the Tibetan communities in Tibet. Some informants who favored the solution of full independence for Tibet expressed the thought that many people would only openly support the Middle Way Approach because they do not want to be seen as someone who does not follow the Dalai Lama.

Semkyi works with a Tibetan organisation that has been fighting for Tibet's independence since its founding. During our conversation, she told me that it is often assumed that the organisation generally rejects the Dalai Lama because of its support for full independence. In daily conversations, some Tibetans mentioned the idea that after the Dalai Lama's death, more people would turn towards the aim of a fully independent Tibet. Because of the concern of being judged for not following the Dalai Lama's opinions, many young Tibetans might just be afraid of openly declaring themselves in favour of full independence. Therefore, it can be assumed that the position towards the Dalai Lama can be another factor that exerts pressure upon the Tibetan youth.

In Chapter 6.2, the research informants' answers about going abroad and the situation in the hostland were described. Some of the informants also expressed their thoughts about going (back) to their homeland. In most cases, this was more about sharing their dreams and talking about the desire than an actual plan to go there. Lobsang, who was born in India, expressed his wish to visit Tibet at least once:

I would like to go to Tibet one day. I have never seen my country, only in television and in pictures. My parents saw it, but I didn't. I have no idea how Tibet's air smells (Interview Lobsang, September 21, 2019).

In Lobsang's words, there is a distinct desire for Tibet, the homeland he was not born in. Emotional expressions about Tibet could be sensed in all of the interviews. Panang described her wish for the future:

When I talk about independence, I see this image: A beautiful image about how I see him [the Dalai Lama] going back to Potala, as our future leader of a democratic Tibet. I see a Tibetan national flag, flying high in a democratic Tibet. So, when I look into it and think about these ideas about equality and democracy. I feel like only an independent Tibet could assure that change (Interview Panang, October 10, 2019).

Thinley, who clearly declared himself in favour of a fully independent Tibet, spoke emotionally about why he will not go back to Tibet anytime soon:

I have my whole family, everything there. I can go back and live happily. But why I'm still here, is fighting for independence, which is hard because we not just fantasize, and I feel that this is a mess and we can't make it forever, but still we are fighting for people suffering (Interview Thinley, September 16, 2019).

Thinley, who works for a political Tibetan organisation, felt strongly engaged with the fight for Tibetan independence, and moreover, with the Tibetans back in the homeland. Therefore, he stated that he wished to use his rights of speech and opinion in India to campaign for Tibet's freedom. To set this in contrast, the young monk Tashi mentioned he would go back to Tibet soon. He came to India to study the English language and to visit important Buddhist sites and never planned to stay forever. He was aware of possible problems he could face when going back: "I'm not a politician, so I can stay in China. I'm not that interested in politics. Of course, I could get a problem because I went to India" (Interview Tashi, October 15, 2019).

7.3. Interim Summary

The Dalai Lama, whether seen as divine or human, was important for all the informants in this study. What differed was the interviewees' actual belief in him and in his decisions. This was illustrated when the informants talked about their opinion on the Dalai Lama's and the CTA's Middle Way Approach. Several informants mentioned that they support this idea because the Dalai Lama wishes it. Others mentioned they would have been discriminated against if they did not follow this approach because they would be perceived as not following the Dalai Lama by association. The notion that people would not feel confident enough to speak against this approach shows again a kind of pressure on how Tibetans have to identify and behave. Reflecting on the research informants' thoughts, it can be assumed that in whatever way, something will change after the Dalai Lama's death. How and what will change will depend on his decisions about his reincarnation, the Chinese Government's reaction and political actions, and the coherence among the Tibetan communities. The answers of the informants varied from expressions of fear and insecurity to the prediction of a possible armed resistance in and outside of Tibet against the Chinese authorities. The data outlined in this chapter, showed again how cultural identities are formed and perceived in their political contexts.

8. HOMELAND, HOSTLAND AND THE TIBETAN YOUTH

“Cultural identities are [...] subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (Hall 1993:394).

The field study and the research informants’ interviews show that the interaction of the three facets Stuart Hall describes are present in the construction of Tibetan youth’ identities. “Power”, in this case, consists of the three governments in the homeland (the Chinese Government in Tibet), the hostland (the Indian Government), and the exile communities (Tibetan Government in Exile). The last point can refer to the communities themselves as well as the actual Tibetan Government in Exile and its former political leader, the Dalai Lama. In short, the process of constructing cultural identities of young Tibetans in Dharamsala is affected by components from all three contexts, the hostland, homeland and the community in exile. The connections between them will be examined in the following.

Regarding the presented theoretical approach, Safran’s characteristics of diasporic communities can be recognized in the field study data. The previous chapters showed that many young Tibetans intensively engage with Tibetan culture, religion, and language and are generally oriented towards their homeland. The concrete implementations and focuses vary to a certain extent. These heterogenic ways of defining aspects of individual lives should never be underestimated. The reason becomes clear while investigating the research results: When asking the question if one would identify as Tibetan and attach values to the Tibetan culture, every one of the research informants would answer in an extremely similar way. However, a deeper investigation of this answer showed that the individual interpretations of these answers differed and even contradicted each other, especially regarding the existing conflict between some Tibetan youths born in India and others born in Tibet. This thesis cannot answer who constitutes a ‘real’ Tibetan or truly attest to the resulting pressure of this conflicted identity. To better understand this struggle, all of the segments organising and influencing the Tibetan communities should be considered, as well as the older generations and further aspects. But some factors that can be named in this context, and referencing Safran’s characteristics of culture once again, are the Tibetan institutions. First of all, the Tibetan Government in Exile as a political institution has provided an education system that cares about and promotes the preservation of the Tibetan language and cultural aspects. Furthermore, numerous cultural and social organisations engage with the current situation in Tibet and in exile and continually promote Tibetan identity. On the religious side, there is the Dalai Lama, whose importance for the Tibetan community and young research informants was clear during my time in Dharamsala. These institutions enable Tibetans to maintain their cultural identity,

its facets and present the homeland Tibet, which faces continuous suppression and cultural genocide. At the same time, these institutions provide a more stable notion of Tibetan cultural aspects. Because these are threatened in the homeland, the need to preserve them in the exact same manner is seen as even more important. Therefore, another result can be the urge not to adopt any other cultural aspects that do not belong traditionally to those of the homeland. For young second generation Tibetans who were born in India, and consequently the further generations in exile, this can hardly be possible, as shown in the research informants' notions. Many young Tibetans speak Indian languages and English more fluently than Tibetan. Drawing the line back to Hall's concepts, this is a further example of the hybridity and heterogeneity of diasporic experience (Hall 1990:235). Based on Hall's two approaches towards cultural identities, the research informants' examples reflect shared historical and cultural contexts and a homogenous frame, but they are also part of an unstated and continuous process. As culture is not seen as fixed, it is not possible to maintain Tibetan culture in the hostland in its "actual" form, as it would have been subject to a continuous process in a free homeland too. But the continuous destruction of Tibetan language, religion, and culture in Tibet should not be underestimated and should not be viewed as irrelevant, as these aspects, as well as the people who fight for them, face an actual acute danger. In this context, the Tibetan diaspora differs from many others. The events that led to the diaspora happened only 60 years ago. Therefore, there still are many people who can talk about the traumatic experiences and historical events, which resulted in the forced migration. Furthermore, the situation is still real and current. In exile, it is only the second and third generation growing up, and still, many (young) Tibetans risk their lives on the flight to exile. This fact shows the respective connection to the homeland of the young Tibetans born in India and those born in Tibet. The latter actually have memories of the homeland and physically experienced the dispersal. On the other hand, the second generation shares orally stories about their homeland told by their parents and other members of the exiled community. In both groups, the homeland is often idealized, either in childhood memories or in orally stories. Because of the ongoing nature of Tibet's situation and the relatively young history of dispersion, the boundaries between political and cultural identity are often blurred. The continuous endeavour of the Tibetan Government in Exile and the Dalai Lama to achieve a productive dialogue with the Chinese authorities, by even accepting the autonomous status of Tibet also encourages the young generations to hope for a peaceful solution and possible return to the homeland.

The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of a community in exile as well as in the homeland, embodies a unique institution. In preserving their culture, providing structure to the exile community, and guiding the Tibetan community spiritually, the Tibetan community in the diaspora views him as a powerful figure that helps them to stay unified. As an internationally respected person, he is also in the position to bring Tibet into a global public debate. He not only represents the Tibetan community but also the Tibetan culture and especially Tibetan Buddhism. All the aspects of a diaspora community Safran mentioned, the preservation of memory, (cultural) connections toward their homeland, (Tibetan) institutions, and the pursuit to survive in another community (Safran 2004:10 in Safran et al.1991) are in a way unified in the symbolic importance of the Dalai Lama. The previously described thoughts of the research informants show that he holds a great significance for young Tibetans. Nevertheless, it can be estimated, that the mentioned young Tibetans born in India pursue a more secular notion. One's religious belief in the Dalai Lama was also shown to be a determinant for opinions and preferences about political approaches to Tibet's future. Most of the research informants who declared themselves in favour of the Middle Way Approach also expressed belief in the Dalai Lama as a divine being. In contrast, most of the persons who respected the Dalai Lama as a human being would vote instead for independence. At the same time, most of the persons in the latter group were born in India. Therefore, it can be estimated that the religious belief and the traditional view on the institution of the Dalai Lama affects a person's perspective towards Tibet's future. However, some informants also expressed themselves in favour of the Middle Way Approach because of their trust in the Dalai Lama's decision, regardless of his divine or human nature. What

united all informants were the worries about potential difficulties after the Dalai Lama's death, which are present in all of the research informants. First, because of the government in the hostland India and second, because of those in the homeland.

The difficulties of feeling accepted in the hostland are another aspect of Safran's mentioned characteristics. The research showed different experiences of discrimination and rejection because of the research informant's origin, or that of their parents. The Tibetan youth is dependent on the Indian Government's acceptance. Their current status in India limits the possibilities for higher education, the rights to own land, and their ability to achieve certain job positions. Therefore, many young Tibetans are unhappy with their legal status in India. On the other hand, to leave India and move to countries with better economic facilities would mean leaving a relatively close-knit living community with many shared traditions, shared cultural aspects, and a shared language. The sense of responsibility many young Tibetans feel to hold up and maintain Tibetan language, religion and culture, therefore, often prevents the youth from fulfilling some of their future plans, like going abroad, which refer to their personal, individual lives. On the other hand, many young Tibetans are optimistic about preserving Tibetan cultural identity in other hostlands that do not have substantial established Tibetan communities. Ongoing globalisation and the proliferation of online communities and communication are seen as a possible way for people to spread and share Tibetan culture, language, and religion and to connect with other communities in the Tibetan diaspora. Safran also mentions the usefulness of the internet in his description of diasporic communities, describing cyberspace as a new "homeland space" (Safran 2004:17). In the case of the Tibetan exile, this can be adopted in the communities living outside of Tibet. Though it is not possible to apply Safran's explanation to the homeland itself. As the research showed, many of the research informants' relatives, or even whole families, are still living in Tibet. The intense censorship and data tracking in the Chinese People's Republic make it nearly impossible to spread news to the community inside China. Therefore, many young Tibetans in Dharamsala struggle to maintain contact with the homeland or even have to fear over contacting particular people.

The field study data presents a heterogenic group of individual young Tibetans who share a common history of their homeland and common challenges in the hostland. Furthermore, they share a sense of responsibility towards the preservation of the Tibetan culture, religions, and language, which results in a personal identity struggle. The ways in which the individuals draw their cultural boundaries also depended on where they were born. Within the diaspora, Tibetan culture and identity remain connected with the circumstances in the hostland. Nevertheless, Tibetan culture is subject to changes and processes in the homeland as well as in the hostland. Some young Tibetans arriving in Dharamsala are, therefore, confronted with modified, varied, or added cultural aspects. At the same time, many young Tibetans, especially those who were born in India, feel a certain pressure to behave like "pure Tibetans".

9. CONCLUSION

The research conducted in Dharamsala provided insight into the lives and ideas of some young Tibetans living in exile in India. As Dharamsala is a relatively open and diverse place, other investigations in more insular communities might bring different insights.

Not all aspects of young Tibetan's social and cultural lives which shape cultural identity could be included within the limited framework of this research. Therefore, this thesis can only provide an insight into an unrepresentative sample. Further studies could provide a more detailed delineation of additional aspects that shape the cultural identities of young Tibetans in exile. In addition, the concepts and perceptions of the older generations on the Tibetan youth and the comparing of generational aspects could be of importance in the context of this study.

As stated, the scholarly interest in the young diasporic generations is emerging slowly and recently. Often, Tibetans arriving from Tibet are not considered by researchers investigating the diaspora. Looking forward, it can be estimated that the young Tibetan's notions and experiences in exile will shape the Tibetan future. The generation which is currently growing up in exile is more secular, modern, and has multiple and hybrid identities. Nevertheless, traditional aspects and institutions like the Dalai Lama are of high importance. Due to the circumstances, identities are also politized.

The young Tibetans who participated in this research own heterogenic cultural identities, created through their own self-determination and agency and nevertheless affected by the memories of and current context in the homeland, experiences and political (dis)recognition in the hostland, and the socio-spiritual context of the exiled communities themselves. They are united in ascribing great importance to Tibetan culture and identity even though the dimensions, definitions, engagement with, and the concern about the (political) future of Tibet and those of exiled Tibetans all vary. Therefore, Tibetan youth often find themselves juxtaposed between the home and the hostland, between the sense of responsibility to maintain and "conserve" Tibetan cultural identity and individual wishes for being accepted and to feel "at home" in the hostland(s). The human rights violations and repression in Tibet are still happening, and the context of the Tibetan diaspora is as relevant as ever. The imagined nation which Tibetans born in India dream of, and the once-existent nation Tibetans born in Tibet remember, is omnipresent for the generation which is trying to find their space in the diaspora.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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I. APPENDIX

Interview	Pseudonym	Sex	Born in	Date of Interview
1	Thinley	M	1991, Tibet	16.09.2019
2	Dolma	F	1993, India	18.09.2019
3	Semkyi	F	1995, India	20.09.2019
4 (expert interview)	Tenzin	M	-	20.09.2019
5	Lobsang	M	1992, India	21.09.2019
6	Yangdol	F	1998, Tibet	22.09.2019
7	Pema	F	1989, India	26.09.2019
8	Dawa	M	1996, Tibet	27.09.2019
9	Gonpo	M	1995, Tibet	27.09.2019
10	Nyima	F	1995, Tibet	05.10.2019
11	Tsundue	M	1992, India	08.10.2019
12	Norbu	M	1995, Tibet	10.10.2019
13	Panang	M	1990, India	10.10.2019
14 (expert interview)	Phuntsok	M	-	11.10.2019
15	Kunzang	F	2003, India	12.10.2019
16	Dorje	M	2004, Tibet	12.10.2019
17	Tashi	M	1999, Tibet	15.10.2019