



MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Tibetans in Exile: Negotiating Temporalities. Making a Life
between the Past and the Future Through the Preservation of
Tibetan Carpet Weaving

verfasst von | submitted by
Julia Verbeek BA

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien | Vienna, 2024

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 066 810

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Masterstudium Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Ayse Caglar

Table of Content

Acknowledgements	3
Abstract (English)	4
Abstract (Deutsch)	6
Introduction.....	8
Methodology	11
Literature Review – Forced Migration and Temporality	16
1. Tibetan Refugees and the Tibetan Government in Exile	23
1.1. <i>The Historical Background of Tibetan Refugee Settlements and Government in Exile</i>	23
1.2. <i>Tibetan Refugees in India? The Issue of Classification</i>	26
1.3. <i>Identity Formation in Exile</i>	30
2. Introducing the Tibetan Refugee Self Help Centre, Darjeeling	33
2.1. <i>Establishment, Philosophy and Geopolitical embeddedness</i>	33
2.2. <i>Structure and Sections of the Center</i>	36
2.3. <i>Infrastructure and Life Quality</i>	41
3. Tibetan Carpet Weaving	44
3.1. <i>The History of Tibetan Carpet Weaving</i>	44
3.2. <i>Tibetan Carpet Production at the TRSHC</i>	47
4. Preserving Tibetan Culture Through Carpets.....	49
4.2. <i>Personal Drivers Towards the Preservation of Art</i>	51
4.2.1. <i>Tibet's Collective History and its Commercialization</i>	53
5. Negotiation Temporalities along Generational Lines	59
5.1. <i>Tibetan Culture Preservation, An Elderly Female Practice?</i>	59
5.2. <i>The Interplay of Possibilities and Community Building</i>	63
5.3. <i>Monetary Aspects of Staying and Leaving the TRSHC</i>	69
5.3.1. <i>Leaving to Stay – Children as a Financial Security Blanket</i>	71
6. Buddhist Influences and Time-Embeddedness	75

7. The Agency of Research	81
Conclusion	82
List of Abbreviations	84
List of Figures.....	85
Literature.....	86

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre, that not only allowed me to conduct research between their four walls, but that also welcomed me with kindness and open arms. My special thanks go out to Pelmo-la, who has been of immense support regarding the organization of my sojourn at the center and to Chimay-la, who provided me with a helping hand to orient myself within the facility. I also want to thank Jampa-la and Budhi-la, who incorporated me intensively into their daily work routine and to Raptan, who established insights and gateways into the younger generation's life.

A special acknowledgment goes to my supervisor Prof. Ayşe Çağlar who supported me not only in my endeavor of this MA thesis, but who also encouraged me to go with my findings to the Calcutta Research Group's "Research and Orientation Workshop on Global Protection of Refugees and Migrants (2023)", from which a number of opportunities emerged.

I also want to thank the Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology at the University of Vienna and the organizers of the Vienna Anthropology Days 2024, who allowed me to share my research findings.

Abstract (English)

The historicity and political context of Tibetans in exile today provide us with valuable insights into distinct understandings and connections between the past (in Tibet) and the aspired future (the return to a free Tibet), which raises the question of how these dynamics shape the ways in which the Tibetans in exile experience and negotiate the present and what impacts this has on the individual and the community. Based on the example of culture preservation through Tibetan carpet weaving at the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre, Darjeeling, India, these negotiations will be analyzed. The production and selling of Tibetan carpet at the respective self-help refugee settlement constitutes its main source of income, showcasing thus an intriguing intersection of cultural preservation, commercializing of heritage and political claim making.

The thesis presents the research field via an embeddedness of Tibetan refugees in Indian exile. For that, the history that led to the fleeing of Tibetans from Chinese occupation in 1959 will be briefly outlined. By scrutinizing the term “refugee” in the context of Tibetans in exile, the positionality of them in India will be presented, a nation-state that hasn’t signed the Geneva Convention of 1951, and thus does not juridically operate, with the category of “refugee”. The implications and special rights afforded to the Tibetans will be discussed. The entanglement of the research site with other entities and institutions on a geo-political sphere give a sense of the field in which the preservation of Tibetan material culture finds itself.

By discussing what qualities and narratives surrounding the handicraft production of Tibetan carpets make its protection crucial for the research participants, it will be shown in what ways this process of culture preservation sustains a distinct collective Tibetan history, in order to navigate the present and also how this is targeted towards a (imagined) future, free from Chinese oppression. Here, aspects of commercialization and tourism are explored. Focus also lies on the prominent challenge of a generation change within the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre, that is characterized by the younger generation not participating in Tibetan handicrafts but rather pursuing a life outside of the community’s facility. Here, the intersection of possibilities in Indian exile, the notion of finances, and the embeddedness into community ties will be unfolded, as well as how different generations experience these notions and through that negotiate their connection to the past, present and future in divergent ways.

The findings are supplemented by a brief overview on how Tibetan Buddhism informs the act of preserving culture in exile at the refugee center, how the refugee's attitudes and worldviews are driven by it and how Buddhist concepts are shaping the perception of time, in relation to the belief in reincarnation. Furthermore, the research's entanglement itself in the process of culture preservation and the refugee's aspirations towards the future will be discussed.

Abstract (Deutsch)

Die Historizität und der politische Kontext der Tibeter*innen im Exil heute bieten uns wertvolle Einblicke in bestimmte Verständnisse und Verbindungen zwischen einer Vergangenheit (in Tibet) und einer angestrebten Zukunft (die Rückkehr in ein freies Tibet), was die Frage aufwirft, wie diese Dynamiken die Art und Weise prägen, in der die Tibeter*innen im Exil die Gegenwart erleben und welche Auswirkungen dies auf das Individuum und die Gemeinschaft hat. Am Beispiel der Kulturerhaltung durch die tibetische Teppichweberei im Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre in Darjeeling, Indien, werden diese Aushandlungen analysiert. Die Produktion und der Verkauf tibetischer Teppiche in der selbst versorgenden Flüchtlingssiedlung konstituieren deren finanzielle Haupteinnahmequelle und zeigen somit eine interessante Schnittstelle zwischen Kulturerhalt, Kommerzialisierung von kulturellem Erbe und politischer Anspruchserhebung.

Die Arbeit stellt das Forschungsfeld anhand einer Einbettung tibetischer Flüchtlinge im indischen Exil dar, indem sie kurz die Geschichte skizziert, die 1959 zur Flucht der Tibeter*innen vor der chinesischen Besatzung führte. Durch die Untersuchung des Begriffs "Flüchtling" im Kontext der Tibeter*innen im Exil wird die Positionalisierung dieser innerhalb Indiens dargestellt, einem Nationalstaat, der die Genfer Konvention von 1951 nicht unterzeichnet hat und daher juristisch nicht mit der Kategorie "Flüchtling" operiert. Die resultierenden Implikationen und besonderen Rechte für die Tibeter*innen werden erörtert. Die Verflechtung der Forschungsstätte mit anderen Entitäten und Institutionen auf geopolitischer Ebene vermittelt einen Eindruck des Feldes, in dem sich die Bewahrung der tibetischen (materiellen) Kultur befindet.

Durch die Diskussion, welche Qualitäten und Narrativen die tibetische Teppichweberei umgeben und welche Bedeutungen dies für die Forschungsteilnehmer*innen hat, wird aufgezeigt, inwiefern dieser Prozess der Kulturerhaltung eine besondere kollektive tibetische Vergangenheit aufrechterhält, um die Gegenwart zu navigieren, und wie diese auf eine (imaginierte) Zukunft abzielt, frei von chinesischer Unterdrückung. Hier werden auch Aspekte der Kommerzialisierung und des Tourismus tragend. Ein weiterer Schwerpunkt liegt auf der Herausforderung eines Generationswechsels im Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre, der dadurch gekennzeichnet ist, dass die jüngere Generation kaum tibetisches Handwerk praktiziert und ein Leben außerhalb der Gemeinschaftseinrichtung anstrebt. Hier wird die Schnittstelle von Möglichkeiten im indischen Exil, finanziellen Gegebenheiten und die

Einbettung in die Gemeinschaft entfaltet, und wie Generationen diese Aspekte erleben und dadurch ihre Verbindung zur Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft unterschiedlich verhandeln.

Die Erkenntnisse werden durch einen kurzen Überblick ergänzt, wie der tibetische Buddhismus den Akt der Kulturerhaltung im Exil im Flüchtlingszentrum beeinflusst, wie die Einstellungen und Weltanschauungen der Flüchtlinge davon geprägt sind und wie buddhistische Konzepte die Wahrnehmung von Zeit in Bezug auf den Glauben an die Wiedergeburt formen. Darüber hinaus wird die Verflechtung der Forschung selbst in den Prozess der Kulturerhaltung und die Bestrebungen der Flüchtlinge in Richtung Zukunft diskutiert.

Introduction

The experience of displacement and exile is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that affects individuals and communities in various ways. This research investigates one specific aspect within this field: the negotiation of experienced temporalities, in the context of Tibetans living in exile in India. Looking at this phenomenon is of value, since an individual, as well as a collective group, is always in some way linked to their past, present and future. This entanglement, in turn, shapes the lives of the people and manifests in various ways. At the same time, temporalities never exist in a void but are embedded in broader narratives and processes, which will be unfolded. The historicity and political context of Tibetans in exile today provide us with distinct understandings and connections between the past (in Tibet) and the aspired future (the return to a free Tibet), which raises the question of how these dynamics shape the ways the Tibetans in exile experience the present and what impact this has on the individual and the community. The Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre in Darjeeling, India, where a three-week anthropological fieldwork was conducted in 2023, and its Tibetan carpet weaving production is used as an example of culture preservation through which these negotiations surrounding temporalities will be elaborated upon. It is important to note that while the artisanal productions are the used example, this research will not be providing an analysis of the art craft in itself, but rather uses it as a medium through which temporality can be grasped.

So far, research on Tibetan refugees has mainly focused on human rights issues, identity constructions, and political perspectives, specifically looking at the Tibetan government in exile. This research proposal fills a gap in existing literature by providing an in-depth understanding of how the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre provides a space for negotiating the refugees' understanding, experience and production of temporalities that they are embedded in, both on an individual and a collective scale. The settlement constitutes the focal point of most of its resident's lives, by providing various facilities and services. From educational, medical, religious, welfare, and economic sectors. The study will shed light on the experiences and realities of the refugees living in the center and its entanglement in political and institutionalized structures and power dynamics, which in turn impact the refugees' lives.

As a starting point, the thesis will cover the theoretical ground on which it is standing, focusing on discourses on forced migration and its intersection with temporality. The literature review

will thus enable the reader to get a cohesive overview onto the current academic discourses and how this thesis operates with them and extends them.

The thesis then presents the research field on two grounds. In Chapter 1 (*Tibetan Refugees and the Tibetan Government in Exile*), a broad embedding of Tibetan refugees in Indian exile will be given, by briefly walking through the history that led to the fleeing of Tibetans from Chinese occupation in 1959. The usage of the term “refugee”, which will be used throughout this thesis to refer to the Tibetans in exile, will be scrutinized, pointing to different conceptualizations that apply to the respective research participants, which find themselves in a nation-state that hasn’t signed the Geneva Convention of 1951, and thus does not operate, on a legal ground, with the category of “refugee”. The implications and special rights in the case of the Tibetans will be discussed. Furthermore, the ways in which Tibetan identity is maintained, as well as purposely sustained in exile, will be explored. Through these analyses, the broader embeddedness of Tibetan refugees and their settlements within India will be demonstrated.

Chapter 2 (*Introducing the Tibetan Refugee Self Help Centre, Darjeeling*) will then present the specific research site of the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre, Darjeeling. At first, by outlining its history, philosophy of self-help and its connected entanglement with other global entities. The institutions’ structure and sectors will then be described, as well as its (infra-)structure and connected discussion upon life-quality for its residents and workers.

Chapter 3 (*Tibetan Carpet Weaving*) will provide a short overview onto the handicraft of Tibetan carpet weaving, as this element of material culture is used as the anchor point of the thesis’s analysis. The history of Tibetan carpet weaving will be briefly elaborated upon, highlighting the geopolitical dynamics involved. Then, the steps of the current carpet production at the research site will be explained.

The following three chapters present the main analytical body of the thesis. Chapter 4 (*Preserving Tibetan Culture Through Carpets*) deals with the preservation of culture through the example of Tibetan carpet weaving and discusses what qualities and narratives surrounding this handicraft make its protection crucial for the research participants. The section continues to outline in what ways this pursuit of culture preservation keeps a distinct collective Tibetan history alive, that then undergoes a commercialization process, as the financial stability of the center relies on its economic revenues located in the tourism sector, which, in turn, is heavily based on the interest and sympathy with the Tibetan history and current situation. These

findings are linked to the broader context of “refugee business”, which is characterized by economic profits based on refugee identities.

Chapter 5 (*Negotiation Temporalities along Generational Lines*) discusses the prominent challenge of a generational change within the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre, that is characterized by the younger generation not participating in Tibetan handicrafts and pursuing a life outside of the community’s facility. Here, the intersection of possibilities in Indian exile, the notion of finances, and the community bonds will be unfolded, as well as how generations experience these notions and through that negotiate their connection to the past, present and future differently.

Chapter 6 (*Buddhist Influences and Time-Embeddedness*) will give a brief overview on how Tibetan Buddhism informs the act of preserving culture in exile at the refugee center, how the refugee’s attitudes and worldviews are driven by it and how Buddhist concepts are shaping the perception of time, in relation to the belief in reincarnation.

Chapter 7 (*The Agency of Research*) will close the thesis by viewing the research and the produced paper itself as a part of preserving Tibetan culture, which makes it therefore related to the refugee’s aspirations towards it and their wishes for the future.

Methodology

The conducted research is based on on-site anthropological fieldwork at the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre (TRSHC), Darjeeling, India from the 28th of August 2023 to the 21st of September 2023, which was funded by the Short-term grants abroad (KWA) of the University of Vienna.

The research was conducted on site, as anthropological fieldwork requires the immersion of the researcher into the field and their involvement and observation of practices. Furthermore, due to the sensitive and highly politicized issue of Tibetans in exile, it is needed for the researcher to spend a certain amount of time at the research site, in order to establish a relationship of trust with the research participants, which is the basis of conducting an honest and fruitful research. Due to these characteristics of my research, the qualitative data collection had taken place at the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre.

With a lot of literature on Tibetans in India already provided, the fieldwork's intent was to get a grasp on the realities experienced in refugee settlements at the current moment in history, capturing the daily life there. Based in a local Nepali homestay directly located next to the TRSHC, I was granted permission to enter the institution at any moment, spending as much time as desired with the residents. Before going into detail about how anthropological fieldwork was employed in practice, I want to briefly outline my own positionality in the field, as well as the ethical and methodological approach taken.

My own positionality as a researcher (from the West) influenced the circumstances under which I was able to conduct research. The center and its inhabitants are encouraging outsiders to visit the facility, in order to gain publicity for themselves and the greater political project in which they situate themselves – the freedom of Tibet. This becomes visible as the center is presenting itself not only as a residence but also as a touristic place, that portrays through visual means (posters, etc.) their wish for an independent homeland. The expectations behind having me as a researcher at their settlement, namely, to shed light onto the refugees' experiences and life as a means of culture preservation, was not disguised. A first clue regarding those expectations was my immediate approval to write my thesis about the center, without having communicated my concrete research topic. Arriving at the site, my interlocutors often expressed their gratitude for my arrival, as it might raise awareness of the Tibetan cause outside of the gates of the center and as my paper in itself will be a preservation of their culture in

written form. These dynamics make it clear that a certain role was put onto me and my research. With the institution being a touristic place, the inhabitants are furthermore practiced in narrating their story and the center's self-understanding in a distinct way. Here, a critical lens on the researchers site becomes important, to distinguish narratives as a form of “commercialization” from ones of “life experiences”. For this, the longer stay at the facility was needed, as it allowed me to see beyond narratives merely used for self-presentation. However, these narratives and the dynamic of presenting a certain picture to the outside is also of great importance to acknowledge and analyze. Due to these underlying notions, interviews were on purpose only conducted in the second half of my stay, when I wasn’t viewed anymore as yet another visitor from the West. Over time, conversational topics changed more and more from the struggle of Tibet to the life challenges at the distinct place – from keeping the handicraft of Tibetan carpets alive to generating income to sanitary issues.

While anonymization is a common practice in academic writings to protect the research participants, I have acknowledged their wishes regarding this issue. The research participants of this thesis, with some exceptions, insisted on their names *not* being anonymized, arguing that this would fall into the process of “silencing” their voices, just as they are experiencing already in relation to their oppression in Tibet. Therefore, this thesis will overall refer to the research participants by their real names. Residents without any public position in the facility will only be referred to by their first name.

From an ethical standpoint, the research has been undertaken via the guidance of the Charter of Decolonial Research Ethics (Decolonialidad Europa 2003). Decolonial research aims to distance itself from eurocentric, hegemonial and colonial power structures. The decolonial project provides guidelines and principles that work against the different forms of privileges inherent to the colonial power matrix, which become especially crucial when dismantling the white privilege inherent in Western research practices. An important aspect here is that the researcher is not in the authoritative position to define struggles themselves. I work leaning on decolonial approaches as they offer protection to the research participants, in the sense of protecting their property of knowledge, dignity and humanness, by giving their conceptions onto the research room. In practice this primarily means viewing the research subjects as research partners, letting the field itself reveal their own terminology and their meaning. At the core, the emic perspective thus constitutes the main narration of the research.

Relying on decolonial research ethics (Decolonialidad Europa 2013) this thesis has been realized *with*, rather than about, Tibetan refugees, which I refer to as research participants, instead of the commonly used wording of research subjects. Through this wording, and also by acknowledging the Tibetans I worked with as refugees, I position myself within the complex political sphere of the Tibetan-Chinese conflict. Still, I am not operating as an activist anthropologist. However, those lines are blurry when working with marginalized groups, as participant observation can easily turn into participant intervention, in the name of wanting to help, to fix things and to protect people from harm. Just as volunteerism has become scrutinized for its neo-colonial dimensions, creating a realm of dependency and vulnerability (Raymond/Hall 2008), anthropological researchers must be just as mindful of such processes. The urge to help becomes especially pressing when working in the context of human rights violations, where morality has been disrupted. In regard to refugee protection, it can therefore become a fine line between research and activist activities, which have to be reflected upon, in order to ensure that the well-meant desire to help does not provide more ground for conflict at the end. While some schools encourage a clear distinction between academia and activism, decolonial anthropology sees an ethical obligation to produce academic knowledge in a manner that contributes to the marginalized communities one is working with, to an extent that does not exclude activism or even expects it to some degree. (Decolonialidad Europa 2013)

In this light, the thesis, as a preserver of knowledge around the Tibetan refugees at the TRSHC, does contribute to the community that was worked with, as their hope regarding my fieldwork was to preserve their culture through it and through that raise awareness.

The main methods of the research were participant observation and semi-structured qualitative interviews. The data stemming from the fieldwork was then put in dialogue with relevant literature on theoretical, anthropological approaches.

Participant observation locates the researcher within the research field. They become part of the group/community studied and thus aim to experience life as the research participants. This endeavor commonly requires observing and participating in everyday life activities, as well as the encouragement to hold sufficient native language skills. (Spradley 1980) To prepare for the sojourn at the TRSHC, I acquainted myself with sufficient modern Tibetan language skills to hold up everyday conversations. This enabled me to form relationships at the center without

the help of a translator and to showcase my efforts as well and my aimed position of not being a mere “drop-in/drop-out” researcher.

By semi-structured interviews I refer to a rough outline of questions that were aimed to contain the interview within a certain frame. Research participants were given the space to answer the open-end questions by bringing topics to the table that they found pressing and the interview adapted according to their own focuses. Thus, the interviews didn’t follow a strict catalog of questions but rather, follow-up questions, related to the narratives presented, were asked. An important part of all the conducted interviews were biographical events that the interlocutors regarded themselves as vital milestones. Thus, aspects of narrative interviews were incorporated (such as: narrative prompt that mobilizes memories and guides free storytelling, autonomously designed main narrative, narrative-generating inquiries). (Hopf 2000, 356f)

In total, 14 interviews with an average of 40 minutes have been conducted, focused on the center’s administrative staff and workers in the handicraft sections.

Whilst a strict timetable has not been implemented, the time spent in the center usually had the following structure:

In the mornings until noon, research has been conducted within the different sections of the wool and carpet production in the center. Except for the weaving of the carpets itself I was able to not only observe but learn about all the steps involved first-hand. From cleaning the wool, to softening it by ripping it apart and brushing it, to spinning it, to dyeing it... By running through all the sections I was able to not only get a better understanding of the production process, but to also experience it. With a lot of research already been conducted upon the handicraft of Tibetan carpet weaving (Denwood 1974/Lipton 1988/Chodrak 2000), my aim here was not to learn about the particularities of the artform itself, but to capture how this work is embedded into the refugees’ lives, how they relate to it and how different connotations and experiences of temporalities unfold within this practice. The afternoons have usually been spent in the wool stockroom, where resident Mr. Jampa-la¹ taught me about the connection between culture preservation and Buddhism. Afternoons were also used for the processing of my collected data and the conduction of interviews. During the entire research, resident Chimay-la has been my resource/contact person and person of trust, as she introduced me to the center’s

¹ The suffix “-la”, operates as a demonstration of respect, used when referring to people of high status or older age.

facilities and to daily life in the center outside of working hours. By attending weekly events like morning prayers and evening dances in honor of the Dalai Lama, eating meals with the residents after they invited me into their homes or going into town to pray in monasteries, I was able to grasp a fuller picture of what life as a resident of the refugee center encompasses. Apart from my time spent in the center, the NGOs headquarters, located in the city of Darjeeling, have been visited to meet and interview the people working there, including the presidents' daughter and secretary Pelmo-la. Another inquiry of data stemmed from the placement in a Nepali host family, as this evoked awareness of the embeddedness of the center in relation to its locality and its relationship to "locals".

Literature Review – Forced Migration and Temporality

In this literature review, anthropological discourses on forced migration and temporality will be presented, that form the theoretical framework of the research that works through the gaze of temporalities in the context of Tibetan “refugees” in India. The interlocutors, as well as the common public discourse, describe Tibetans in exile as refugees. Still, on a theoretical basis, this thesis works within the discourse of forced migration. This is because foremost, the definition of a refugee is bound to the Geneva Convention, which India, the nation state where the research participants are based, isn’t a signatory to. This classificatory issue surrounding refugees will be unfolded in the following chapter (see Chapter 1.2.). Before delving into these dynamics, the general discourses around forced migration and its differentiation from refugee studies will be outlined, to further make graspable why this thesis is embedded within this framework. As the thesis is anchored around the concept of temporality, its entanglement within forced migration studies will be explored, showcasing how my own research will be embedded into, and go beyond, the existing theoretical scope.

The emergence of forced migration studies can be regarded as an answer to the limitations that the contemporary term “refugee” inhabits. These limitations are bound to the latter’s historicity. Anthropologist Liisa Malkki (1995) locates the upcoming of the contemporary refugee understanding in a specific locality and temporality: post-World War II Europe. She argues for this period, as this point is viewed as the one where “*key techniques for managing mass displacements of people first became standardised and then globalised*”. (Malkki 1995: 497) With that, the social category of the refugee and its global legal dimensions emerged. In 1951 the United Nation High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) was set up and with that, refugees were regarded as a humanitarian, rather than military, issue resulting in the emergence of international refugee law. (ibid.: 498ff), the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol. Classifying a refugee as:

“ a person who[.] . .owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country [...]” (as cited in Malkki 1995: 501)

The contemporary refugee understanding is thus rooted in a specific historicity of post- World War II Europe. While the established legal status protects many, this historical specificity and narrow scope leads to limitations. By analyzing and bringing existing literature into dialogue, those limitations and their role in the emergence of the term “forced migrants” will be outlined.

Starting again with Malkki, she points to the diversity in causes and situations of people that are forced to move. Arguing that: *“it would seem that the term refugee has analytical usefulness not as a label for a special, generalizable "kind" or "type" of person or situation, but only as a broad legal or descriptive rubric that includes within it a world of different socioeconomic statuses, personal histories, and psychological or spiritual situations.”* (Malkki 1995: 495) However, the diversity and complexity of sociopolitical and cultural processes, in which people forced to move are embedded (racism, censorship, state violence etc.) is often neglected. Similarly, sociologist Stephen Castles (2003) argues that the 1951 refugee definition doesn’t do justice in encompassing the diversity inherent in causes and patterns of people forced to move. For example, internally displaced people (IDPs) are completely left out of the refugee concept, which is only applicable to people finding themselves outside of their country of nationality.

These shortcomings are addressed by scholars through advocating for a broader conceptualization – namely that of forced migration. Refugees and forced migrants are nouns that are often used interchangeably. However, regarding their legal scope they clearly aren’t, since the term “refugee” points to a specific international legal status and its bureaucratic realm, whereas the protection needs, and rights of forced migrants aren’t necessarily bound to a legal status. (Malkki 1995: 513)

When we look at the distinction between refugees and forced migrants, we see that first of all, being a refugee is only related to the concept of persecution. In contrast, former Oxford Professor on Refugee Studies Roger Zetter (2019) gives a concise overview on the different drivers of forced migration: existential threats, armed conflict, environmental degradation and climate change, development-induced displacement and natural disasters. Furthermore, forced migration is often not mono-causal but rather a result of different drivers. Critiquing the postulated single driver of refugees (persecution), Castles argues that *“it is impossible to completely separate economic and human rights motivations – which is a challenge to the neat categories that bureaucracies seek to impose”*. (Castles 2003: 17) Similarly, Zetter states that *“a categorical conceptualization which is legally and normatively embedded, such as refugee,*

distinguishes between different varieties of involuntary/forced migrants that are not, in reality, clear-cut but merge into each other". (Zetter 2019: 37) The scholars want to show that the reason one has to flee is hardly ever mono-causal and not as easy to capture and define as the 1951 Convention postulates.

Other than the drivers for enforced mobility, there are also distinctions between the concepts of refugees and forced migrants when it comes to the patterns of their migration form. Whereas refugees are associated commonly with one single event of exodus, the movement of forced migrants is described by Zetter as episodic, lasting for several decades. *"Forcibly displaced people may be in transit or stationery, temporarily settled or temporarily returning, permanently exiled or permanently returning: their trajectory is not necessarily predicated on a fixed destination, or a clear status, or durable solution."* (Zetter 2019: 34)

The restrictive scope of what a refugee "is" results in a highly exclusive and generalized perception of the person classified as such. I will use the "refugee experience" by Keller (1975) as an example. In this line of argumentation, the journey of a refugee entails shared stages:

"perception of a threat; decision to flee; the period of extreme danger and flight; reaching safety; camp behavior; repatriation, settlement, or resettlement; the early and late stages of resettlement; adjustment and acculturation; and, finally, residual states and changes in behavior caused by the experience" (cited in Stein 1981, 321).

Scholars like Robertson (2014) critique such a linear migration understanding, that positions the past in the home country, and the present and future in the new country.

This generalized refugee experience postulates *"a single, essential, transhistorical refugee condition"* (ibid.: 511), reducing refugees into one single collective identity. Viewing refugees as "one" can then translate into seeing them as the "dangerous other", legitimizing enhanced border controls, naturalizing places of refuge containment (ibid.), enabling states to limit access to protection and to handle migration as a security matter. (Zetter 2019: 27) Academia on refugee studies moves away from the generalized conceptions of what Keller (1975) called *the* refugee experience, which is however still prevailing.

In short, forced migration, in contrast to the refugee concept, isn't associated with a specific legal status and its limiting requirements, but rather captures diverse drivers and patterns of

involuntary migration that goes beyond an assumed clear cause-effect relationship. In Zetter's understanding, forced migration then has the potential to delink drivers and processes of involuntary migration from a legal status and to reveal the diversity of protection needs and gaps. (ibid.: 37)

Building on these discursive foundations, current debates around the entanglement of space, temporality and forced migration thus show the trend of moving away from viewing the latter as a linear temporal endeavor, from leaving the home country, to the settlement in the host country that follows the basic scheme of movement, settlement and integration. (Castles 2002) Contrasting this approach, forced migration isn't a one-time activity, but a lived experience that stretches over space, time and generations (Ramsay 2017) Regarding the spatial factor, forced migration is often times connected with the encompassment of transnational spaces (Castles 2002) that expand over multiple geographies not limited to the borders of nation states. These spaces are characterized by people whose social, political and/or economic lives revolve around multiple locations (most prominently, in the forced migration context, host and receiving country). Thus, whilst these migrants establish a life in the host country, they are simultaneously connected to their home country through different possible means like money making or participation in the political elections through voting. The intensity and forms of bonds to the different locations vary from individual to individual. (Levitt 2003: 850f) This transnational space becomes intriguing in the case of Tibetans in exile, as through their establishment of a quasi-Tibetan citizenship through the Tibetan Government in Exile (based in Dharamsala, India), they are embedded into the Indian state of residence, but also into the "imagined" state of Tibet, which is, in turn, associating itself with the occupied Tibetan area in nowadays China.

Within the studies of forced migration, as well as refugee studies, an emphasis on spatial, rather than temporal aspects, is visible. Still, although insufficiently explored, the issue of temporalities seems to be gaining interest within these academic discourses. Some of the key issues tackled are the migrants' experience of time (Cwerner 2001), time as a key factor for nation states in relation to the governance of migrants (Hammar 1994) and the interconnectedness of temporality and belonging. Many scholars investigate temporality and liminality in the context of refugee studies and here specifically within asylum processes.

Namely, how the experience of being “in limbo” is dealt with, while waiting for the determination of the applied legal status. (Griffiths 2014/Brun 2015/Gil Everaert 2020) Authors like Saulo Cwerner (2001) investigate temporalities in the realm of immigration policies and visa regimes and how such are utilized as tools of disciplines. The key intersection here is temporality and control. Another focus lies on the intersection of temporalities and the governing of migration. (Tazzioli 2018) and Jacobsen et al. (2012) focuses in their volume on the concept of waiting in the context of irregular migration.

While the presented focus areas are of importance, my own approach, while acknowledging and taking into account the discussed contributions, is more linked to the concept of biographic time of Robertson (2014, 165), referring to “*the imaginaries of pasts, present and futures, as well as everyday lived time*”. Within this concept, the interplay between personal experiences and social structures is vital in the construction of time. Experienced time is related to a persons or groups identities and life trajectories and agency over the sense-making of their past, present and future, is attributed to individuals. Furthermore, biographical time is plural, as time operates here on individual, collective and institutional grounds in deferring ways.

Another vital conceptualization of temporality for this thesis is that of the “unending present”: Forced migration experiences in relation to temporalities is often viewed in regard to challenges and obstacles – rightly so. A common theme of research is how people get cut off from their past and are being made unable to imagine their futures. Feldmann conceptualizes this with the “unending present” (Feldman, 2018). Building upon this concept, Sakti and Amrith (2022, 457) explore the so-called “extended temporalities”: “*the continued lived experiences of displacement after resettlement or deportation*”. Arguing here the interconnectedness of the “here and now” with other temporalities, such as historical violence that informs present experiences. Their theoretical framework will become of use throughout this thesis, as they propose three areas, through which the negotiation of the present, in accordance with other temporalities, can be explored: “(i) *the economic and material pressures of the here and now* (the here and now operates a mean to generate livelihood for survival); (ii) *its affective dimensions expressed through care, aspiring and belonging* (bonds and relationships are (re-)formed to combat losses) ; (iii) *the effects of multiple, ongoing forms of displacement* (viewing displacement for example as an ongoing experience across generations).” (ibid., 460)

In this context, the concept of the post-migrant is helpful as well, which refers to experiences of migration from people who themselves haven't experienced it. As shown, temporality is discussed and re-negotiated in the sense of the migrants or refugee's biographical timeline and how their migration process unfolds over time and space. I agree with scholars like Castles or Robertson, that forced migration and a refugee's biography aren't bound to fixed temporal and spatial processes. For example, second generation Tibetans at the refugee center I worked out have never migrated themselves but are still embedded into spheres and dynamics of forced migration. Thus, these people could be classified as post-migrants. Within this discourse, the present of post-migrants is linked to an inscribed past. (Çağlar 2016) As this thesis will demonstrate, in the case of not only the second generation but also the first generation of Tibetan refugees in India, this inscribed past is bound to the exodus into India due to the Chinese occupation of Tibet. The "Now" is inherently intertwined and informed by this distinct past.

Another crucial dimension is that of the future. Although differing in its "end-goal", the theory lying beneath integrational models (Favell 1998/Schinkel 2017) is of use. Here, *"migrants are expected to 'uproot' themselves from the spaces of their 'home countries' (and of the 'culture' which is projected to the 'ancestral home') and integrate themselves into the countries of settlement in time."* (Çağlar 2018, 26) While the Tibetan refugees I worked with aren't expected nor eager to integrate into Indian society, but rather live secluded, their present is informed by a normative (imagined) future – the reintegration into a free Tibetan society in the spatial realm of Tibet.

Regarding both the embeddedness into a prescribed past and normative future, scholars critique the implication of viewing the temporal spheres of migrants and non-migrants as not the same, as if their "Now" isn't coeval. (Çağlar 2018, 29) In accordance, Baas and Yeoh (2019) argue that within migration studies, the concepts of time and temporality mark a new paradigmatic shift, where migration and non-migrations are regarded as conjoined, rather than as dichotomies. While these critiques are certainly justified, the example of the Tibetans at the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre, Darjeeling, does suggest a (self-proclaimed) rupture with the non-Tibetans of the area, as the community wants to distinct itself from the outside. As will be discussed, the temporalities of the shared past and imagined future are not only experienced but also intendedly used to represent themselves as a distinct ethnic group towards others. Showcasing agency over the understanding of time, as postulated by Robertson earlier on.

I share the general critique of (forced) migration not being a mere linear process and will go beyond existing theoretical gazes and frameworks by investigating how imagined temporal spheres manifest and intersect with the "here and now". Namely, how the shared history and memory of Tibet -the temporal sphere of the past-, and the aspired return to a free Tibet -the temporal sphere of the future-, influence and are utilized in the present. For that I will look at artisanal crafts produced by the refugees that stand between remembrance of the past and working towards a better future. A rupture with common temporal conceptions will also be made, by adding the religious Buddhist layer, which extends the notion of the past and future to other life cycles attributed to reincarnation.

1. Tibetan Refugees and the Tibetan Government in Exile

First, an overview of Tibetan history that led to the establishment of refugee settlements, as well as the Tibetan Government in Exile in India, will be given. Then, the position of Tibetan refugees within the nation state of India, which doesn't operate with the legal category of "refugees", will be unfolded. Building upon that, the ways in which Tibetan identity in exile is formed and maintained will conclude this introductory chapter of the research field.

1.1. The Historical Background of Tibetan Refugee Settlements and Government in Exile

When referring to Tibet, two things can be meant, that Philip Denwood (1974, 1f) distinguishes between the so-called "Tibet proper" and "cultural Tibet". Tibet proper refers to a geographical unit that stretches with a longitude of 4000 km, between nowadays Bhutan, Nepal, India and China, covering parts of the Himalayan. From the 19th century until 1959, Tibet proper refers also to the land under governance of Dalai Lamas², ruling from the city of Lhasa. The term cultural Tibet in turn refers to areas extending from Tibet proper, such as the province of Kansu, China, where Tibetans have settled, but haven't been under the rule of the Tibetan government.

In 1949, the communist People's Republic of China (PRC) was formed. Its chairman Mao Zedong expressed the "liberation of Tibet"³ as one of the PRCs goals. In the same year, Chinese troops first entered Eastern Tibet. The following years, the Tibetan government tried to receive help from the United Nations without success. Then, negotiations with China begun, resulting in the signing of the Seventeen-Point-Agreement⁴ in 1951. Still, negotiations on Tibet's side to

² A Dalai Lama is the head of the Tibetan Buddhist Gelukpa school and until 1959, was the spiritual and political leader of Tibet. He is considered to be the reincarnation of the Avalokiteshvara, a bodhisattva (person that is on the path to obtain Buddhahood; the highest form of spiritual awakening in Buddhism) that postpones Buddhahood in order to help sentient beings on earth. (Britannica a) 2024)

³ Referring to the annexation of Tibet to the PRC.

⁴ The Seventeen-Point Agreement is a declaration between the Tibetan government and the People's Republic of China, that grants the latter control over the territory of Tibet, that, in return, receives inner-political autonomy. From Tibetans side, the agreement is said to have been signed under military pressure. (CTA 2001) Despite that, the Seventeen-Point-Agreement was refuted from Tibetans side, as

regain independence were taking place with other governments. In 1956, when Chinese occupation led to uprisings in the region Kham, the US granted Tibet with military support. Nonetheless, *“Chinese political restrictions grew worse by the day, and Tibetan government officials began to fear the Chinese were planning to kidnap the Dalai Lama. As Tibetans rose in protest over Chinese plans and policies, the Chinese bombed Lhasa.”* (McGranahan 2010: 46) In 1959, the 14th and current Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso, together with around 80,000 Tibetans, fled from the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), which declared in 1949 the “peaceful liberation” (ergo, occupation) of Tibet, resulting in the crushing of the Tibetan national uprising in Lhasa in 1959. Crossing the Himalaya, the Dalai Lama – disguised as a commoner - reached the Indian border on March 30, 1959. (Acharya, 2004/McConnell 2009).

The Chinese occupation of Tibet went alongside the oppression of Tibetan culture, mostly regarding the Dalai Lama, as devotion to him is considered a threat towards the PRC's government. In turn, expression of royalty towards him became illegal, and within the 1990s, a ban of the portrayal of his picture in homes, monasteries, schools and public places became enforced. To demonstrate devotion to the PRC, monks and nuns, who as religious authorities were regarded as the center of rebellion towards the political climate, needed to sign a declaration, proofing their allegiance to the state. Testimonies stated that the Chinese officials in charge for the signing process were equipped with weapons and resistance was reacted to with intimidation and violence. Monks and nuns needed to:

“1. Agree to the historical unity of China and Tibet; 2. Recognize the Chinese appointed Panchen Lama⁵; 3. Deny that Tibet will ever gain independence; 4.

China violated its own terms by not granting Tibet the promised inner-political autonomy. An assertion made by the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists. (Thondup & Thurston 2014, 195ff)

⁵ The Panchen Lama is the highest form of reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism after the Dalai Lama, being the reincarnation of Buddha Amitabha. The Dalai Lama searches and appoints the next Panchen Lama. However, after the death of the 10th Panchen Lama, the PRC stated the 11th Panchen Lama- six-year-old Gedun Chokyi Nyima- as appointed by the Dalai Lama in 1995, isn't valid and they arrested him and his close relatives and brought them to Beijing. Their whereabouts are still unknown. The PRC then appointed Gyaltsen Norbu as the 11th Panchen Lama and promoted his acceptance within the TAR. The Tibetan Government in Exile, and the broad Tibetan consensus, is that the 11th Panchen Lama is Gedun Chokyi Nyima. (The Gu Chu Sum Movement of Tibet 2005, 11-15)

Denounce the Dalai Lama as a traitor or splittist; 5. Declare an opposition to separatism.” (The Gu Chu Sum Movement of Tibet 2005, 9)

This restriction of religious freedom stands in contrast to not only the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18⁶ and similar, but also against Chinese law, such as the Constitution of the PRC, Article 36⁷, declaring the freedom of religion to everyone. Interesting is also Chinese Penal Code, Section 147, stating that officials that deprive citizens from their freedom of religion are facing imprisonment, however, in relation to the Tibetans, no arrest has been made. (ibid., 6)

As a quick return to Tibet seemed more and more unlikely, Tibetan refugee settlements were installed - mainly in the 1960s. (Bentz 2012, 87ff) Next to Tibet's neighboring countries such as Nepal and Bhutan, and North American, European and Oceanic host countries, the largest Tibetan settlement (around 72%) is found in India. As of today, the Tibetan diaspora in India (formerly encompassing around 150 000 people), accounts for roughly 72 000 people, according to a study conducted by the UNHCR in 2022. India awarded the Tibetans internally independent settlements. According to the Central Tibetan Administration⁸ (CTA), 39 of such settlements can be found. While they still belong to the state of India, the Tibetan government in exile can de facto act autonomously within them (McConnell 2012: 79).

In Dharamsala, India, in 1960, the Dalai Lama established the Tibetan government in exile, which formulated the rehabilitation and subsequent independence of Tibet as its main goals. In the Buddhist-influenced Tibetan understanding, the Dalai Lama is considered the reincarnation of the Bodhisattva Chenrezig: the patron saint of Tibet (Wiegand 2017). Before

⁶ *Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his or her religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his or her religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.* (as cited in The Gu Chu Sum Movement of Tibet 2005, 6)

⁷ *Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. "No state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion. The state protects normal religious activities."* (as cited in The Gu Chu Sum Movement of Tibet 2005, 6)

⁸ Tibetan Government in Exile

the Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959, he held both political and religious power over Tibet. In exile, the Dalai Lama and the Government in Exile initiated the first democratic efforts in the history of Tibet. Along with the democratization processes, the religious and political power of the Dalai Lama became separated, as he finally denounced his political offices in 2011. An endeavor that resulted in protests by Tibetans. (McConnell 2009: 119f). The Tibetan government in exile was despite protests subsequently established democratically. Although the Tibetan exile is not internationally viewed as an independent state, it operates as such in many ways. From their own health and education system⁹, to a (voluntary) tax system, the issuing of a form of passport – the Green Book-, to democratic elections. In general, the Tibetan government in exile sees itself as representative and responsible for both the Tibetans in exile and those in Tibet itself (McConnell 2009: 115f).

1.2. Tibetan Refugees in India? The Issue of Classification

This thesis refers to the Tibetans in exile as refugees. However, this classification must be scrutinized, as no such legal status is given within India. This chapter thus explores different connotations of what being a refugee entails, that become pressing within this research field.

India is regarded as an immigration state. Looking at the post-independence era, India was facing 20 million refugees in the first couple of decades given the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, following the Indian Independence Act, that has been passed by the UK Parliament. India established in the initial stage 160 relief camps for displaced people from West Pakistan. (Rai and Dwivedi, 2021) The great migration went in both directions, with Muslims heading to the Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindus and Sikhs to the Hindu-majority India. (Dalrymple, 2015) Till this day, India receives refugees to a large extent, especially from its eleven neighboring countries, due to the precarious conditions there. To put it into numbers:

⁹ In the 1960s, the 14th Dalai Lama asked Indian Prime Minister Nehru to establish separate schools for Tibetan children in Exile, where they learned Tibetan language, basic Hindi and English, as well as training in nursery and sewing. The Central Tibetan Administration states:

“The sole purpose of establishing separate schools for Tibetans in India is to provide quality modern education and preservation of the Tibetan language and culture at the same time. This idea is commonly referred to as the twin object of the Tibetan schools in exile and became the heart and soul of the Tibetan education policy.” (CTA a) n.D.)

“In mid-year 2021, the UNHCR counted 196,194 refugees in the country, mainly from Sri Lanka 47.3%, China 37.4%, Myanmar 10.4% and Afghanistan 4.4%. Asylum seekers in the same year numbered 12,474, according to the same source, mainly from Afghanistan 55%, Myanmar 23% and Yemen 7%”. (Integral Human Development, 2022)

As resourced from the UNHCR, the refugee definition as per the Geneva Convention 1951 is amplified here when talking about the forced migrants that entered India.

But what does it mean to be a refugee to the Indian authorities? As Acharya (2004) outlines, the definition of what a refugee (symbolically) signifies in India coincides with the 1951 Geneva Convention, however, its connected legal scope varies drastically, as India still has not signed either the Geneva Convention nor its Protocol, unlike 146 other parties. (UNHCR, 2015) While within signatory states being a refugee constitutes a specific legal category, the same cannot be said in the Indian context, where the handling of refugees is executed in a case-by-case manner and thus does not refer to a coherent system, as India has no national legislation to govern and protect refugees. Instead, refugees are subject to the Foreigners Act, 1946, which was enacted by the Imperial Legislative Assembly of the Government of India. The emergence of the Foreigners Act is similar to the Geneva Convention, as it was a response to the aftermath of the Second World War. Achary argues that:

“its continued application in independent India for more than sixty years after the end of the war can only be seen as an indication of the government’s desire to retain almost absolute powers to deal with foreigners”. (Achary 2004, 2)

According to the Foreigners Act, refugees fall under the category of foreigners: non-Indian citizens. The Indian Government is equipped with certain powers related to the governing of this group of people, especially regarding their activities, movement and issue of identity proof. This includes: the prohibition of changing their names and the obligation of hotels to keep records of foreigners.¹⁰ While the Foreigners Act comes with a plethora of executive dynamics, the key aspect that this paper wants to highlight is that when subsuming refugees, at least “on

¹⁰ See sections 2, 5 and 7 of the Foreigners Act, 1946

paper”, with foreigners overall, special protection is not granted towards them. Foreigners, and as such refugees, are according to article 14 and 21 of the Indian Constitution entitled to the constitutional protection of equality (e.g., before the law), life and liberty (entitlement to the right against the deprivation of life, for bodily integrity and dignity and “the right against executive action sans procedural due process accrues to them”). (Achary, 2004, 3f) Still, the downside of not providing special protection becomes especially pressing when looking at Section 3 (2)(c) of the Foreigners Act, which enables the executive the power to remove foreigners. A right that has been confirmed in 1955 by the Supreme Court and powers, “that have generally been exercised free from judicial review” and given to the Indian Government. With refugees being regarded as foreigners, they do not experience legally binding special protection, for example from issues such as deportations. (ibid.)

One example is the case of Rohingya refugees in India, who face great threat in Myanmar, where Muslim Rohingya have been subject to genocide in 2016-2017 by Myanmar's military, leading to the escape of over a million Rohingyas. Human Rights groups have stated that India has arrested and detained thousands Rohingyas and returned 16 to Myanmar between 2017 and 2022. Organizations such as the Rohingya Human Rights Initiative refer here to India's neglect of taking the holding of UNHCR identity cards into account and the general absence of a refugee and asylum law. (Global Detention Project, 2023)

Instances when refugees are treated as a separate class, distinguished from foreigners, have been in the contexts of sudden mass refugee influx situations. In such cases, refugees from South Asia were usually able to apply for political asylum (such as Tibetans) and other nationalities were protected under the mandate of UNHCR, who issues “Refugee Certificates”, which, although generally taken into account by the Indian authorities, are not legally recognized and thus non-binding. (Achary 2004)

After the events of 1959 and the arrival of Tibetans, alongside the 14th Dalai Lama, India, under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, granted Tibetans the right to reside in India and helped facilitate settlements, schools, as well as medical infrastructures. (Tibet Justice Center, 2022) While still legally treated as foreigners, the Tibetan community does receive special protection and therefore does not share the same experience of “refugeeness” as communities and individuals considered as refugees or forced migrants from other regions within India. For example, the Office Memorandum on “The Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy, 2014”, provides

details of the negotiations between the Central Tibetan Relief Committee¹¹ and the Government of India, regarding non-uniform assistance and facilities provided by the latter. The 2014 policy enables provisions such as land leases, employment, housing to Tibetans with the Registration Certificate (RC) – a permit for Tibetans to stay in India, and trade opportunities. (Government of India, 2014/Adhya, 2022)

While understanding the bigger legal webs into which refugees are embedded is important, I argue that the emic perspective ought to be the focal point. Drawing from qualitative research examples, I argue that the refugee's perception of what being a refugee encompasses quite often drastically differs from what the "host country's" system proposes. Knowing those differences is of value, since it can shift the whole data analysis, providing ground for letting the subalterns speak and shedding light onto effects of possible conflicts between different forms of identification.

Talking to Tibetan refugees at the Tibetan Refugee Self Help Centre, Darjeeling, Tsering-la, an elderly first-generation-man, described being a refugee in the following way: "People who don't have a home anymore and who have to live somewhere else." There is a shared feeling, at least among the older generation at the Centre, that the key aspect of being a refugee lies within the relationship one has to the home country and the (non) status they have there, instead of using the label as a marker of their status within the host country. Here, what makes a refugee a refugee varies drastically from the UNHCR'S definition, which requires a form of prosecution. Furthermore, the respective refugees don't use the label as a legal category, as the UNHCR definition would imply, which can be understood when looking at the context they are finding themselves in – the nation state of India, where no legal category of "refugee" exists.

The association of "being a refugee" seems to shift within the younger generation of Tibetans in India, who have an easier access to Indian nationality. This means that they have to make

¹¹ His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Central Tibetan Relief Committee (CTRC) was established in 1960 and operates as a Relief and Development Wing of the Home Department in the Central Tibetan Administration. Forming part of the Tibetan government of exile, by coordination relief and rehabilitation for Tibetans refugees in India, Nepal and Bhutan. The CTRC is registered as a Charitable Society, according to the Indian Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860. (CTRC, n.D.)

the decision of whether or not to apply for an official Registration Certificate (RC), which declares them as foreigners, giving them an informal status that allows them to live in India. Informal, as holding the RC does not grant a legal right to reside in India. *“In practice, this informal status amounts to the ability to reside in a particular locality of India, typically connected to a Tibetan settlement camp or locale, and to travel domestically”*. (Legal Service India, n.D.) Obtaining the RC or the Indian citizenship (as both cannot be held at the same time) come with different benefits and downsides, for example when it comes to university entry quota, which in some instances favors RC, or government jobs, which usually require the Indian citizenship. (ibid.) In this light, the younger generation with whom I engaged during my fieldwork, deeply attributed their status of being a foreigner or refugee with bureaucratic connotations. Furthermore, as they were born in India, the younger people I have talked to in the Centre attribute their “refugeeness” less, or not at all, to themselves as individuals, but rather to their collective history. In contrast, the first and second generation of Tibetan refugees, who do not have the advantage of easily obtaining Indian citizenship, connect this term to a large extent to their personal stories and memories of struggles and violence of them fleeing to India and their relationship to their homeland – Tibet.

The different associations with the term “refugee” within the different generations hint to greater underlying social discrepancies: regarding the people’s connection to the homeland, their personal stories about fleeing the country, the challenges faced and possibilities available in the host country and so on. Aspects that will unfold throughout this thesis. The different approaches towards the meaning of what being a refugee encompasses also lead us to another crucial dynamic visible within the Tibetan exile in India – the formation of Identity.

1.3. Identity Formation in Exile

The case of Tibetans in exile shows distinct characteristics regarding identity discourses. The need for a community is not only a response to the survival in exile, but also to demonstrate entitlement of being regarded as a sovereign culture and to thus make political claims as an independent state. In exile, Tibet lost to Chinese occupation is being kept alive. Permanent refugee settlements in India and also Bhutan or Nepal pursue the goal (advocated by the Dalai Lama), to create a Tibetan exile community, by fostering solidarity, through the means of providing settlements that are rather isolated. (Bentz 2012, 94) This intention is highly visible at the TRSHC, which, if aimed to describe loosely, could be referred to as a gated community.

This is because as for starters, both residents and workers at the facility are exclusively Tibetan, but also because of underlying ideologies and prejudices at place, such as the intent to not let their children mix with locals (e.g., by putting them into Tibetan schools instead of Indian schools), to avoid losing their sense of ‘Tibetanness’, but also to not acquire characteristics attributed to the locals, such as alcoholism or loose morale.

The desire to keep Tibetan settlements in India within themselves is not only supported from Tibetan side, but also by the state of India, emphasizing “(1) the liberal ‘non-assimilative’ framework as reflected in the separate settlements, and (2) the broad ‘delegated’ authority of the Tibetan leadership headed by the Dalai Lama over the Tibetan settlements in India.” (Norbu 2003, 204), thus making the organization of the Tibetan exile a Tibetan affair.

When considering exile Tibetan society and government in this light, two forms of identity discourses are presented: a) a “natural” identity formation in and through exile and b) a “guided” identity formation that pursues certain goals and agendas.

The “natural” identity formation is linked to collective memories. The Tibetan identity in exile is based on shared experiences and memories upon their way to and journey in exile: from fleeing the Chinese occupation, to their hard work in India (e.g., as road builders), to the establishment of Tibetan exile settlements... But it is not just the memories of these challenges, but above all their overcoming that created a feeling of connection and also of pride among the Tibetans in exile. These collective memories are reproduced in exile for future generations, in narrations but also for example in schoolbooks and are thus kept alive as an element of exile identity. (Kauffmann 2015: 23ff)

In contrast, the “guided” identity formation creates an exile Tibetan identity that can be traced back to a controlled process that pursues certain goals. Here, identity is used as a tool to either present themselves skillfully to the West, or to bind the community to keep the relevance of the liberation of Tibet alive. In both instances, the notion of democracy becomes vital.

Ashild Kolas (1996) points to those two understandings of “guided” identity formation as she emphasizes the representation of Tibet in exile vis-à-vis the West and focuses on the alignment with the Western concept of statehood. Tibet in exile had to adapt to Western “norms” and, above all, present itself as a state to gain recognition and the associated support, for example visible in the numerous international Tibet Support Groups, that work independently from the CTA. (CTA b) n.D.) In order to embody the Western concept of statehood, the following aspects were central: *“a permanent population, a defined territory, governance, and the*

capacity to enter into relations with other states.” (Kolas 1996: 59). During the process of adapting to this definition of statehood, democracy gained importance. For the government-in-exile, maintaining ties with the homeland is of great importance. This is justified because the Tibetan identity, under the supremacy of China, seems to be in danger of getting lost and therefore has to be preserved in exile. For this goal, it is highly relevant for the government in exile to be homogeneous and to promote a society with a shared national identity (McConnell 2012: 86f). To control the construction of identity, the government in exile resorts to the following biopolitical regulatory mechanisms: the creation of (quasi) citizenship; Tibetan settlements, religious and cultural institutions that form spaces of power and “national”; the promotion of standardized Tibetan nationalism (e.g., through holidays or flag raising) or in the field of education, in which a Tibetan identity is conveyed. (ibid.: 89) McConnell also illustrates this form of identity construction based on a (symbolic) connection to the homeland using the electoral system in exile, which is ought to be adopted in Tibet in the future (McConnell 2009: 122). The connection to the homeland is created by the political assembly members being elected with a symbolic quota for the three traditional provinces of Tibet (U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo), the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and the Bön, and the exiled Tibetans in North America, Europe and Oceania. The elected parliament in exile (symbolically) represents a microcosm in relation to the homeland and shapes democracy rather than the reality in exile (ibid.: 124ff). These theoretical discourses argue that via the establishment of a democratic government and political representation, connected with identity preservation and formation, a creation of a (quasi) Tibetan citizenship has been established.

Tibetan identity is in conclusion re-produced and enhanced in exile, through the (oftentimes traumatic) experiences that the refugees faced back in Tibet, on their way to India and within the new state of settlement. Furthermore, Tibetan identity is tried to be kept alive and contained, in order to counter oppression of Tibetan identity by the Chinese government. As such, Tibetan identity gets expressed through means of democratization and statehood, also, to gain recognition by vital players in the Tibetan cause in the West. The concept of “Tibetan identity” has to be regarded however, within all of these identity formation processes, through a critical lens, as it postulates a homogenous Tibetan identity – “the” Tibetan identity/culture. This presentation, although arguably needed to set themselves apart from other cultural systems and to embody a “united front” that seeks out outside support, leads to an essentialization of “Tibetanness” which challenges differentiations within.

2. Introducing the Tibetan Refugee Self Help Centre, Darjeeling

After having outlined the broader picture of Tibetan refugees in India of today, the Tibetan Refugee Self Help Centre, constituting the focal point of the research, will be presented. At first, by taking a look into the facility as whole – its establishment, self-help philosophy and geopolitical embeddedness. Secondly, the different sectors into which the center is divided will be presented. Finally, the center's infrastructure and connected life quality will be addressed, which is of crucial importance regarding the thesis' focus.

2.1. Establishment, Philosophy and Geopolitical embeddedness

The Tibetan Refugee Self Help Centre (TRSHC) opened its doors on October 2nd, 1959, just a couple of months after the 14th Dalai Lama escaped from Chinese occupation through the Indian borders. Founder of the Center is Taiwanese woman Mrs. Deky Dolkar Thondup, wife of Gyalo Thondup – the elder brother of the 14th Dalai Lama. Considering the thousands of Tibetans fleeing to India, Dolkar Thondup assembled a ten-member committee, with the goal to establish a rehabilitation center for the Tibetan refugees. Through local initiatives (donations, charity shows and an exhibition football match) to assemble funding, and donations from voluntary and humanitarian agencies such as CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Red Cross, American Friends Committee and more, as well as through the Central Relief Committee (India), land was purchased in the Darjeeling Hill Side. The location of the center itself is of historical importance and value to its residents, as the 13th Dalai Lama had resided here in exile from Chinese aggression towards Tibet during 1910 and 1912.

The center was beginning to operate, being registered as a charitable organization under the act of Government of India. Other than monetary aid, the center also received substantial support in form of food, clothes, medicine and equipment from various humanitarian organizations and private donors. Starting with only four workers in 1959, the center became a home to up to 2000 residents at its highest point. When conducting research in 2023, around 50 families and 20ish workers were left in the center, demonstrating a significant downsizing of residents over time. This downsizing in residents and thus staff will inform this thesis main analysis, as the preservation of culture at place becomes faced with difficulties. (TRSHC n.D.)

The center has since its beginning embraced a self-providing and self-help philosophy, which becomes evident in the institution's name. The Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre describes this approach as follows:

“Right from the initial stages, we recognized that the need of the hour was the determination to stand on our own feet and rely first on and foremost on our own effort- in short, the spirit of Self-Help. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that without Self-Help there can be no rehabilitation – be it cultural, economic, psychological, social or spiritual. Outside assistance is, of course, necessary. But no matter how generous others prove to be, no refugee could ever be rehabilitated in the fullest sense of the word without the empowerment that comes from Self-Help. This vital element could only come from within our own community, from within our own selves.” (TRSHC n.D.)

In the light of self-help, Tibetan handicraft production was and is the main activity and source of income of the center. Residents do not only live in the facility but are generally trained at the center in artisanal work (weaving, thangka painting¹², woodwork...) which they then carry out in that same facility. Other than producing and selling Tibetan art, the center also self-provides by harvesting vegetables in a greenhouse, providing care of the sick in its own little hospital, taking care of their most vulnerable members, as well as providing sponsored education in Tibetan schools. The former running nursery and orphanage are not open at this point anymore, due to the downsizing of residents. (ibid./Thondup & Thurston 2015, 212)

The philosophy of self-help and its self-providing expression is crucially informing the facilities geopolitical positioning and its situatedness in India and beyond with a Tibetan Government in Exile (CTA) in place.

Most (refugee) settlements of Tibetans in India are founded by the CTA and are thus linked not only to this form of government, but also to the state of India and of the USA, as these operate as sponsors of the CTA. (Namgyal 2013) Currently, the CTA lists 40 settlements in India, divided into agriculture based (15 settlements), handicraft based (14 settlements) and cluster communities (10 settlements). (CTA 2019) The Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre, in contrast, understands itself as independent, non-affiliated with neither the Indian government

¹² Tibetan Buddhist (rollup) painting, depicting religious symbols.

nor the Tibetan Government in Exile. Put to practice, this means that the money needed for maintaining the facility and providing salary to its residents is generated within the center itself, primarily through selling the produced handicrafts and that outside funding from governments or NGOs is generally refrained from. Only the sponsorship program for elderly and children, encompassing pocket money, is maintained through donations of organizations and private people. However, for certain projects outside funding has been accepted, for example from the Tibetan Government in Exile in Dharamsala to renew the roofs of the TRSHC. This need for external aid became especially pressing as an aftermath of Covid-19, when the center had to shut down business from 2020-2022 and thus didn't obtain enough money to implement such renovation projects. Regarding monetary aid, Pelmo-la, daughter of the centers' current president Mr. Khedroob Thondup, is hinting at changes regarding attitudes towards financial aid revenues. She explains that there has been hesitation to accept money from outside, since this might lead to the donors' claim to interfere with internal affairs. However, especially regarding the current downsizing of the residents and thus, subsequently, of handicraft production and sales, Pelmo-la sees potential for the center to actively seek out more sponsors. Concrete plans have not been formed and/or shared with me.

Other than regarding finances, the center positions itself also as rather detached from broader geopolitics, maintaining an image of a place of refuge and handicrafts. However, the center is located within the Indian nation-state and isn't living in complete isolation. The fact that the center is able to practice a self-help philosophy and is able to operate rather independently, is in the end a result of India's attitude towards Tibetans within their borders. As pointed out in Chapter 1, Tibetans are receiving special rights in comparison to other foreigners in the country, such as the right to reside in India and to establish settlements there. The ability to experience independence to such an extent, has to be understood as embedded within the dynamics between the Tibetans and the Indian government. Furthermore, a connection (although not dependency) to the CTA is also visible when looking at the TRSHC, as representatives from the Tibetan Government visit the center from time to time. For example, when a new prime minister is appointed, to advise the center on current situations of Tibetans in India and to get an insight into the life and struggles of the Tibetans living at the center.

While refraining from being entangled in broader political dynamics on an executive level, the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre is, despite its claims, actively embedded in geopolitics – at least on a symbolic level. Having the word “refugee” in the facilities title alone showcases that

a clear understanding of the history and relationship between Tibet and China is core of the self-understanding of the settlement. While the “Middle Way Approach” (Tibet remaining part of the state of China but with granted autonomy) is accepted by the Dalai Lama and subsequently by the residents of the center¹³, the facility takes a firm stance on the “Free Tibet” cause – the liberation of Tibet from Chinese control. “Free Tibet” posters are found within the residents’ houses, the workspaces, and the Showroom (the shop where tourists can buy handicrafts). Furthermore, the property entails two photo exhibitions (one on Tibet and one on the center’s history), that advocate for Tibet’s independence. The center thus wants to transmit its political stance to the outside. After all, it sustains itself from sales made primarily from tourists stopping by. To keep this interest in Tibetan culture preserved, Tibet, now under Chinese rule, needs to be kept alive as well – at least on a symbolic level.

I argue that although the TRSHC isn’t an active political player and tries to stay detached from political structures, it does situate itself in the geopolitical processes at place and therefore can’t be regarded as detached from them. After all, to position itself as a place of refuge, the political context of the refugees and their histories are being maintained and presented.

2.2. Structure and Sections of the Center

The Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre is split into two locations. One is the actual settlements in the hills of Darjeeling, where residents live and work and which are open for tourists. The other location is in the Darjeeling city center, where the headquarters – an office place - are stationed.

At the first location, the settlement, its building complexes represent the different sections that the facility is split into. As such, different labor streams (woodwork, wool spinning, carpet weaving, etc.) are physically divided, as well as private and communal activities. The following map will showcase some of the buildings and their usage.

¹³ The Dalai Lama is regarded as the authoritative figure by the Tibetans that were informing this thesis, almost transmitting a notion of blind obedience to him and his judgements.



fig. 1 Map of the TRSHC

Most of the buildings comprise residential complexes. Currently, houses or flats are distributed per family units, commonly encompassing a kitchen, a living room and a bedroom. While electricity and running water is provided within the individual housing arrangements, communal sanitary facilities are placed outside. These infrastructures are provided by the center to its residents and their family, under the condition that one family member is also integrated into the labor market of the facility or was integrated but is now retired or ill.



fig. 2 Living room and bedroom of a single residential room.



fig. 3 Residential Complex

The center's main economic activity is the production of Tibetan handicrafts, having shipped to over 36 countries worldwide. The center produces all their handicrafts in place. Thus, many buildings at the settlement are working spaces. The so-called "Workshop" is the biggest workspace with over 20 looms where carpet weavers work. Other than that, there is the dyeing section, where the wool gets manually dyed. There are also rooms dedicated to the spinning and softening of wool before its further processing as well as a wool stockroom. The center also holds a small section of woodwork and sewing, each operating from their own little space. By only employing Tibetans at the center, the facility also puts a strong emphasis on training. It states that training Tibetans in Tibetan art forms is important on three grounds: to provide them with useful labor skills, to maintain workers for the production at site, and to preserve Tibetan culture, by passing down traditional Tibetan arts and crafts along generations. As of 2005, around 1800 people have been trained at the center. (TRSHC n.D.)

When entering the center through its main gate, one is led to a big courtyard. Here, the residents assemble for holidays, such as the Tibetan Democracy Day (2nd of September), to play card games and drink Chang (Tibetan beer). Every Wednesday, in honor of the Dalai Lama, who was born on a Wednesday, some of the residents – mainly women – meet in the evening there to dance Tibetan dances in traditional clothing. An event, not open to the public.

In the morning of the same day, the center's own monastery holds a morning puja¹⁴ for the Dalai Lama, led by an appointed Geshe¹⁵ from the Drepung Loseling Monastic Institution, Mungod, South India, who also resides in the center. The center is distinctly embedded in Tibetan Buddhism, as Chapter 6 will outline in greater detail. Infrastructure wise this is visible through the monastery/temple, a prayer room where pujas are held from time to time in the evening (at least during my time there, only visited by women) and two 2m high copper prayer wheels, as well as 50 smaller ones distributed throughout the area.

Returning to the courtyard, the following places are arrayed around it:

The produced artworks (mainly carpets and clothing, such as pullovers, shawls and jackets) are exhibited in the “Showroom”, which can best be described as the center's gift shop. Here, visitors can also buy Tibetan products, such as prayer flags, tea or ceramics that the center has purchased for selling from outside.

Vis-à-vis the Showroom, there are two photo exhibitions – one on Tibet and one on the center's history, where prior the nursery and orphanage was placed. Next to it, there is a small shop, kitchen and restaurant, where both visitors and workers can drink Tibetan butter, lemon or black tea and eat Momos (Tibetan dumplings), that are freshly made by hand every day there. A bit more on the outskirts of the center's ground, usually not visited by tourists, is a small 20 bed hospital, which was opened in 1961 by the American Relief Service. (TRSHC n.D.) Once providing medical consultations, blood works and Tuberculosis screenings, the hospital underwent substantial downsizing over time. However, residents of the center are still provided access to free medical consultations. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the hospital was used as a place of quarantine for infected people.

The settlement also has a new green house and garden, used for self-cultivating vegetables and greens.

¹⁴A devotional ritual ceremony within Buddhism and Hinduism that can be performed privately or in the context of public festivities. These ceremonies typically encompass offerings and chants. Within Tibetan Buddhism a puja is a ritualistic ceremony, used to give offerings to the Buddha as a form of veneration.

¹⁵ Geshe is a degree obtained within the Buddhist Gelug school, given to students of the philosophical monastic system who succeeded their training related to Buddhist philosophical texts. A Geshe is someone regarded as someone who “knows virtue. (Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) 2007)



fig. 4 Women softening sheep wool.

*fig. 5 Boiler for dyeing wool with green dyed
wool on top to dry.*



fig. 6 "Workshop", carpet weaving room, depicting the looms.

The second site is the office of the TRSHC, located in Darjeeling town. In the early 1990s, current president Mr. Khedroob Thondup saw a need to create a structure where all the main activities of accounting and billing happen. The office, equipped with computers, ought to minister the center more efficiently. Mr. Thondup bought the property of the nowadays office

space, that expanded to encompass other units of activities: a printing press (open to public inquiries such as posters and wedding invitations but also Tibetan prayer books for monasteries) and a dental clinic, which currently doesn't have a dentist employed but owns the only X-Ray machine in the area. Money generated through these means flows back into the center. The so-called children sponsorship department is also administered in the headquarters, which is responsible for donations coming from organizations to provide children and elderly living in the center with pocket money.

2.3. Infrastructure and Life Quality

As the chapter outlined above, the TRSHC is in its self-help philosophy well established regarding its infrastructure, as the residents receive all their life necessities at place or through the institution: from accommodation to the workplace, health insurance, education, leisure activities, and spiritual accompaniment. In earlier days, when the number of residents was higher, the center also had a nursery, an orphanage, and a common kitchen. With an intact infrastructure, the permanent residents consulted during the research in 2023, expressed gratitude towards the home that has been provided to them and emphasized a sentiment of happiness that is connected to their life in the center and the perceived easy life they face at that place. Of course, this evaluation must be regarded within the specific context that these individuals are situated in – refugees, whose memories from before their arrival to India are mostly filled with fear, violence, and banishment. While a consensus about the “good life” at the center seems to be in place, at least within the older generation, there is also criticism expressed regarding the infrastructure of their housing arrangements and especially the sanitary installations.

For instance, most apartments are only accessible via staircases. A difficulty especially for the elderly. With the decline in residents, the wish for bigger housings per family or person are also aspired. So far, extra housing rooms can be acquired via an extra pay of around 200 rupees a month (+/- 2 euros), which, however, constitutes around 10% of their monthly pay. The biggest complaint regarding the life quality at the center are the sanitary facilities. Both the administrative entities of the center, as well as the residents, are in agreement that improvements in this aspect are needed. As of right now, toilets aren't installed within the apartments or housing complexes. To go to the toilet, one must leave one's house and walk outside to common toilets, which are separated according to gender (male – female).

Depending on the distance to the apartment, the walk to the toilets can take up to two minutes, longer, when having difficulties walking. Regarding the climate of Darjeeling, these circumstances can be especially challenging, as temperatures can drop to 3 degrees Celsius in January (in the last decade, Darjeeling even experienced snowfall) and rain is common during the monsoon season from May to September with up to 22 rain days a month. With the toilets being installed outside, various challenges thus emerge, with residents opting to use chamber pots.

These conditions are troubling especially to the younger generation, who express discontent with the underdeveloped facilities, stating that they feel as if nothing has changed since the establishment of the center back in the days. These circumstances are a leading cause mentioned by the younger Tibetans with whom I have spoken to, regarding their decision to leave the center after finishing high school.

As one young male (age 25), who asked to stay anonymous, summarizes:

„ I visited so many other Indian refugee camps where it's highly developed. You can build your own house. Let's focus on basic things like running water, toilet, washroom. That's the main thing in human life. Sanitation and all I think it's pretty weak out here. I'm not saying I'm not thankful and all... It's pretty weird in this generation, in this century we're still living the same thing since. It's the same thing, everything is the same, nothing has changed. As a youth it's fine for me, I can go just there use the washroom, it's fine for us. But as you get older, from the 4th floor you have to come all the way down just to pee. What if you have a diarrhea or something like that in between. ”

Another important aspect regarding the life quality within the center can be named in relation to the conditions of the workers. The production of handicrafts is regulated via an implemented fixed time schedule. The center, as well as its workstations, are open Monday through Saturday from 8 am to 4 pm, including designated time to rest; for lunch (11 am – 12 am) and tea in the afternoon. Especially the elderly, who in some cases exceed 80 years of age, are working at their own pace, taking rests when needed. Having worked in close to every workstation of the center myself for at least a whole workday, depending on the section, I have concluded that the tasks are rather repetitive (e.g., tearing wool open with hands) and are in general undertaken whilst sitting. While physical fatigue wasn't mentioned

by my research participants as a particular challenge, they rather viewed the repetitiveness as exhausting at times, as every day looks more or less the same, with no great variety. Time at work is in turn accompanied by chatter, gossip, listening to the radio and to music.

Regarding the quality of life, the notion of security measures is important to note. While simple work clothes are provided, like aprons and rubber boots (used for cleaning the wool by feet), no greater safety equipment has been implemented. This becomes especially troubling within the dyeing section, where wool gets dyed with natural but also chemical substances by hand, without any gloves or special masks to filter out the toxins. The two workers in that section would put their bare hands into the (sometimes hot) water in which the wool is soaking in color several times a week. Furthermore, as the used boiler (see fig. 5) is operating on gas in a contained room, the air quality inside has to be viewed as a safety hazard, where unacquainted visitors (like myself) can occasionally suffer from a coughing fit.

Regarding the infrastructure and the connected quality of life within the TRSHC, it can be said that great challenges are articulated on ground of sanitary facilities, as well as safety measures within the workspace. These critiques, however, must be regarded as within the context that the center is positioned in, as it is an independent Tibetan settlement on Indian ground, that doesn't profit from great outside financial support, but whose offerings to its residents and workers (housing, education, healthcare, salary) are stemming from a self-providing economic process.

3. Tibetan Carpet Weaving

Through the artisanal artwork of Tibetan carpet weaving, the refugee's negotiation of temporalities based on the preservation of culture, will further be analyzed. While this thesis doesn't deal with the Tibetan carpets as an art craft per se, but rather as a tool through which the refugee's experiences are being made tangible, an insight into the artform itself operates as a means of embedding the observed dynamics into a holistic picture. This chapter thus aims to provide an overview over this particular handicraft, by in the first step giving a historical overview on the Tibetan carpet weaving and in the second step portraying how this artform is employed in the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre.

3.1. The History of Tibetan Carpet Weaving

Tibetan carpets are part of the Tibetan category of *gdan* (which can be translated to “seats”) and are primarily used to sleep or sit on, in houses or in tents, and only seldom are put on the floor as Western carpets. Denwood (1974) stated that Tibetans in India still cover their beddings with carpets, a practice still upholding within the TRSHC as of 2023. Tibetan carpets are also used under the saddle of a horse or donkey when riding. They are used by lay people, as well as in monasteries, however, scarcely fulfill a religious purpose. They are either sitting or prayer rugs for lamas¹⁶ and monks and are in this context commonly incorporating the colors orange or red. The carpets thus fulfill rather practical uses than decorative ones, as, in contrast, the history of Persian carpets shows. Tibetan carpets also are linked to the exhibition of prestige, as the bigger in size and prettier and more complex in design, the worthier its dignitary is. (Denwood 1974, 9ff/Larsson 1988, 122)

Scholars of Tibetan carpets such as Denwood (1974), Larson (1988) or Leeper (1984) aren't able to trace back the origins of Tibetan carpets but estimate their emergence back to roughly 1000 year's. (Larsson 1988, 121) Denwood proposes this timeframe, due to references to Tibetan carpets through the word “*gdan*” in Tibetan texts dating back till then. However, there is evidence that Tibetans engaged in carpet weaving by the 8th century CA, during Tibetan

¹⁶ An honorary title for a teacher within Tibetan Buddhism.

occupation in the Tarim Basin oases, where carpet manufacturers were being recorded. (Denwood 1974, 83f)

More substantial knowledge about Tibetan carpets, their usage and production, is available throughout the 19th/20th century, with Tibet's declared Independence in 1913 after periods of British and Mandu-Chinese occupations. (Goldstein 1989)

We know that wool rugs that were used for official uses (for example in monasteries), were acquired through two means via the Tibetan Government: a) a carpet guild, meaning the hiring of artisans for a few weeks to produce carpets in a temporary set-up workshop or b) ordering carpets in established workshops¹⁷, such as in Gyantse County and later of Lhasa¹⁸ or of Kashag¹⁹. In the beginning of the 20th century, artisans formed a guild that was independent from monasteries and aristocratic estates.

The Tibetan carpet became a crucial component in Tibet's political history with the beginning of Chinese invasion in 1950. In the early fifties, the Kashag workshop was established, inspired by the carpet factory in Beijing. This was of importance, as Tibet, wanting to compete with China, was in need of an identity bound to modernity, in order to gain international support against aggression from the Chinese. (Zhang 2012, 86f) Here we can see the concept of guided identity formation as outlined by Kolas (1996) unfold, which relates to the creation of an exile Tibetan identity that can be traced back to a controlled process that pursues distinct goals. Here, identity is used as a tool to present Tibetan identity skillfully to the West. Through the Kashag workshop, Tibet's commitment to modernization ought to be highlighted. Furthermore, as the production was under Tibetan control, political and cultural autonomy against Chinese invasion was expressed. However, in 1959, with the fleeing of the 14th Dalai Lama to India, such workshops came under Chinese power. These workshops and their economic revenues were then used by China to promote their socialist modernization philosophy.

Between 1959 and 1970, the Tibetan carpet underwent several changes in regard to its esteemed (symbolic) value. After 1959, the Chinese government didn't put substantial funding into this art craft and the guild system dissolved. Tibetan carpet makers were now primarily produced

¹⁷ In this context, the term „workshop” refers to an artisanal working space.

¹⁸ Lhasa is the capital of the Tibetan Autonomous Region in China.

¹⁹ Until 1959, Kashag was the governing council of Tibet.

in small-sized private workshops. In the mid 60s, the Chinese Government promoted a “campaign to destroy the four olds” in light of the Cultural Revolution that aimed to destroy elements of “Chinese culture” (including the occupied territory of Tibet) that were standing in contrast to those embodied through the Chinese Communist Revolution. The “four olds” stand for old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits. The carpets of Lhasa were considered part of these four olds and thus needed to be shut down in production. However, not long after, in the early 70s, policies changed due to a carpet conference in Shanghai that illustrated the reputation Tibetan carpets have around the globe. Consequently, Beijing started ordering carpets from Lhasa for export. This was also to counter, or keep up with, Western relief organizations financially supporting the production of carpets of Tibetan refugees. (Zhang 2009, 86f) A new policy of “reviving Tibetan carpets” was implemented. Through that, in turn, Tibetan artisans were able to express their historically professional and cultural identity through the carpet making under Chinese rule, which was in charge of marketing strategies.

“In competition with Tibetan enterprises in Nepal and India, the Chinese Central Government invested in the production of high-quality ‘Tibetan carpets’ to demonstrate its leadership in defining and preserving ‘Tibetan tradition’ ... Tibetan artisans now had more symbolic resources to draw on. Their work became traditionally Tibetan and simultaneously a Chinese national treasure.” (Zhang 2009, 92)

The “New Tibet development policy” was announced by the Chinese Government in 1980, which allowed international capital to enter the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), which shaped the outlook onto Tibetan carpets, as handicraft projects were now being sponsored through international fundings. (ibid. 93-6) Herzfeld (2004) points out that the promotion of Tibetan carpets not only created income for Tibetans, but also fostered Tibetan cultural nationalism under Chinese rule.

As of today, Tibetan carpets are being produced primarily in big manufactories in Nepal, India and China, with most workers not being Tibetans, resulting in revenues of such products not going back to the local artisans.

The traditional production of Tibetan handicrafts, such as carpets, although still regarded as of great value, is in danger of extinction, according to the Tibetan Artisanal Initiative. This is because Tibetan artisans of today are mostly elderly and with knowledge not being passed

down to the younger generation, traditional Tibetan handicrafts are viewed as endangered. (Drophenling 2024)

3.2. Tibetan Carpet Production at the TRSHC

Everything starts with the wool.

Originally, the center imported the sheep wool it uses from Nepal, as the sheep there ought to be the closest to the ones in former Tibet. However, due to regulatory issues with China, the center switched to wool coming from nomads in Ladakh, located at the north-west of India in the Himalayan, next to Kashmir. Apart from buying the wool from outside, each and every step of the carpet production takes place in the center manually. To give the reader a holistic image, the process will be outlined briefly.

At first, the wool that's still filled with grease gets "opened", by tearing the oily parts with one's hands apart. Around three times a week, 5-10kg of sheep wool undergo this process, followed by being washed. For this, water and soap get poured over it and mixed together by being stamped with one's feet. This procedure reminds of the traditional method of foot treading in barrels in the winemaking production. After a couple of rounds of washing, the wool is put in a bag for one to two hours, so that water can drip out. Then, the wool is getting dried on the roofs. All these steps are undertaken by one person – Mr. Tsering-la. Once the wool is dry it gets "softened". This means that batches of wool are being ripped open by hand, making it kind of fuzzy (see fig. 4). During my stay, it was usually three older women and one elderly man who were occupied in this section. Around once a day two women from the next section – spinning – enter the room to weigh and collect the softened wool. The next room that the wool enters is that of the spinners. Here, the wool gets prepared for being spun into yarn. For that, two metal brushes are being used. Onto one, a handful of the wool is put on and the other brush brushes over it. The technique resembles the maybe more familiar one of prepping hair for wigs. In the same room, filled by three middle-aged women, the prepared wool then gets spun into yarn with manual spinning wheels.

Once the wool is ready, it is either rolled up in balls of wool (raw wool providing up to five shades: white, beige, brown, grey and black), or sent to the dyeing section. The dyeing section is in the hands of Bhuti-la, a middle-aged woman, and her brother-in-law Tsering-la. In a large

vessel, water gets boiled and batches of wool that are connected with strings are put in it for around one day. Depending on which color one wants to achieve, natural materials (such as barberry plant, madder root, indigo plant or tea leaf) are grinded and put into a bag and added to the vessel (kind of like a tea bag through which the color goes out): around 3 kg to achieve light and 6 kg to achieve darker shades. Manually, the wool gets stirred from time to time with long heavy wooden sticks. Once the wool is done sitting in the boiling dye and the water isn't boiling anymore, a wooden construction is placed above the vessel and the wool is taken out by hand and put above it, so that the water can drip out (see fig. 5). In the meantime, the water is brought to boil again for the next batch of wool. In general, around two to three rounds of boiling with the same water (but added colors) are taking place, so that from every natural color around two to three color intensities are achieved, with the first batch being the darkest. Some colors are also achieved with chemical dye. The process is similar, despite the tea-bag method, as the chemicals are just being put directly into the water. Next, the wool gets washed in cold water in non-functioning bathtubs and gets hung again to let the water go out before putting the wool on the roof to dry. Once the wool is dry, two elderly ladies roll it up – just like the natural colors before. Then, the finished wool ends in the stock room.

From the stockroom, the wool can be bought as it is from tourists as a souvenir or can be obtained from residents of the center for their handicraft production, which encompasses sewing, knitting and carpet weaving. The carpet weaving takes place in the so-called “Workshop” – a large room with around 20 wooden looms on which the carpets are being knotted by hand (see fig. 6). For small-sized carpets women work on their own and for bigger carpets, two women are working together. From the around 15 carpet weavers working the workshop, all are female residents –middle aged to elderly. However, Tibetan carpet weaving isn't a female work per se, but was and is practiced by men as well. (Denwood 1974, 122)

What makes Tibetan carpets Tibetan is foremost the technique and the tools used for it: needles are used to separate the knot line one is working on and the carpet weaving itself is done by making Tibetan knots along the wool strings. The carpets produced in the center usually depict some of 85 traditional Tibetan motives: from flowers, to dragons, to the eight lucky signs²⁰.

²⁰ The eight lucky signs (operating as charms) are: the precious parasol, the white conch shell, the two golden fish, the knot of eternity, the vase of great treasures, the victory banner, the lotus flower, the eight spoked wheel.

Orders come in from tourists, organizations, such as SOS Kinderdorf, or monasteries and are being shipped worldwide. Depending on size, the average cost of a carpet lies by 41 800 rupees (around 450 Euros). A carpet, from finish (washing wool) to end takes approximately six months. The process of weaving the carpet, depending on size, around one month.

4. Preserving Tibetan Culture Through Carpets

A re-appearing point made in this thesis is that Tibetans in exile put emphasis on the preservation of their culture, as a formulated goal by the Dalai Lama and the Government in Exile, considering their oppression²¹ faced in their homeland under Chinese rule.

While Tibetan culture gets preserved through various means in the facility (such as, Tibetan education, Tibetan activities such as traditional dances and prayers), the center's image is built around the artisanal sector (most dominantly the Tibetan carpet weaving production) and its self-providing quality stemming from the generated income of its sales. The monetary income generated through this sector is used by the workers for maintaining a living and for the existence of the center overall. As the center, in turn, is positioning itself in favor of the liberation of Tibet from Chinese rule and is advertising itself through such a standpoint, the income of the center is thus at least indirectly also contributing to the "Free Tibet movement".

This thesis argues that Tibetans in the TRSHC negotiate different notions of temporalities, visible in the production of carpets, as they aim to maintain cultural elements that are connected to their "past life" in Tibet, in order to make a living in the here and now but also, to work towards a future, where Tibetans will be able to live out their culture freely within their homeland again.

²¹ The oppression of Tibetan identity within the occupied Tibetan Autonomous Region (China) primarily revolves around the ban of Tibetan language and Tibetan Buddhism, especially references to the Dalai Lama. For instance, Free Radio Asia reported in 2023 that "*Chinese authorities have banned Tibetan as the language of instruction for all subjects in state schools in the so-called Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures of Kardze and Ngaba.*" (International Campaign for Tibet)

In 1996, a ban on the possession of an image of the Dalai Lama was put in practice within the Tibetan Autonomous Region. (Getzleman 2008)

To come to this analysis, this chapter will, in the first step, outline the specific attributes of Tibetan arts that sets it apart from other art forms, as well as the residents' attitudes and emotions towards the facilities aim to preserve Tibetan culture through art. In the second step, the commercialization of Tibet's collective memory (the Chinese oppression) and its linkage to the tourism realm will be analyzed, followed by a critical engagement with carpets as "refugee business" in the broader context of Tibetans in exile.

4.1. Tibetan Carpets – A Unique Artform

This thesis isn't focusing on the Tibetan carpets in the sense of an artistic analysis, but rather as an element of material culture allowing us to investigate the refugees' lives. While the aim thus isn't to give an in depth overview onto the specific techniques of Tibetan carpet production and their meaning in design (for this, see Denwood 1974/Larsson 1988/Kuloy 1995) it is still important to outline why the people working at the TRSHC view the Tibetan carpets specifically as an important and distinct element of culture, as this informs the desire to preserve this art form and to view it as an integral identity marker.

We can see the value of Tibetan carpets attributed to two aspects: technique and designs/color schemes. What sets the Tibetan carpet apart from any other contemporary form of carpet weaving is its technique which relies on the usage of a vertical wooden loom and a metal rod or needle to make the knots. While it is still referred to as carpet weaving, it is in reality a form of knotting, however, without making a "real knot" but a loop, referred to as "Tibetan knot".

„The Tibetan carpet is woven in a slit-loop technique in which the yarn is looped under a warp attached to the loom and then drawn toward the weaver and over a metal gauge rod before being returned to the rug and looped around another warp. When a row is finished, a knife is passed along a groove in the gauge rod, cutting the loops of yarn and thus forming a pile.“ (Britannica 2010)

Apart from the knotting technique, which Denwood (1974) explains in great detail and with visual depictions, the TRSHC is specifically proud of maintaining the traditional production style (referring to the production in Tibet proper up to 1959), which entails doing every step (including the wool production) by hand. This is rather unique within the modern Tibetan carpet production. The only adaptation the TRSHC has made is to add a metal screw into

the loom, to facilitate its handling and to switch from fire to gas heating in the dyeing section for efficiency purposes. In this transformation process, however, several people got injured due to gas explosions, as they weren't acquainted with its proper usage.

The distinction of the carpet productions is of interest in the realm of art history and similar discourses. This uniqueness does, however, provide soil of meaning on another level for the TRSHC and its residents and employees: a separation from Chinese culture. Jampa-la, former trainer in the carpet and dyeing section, explains that the difference in artforms operates as a legitimation for the existence of Tibet, being proof of an independent culture. Maintaining the Tibetan carpet production thus does not only keep this artform alive, but also operates an identity marker that binds Tibetans in exile to their homeland.

4.2. Personal Drivers Towards the Preservation of Art

The just mentioned notion of viewing Tibetan carpets as a material manifestation of identity, leads to the question of how the refugees in the center approach the overarching goal of preserving Tibetan culture through art in the facility on an individual level. For this, the conducted interviews have been analyzed, pointing to the following commonalities.

One of the main arguments is the already mentioned demarcation from Chinese identity. Pelmo-la describes the need of preserving Tibetan carpets, which are seen as an integral part of Tibetan culture for over many centuries, by considering the increasing domination of Chinese rule in Tibet. Pointing to the fact that carpet weaving is perceived as an element that has always been part of Tibetan culture - done at home for personal use, as well as for commercial endeavors -, she regards it as an imperative to save this art craft and as well as distinct Tibetan designs that she views as being uncorrupted by modernity. Similar arguments are made by several research participants, who highlight the destruction of Tibetan culture in the homeland as a main force to preserving it in exile. This "fear of extinction" becomes pressing when talking about the next generations of Tibetans in exile. Especially the elderly residents of the TRSHC are troubled by the thought of the younger people forgetting their culture and roots by living in exile. While the focus here is definitely put on transmitting Tibetan language skills, Tibetan art is regarded as a visual component of material culture that shall operate as a catalyst for Tibetan heritage.

Just as young Tibetans are aimed to be exposed to these cultural elements, so are foreigners and tourists. The research participants articulated the wish to present themselves to the outside as a unique and distinct cultural entity. Pelmo-la, who lives next door to the center's office in Darjeeling town, for example, wants to transform her home into a homestay for tourists (a popular side hustle in this touristic area) and wants to incorporate as many Tibetan elements (such as carpets or woodwork) as possible, in order to give her guests a "traditional Tibetan experience" and to expose them to their culture. This need for exposure is again being articulated in relation to broader dynamics; of wanting to present themselves to the outside as a legitimized autonomous culture, contrasting Chinese occupation. Here, the guided identity formation process, as presented by Kolas (1996), becomes again visible, as identity is here used as a tool and basic ground to keep the relevance of the liberation of Tibet alive and communicated to potential allies.

Another key element that has been exhaustively mentioned when talking about the need for the preservation of culture is His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. As he declared the preservation of culture as an important practice in exile, the research participants have articulated that they follow his instructions by preserving cultural elements, such as language, religion and handicrafts. The Dalai Lama has also visited the TRSHC himself a couple of times and gave praise to their efforts to keep Tibetan culture (including art) alive. The individuals in the center thus identify themselves and their work with the grand goals that have been put out by the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Government in Exile.

An interesting dynamic has also been observed regarding the elderly and their relationship to Tibetan art. As most of the current elderly people living in the TRSHC have been young adults or children when fleeing Tibet, various life stories unfold where these individuals only got excessively in contact with Tibetan culture when living within the community in Darjeeling. I argue that by working in the artisanal sector of the TRSHC and by being exposed to Tibetan material culture, these refugees have found an anchor that connects them on a daily basis to their homeland and its collective history, as the life in Tibet is for many merely a blurred childhood memory. The connection to Tibetan history that the production of handicrafts provides, and which is valued as important, has the potential to embed artisans to a (collective) past and (re-) connect them to their culture. These refugees thus inhabit a past temporality which they themselves haven't lived. This, however, creates a

homogenized past that doesn't give room for much variety in "Tibetanness". The preservation of Tibetan art is therefore operating as a means of maintaining the collective past that Tibetans at the TRSHC identify with.

During the research conducted at the TRSHC, the question of what makes the preservation of Tibetan material art crucial, has always been answered in a plural form. Meaning, it was always related to serving the Tibetan community as a whole, not the individual. This is of interest, as it points to the Tibetans self-understanding, which I would argue is rather a group-understanding. This leads to the concluding remark, namely, that not only the product (e.g., the carpet) is a testimony to the preservation of Tibetan culture, but also the process of creating it. Carpet weaving has been referred to as a communal work, rather than an individualistic one. The center's structure makes this clearly visible. The carpet does not only get woven, but from beginning to end, the wool that gets used for it, passes through many sections (see Chapter 3.2.) and hands. The end product is thus an outcome of communal efforts. The preservation of Tibetan art not only serves the purpose to keep an artform alive and through that Tibetan identity that's oppressed in Tibet, but the act of producing art binds the community's individuals through the collective character of the production process.

In summary, residents of the TRSHC argue for the need of preserving Tibetan carpets through five major drivers: to present a demarcation from Chinese culture; to perpetuate Tibetan identity within the younger generation in exile; to expose foreigners to their cultural value; to follow the orders of the Dalai Lama and to maintain a tie to the Tibetan collective history.

4.2.1. Tibet's Collective History and its Commercialization

Regarding the Tibetan case, the community does operate with a clear understanding of what the past entails – namely the collective history of their expulsion of Tibet and the Dalai Lamas escape in 1959. Interestingly, despite varying generations or backgrounds, when asked about the history of an individual, their story always started with or around the happenings of 1959,

when the Dalai Lama had to flee Tibet from Chinese occupation. Also related to the history of Tibet overall, in the refugees' narratives – this is the starting point. When asked research participants about their life story, every single one that was alive in 1959, no matter what age, used this incident as an entry point. They either began their life story with how they fled from Tibet or told the events that have led to it. When asking people that were born in India, they equally started to tell their stories by referring to the reason they were born in India and not back home. Particularly when asking them about the story of their people, it begins at this precise point of history, while Tibetan history goes back to the 7th century CA. (Kapstein 2006) However, at least the exiled Tibetans at the TRSHC, don't refer to this past when talking about the “beginning” of their and their people's lives.

When looking at this observation from an anthropological point of view, it can be stated that many migrants perceive their arrival into the host country as a total social phenomenon, as this event entails a (re)construction of identity. (La Barbera 2015, 3) The concept of the “phénomènes sociaux totaux” (total social phenomenon) is associated with French anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1925). The quality of this phenomenon is that through it, various institutions express themselves at the same time: of juridical, religious, economic, political, familial and moral character. (Centlivres 1990, 187) The events leading and succeeding 1959, resulted in a life in exile of the Tibetans at place, entailing a reconfiguration in the new country. Identities have been (re)constructed, political structures were erected, new ways of acquiring a livelihood have been established, and so on.

The collective past of Tibetans in exile is used in the present, as an identification point, in order to present themselves as a cohesive unit, a nation, a culture, that shall not be subsumed under Chinese rule and for the purpose of receiving humanitarian aid. (see Chapter 1.3.) This distinct past is thus needed to be kept alive, as it legitimizes their claim to (political) autonomy. The collective past is therefore a tool that negotiates the experienced violence of the past, as an integral part of the identification in the present (as outlined within post-migrant theories in the literature review), which is targeted towards an aspired autonomous future. This observation is also linked to the concept of extended temporalities, that encompasses ongoing forms of displacement (Sakti and Amrith 2022, 461), which

“is not a one-time movement but a lived experience and multi-directional process that stretches out over time, space and generations. (...) Understanding

displacement as an ongoing condition moves us beyond just thinking about how people settle or negotiate life in the 'destination'. It prompts us to explore, for instance, the existential dynamics of displacement as experienced through intergenerational memories.“

The collective history is therefore not only kept alive within the community but is also presented to visitors of the TRSHC, to in the first step raise awareness, which, in the following step aims to gain support and monetary profit.

Rapten, a 26-year-old temporary resident at the TRSHC, tells his experiences about the knowledge around the current Tibetan struggles. Studying in a university Calcutta, federal capital of the district West Bengal, in which Darjeeling is situated, he was faced with little knowledge around Tibet, when telling his fellow colleagues that he was Tibetan. While the Dalai Lama is a generally known personality, that is where the associations with his homeland commonly stopped. Out of this experience he states: *“I want them {non-Tibetans} to explore more on the Tibetan issue. Of how we are staying as refugees, and with that they will come to know how Tibet was occupied and about the political issues inside Tibet.”*

Similar arguments have been made by several residents/workers at the TRSHC. With most tourists coming from inside of India, and the popular stance of the Dalai Lama, who raises awareness about the Tibetan situation, tourists are perceived as taking interest in this matter. The research participants emphasized in that light that they hope that tourists will get to know a bit about Tibet through their visit, and in turn view Tibetan culture as a separate cultural system. A hope is furthermore that not only the tourists that physically visit the center get in touch with Tibetan culture, but that they enable this knowledge to spread, by talking about it, taking pictures and videos and posting them, making others attentive to the facilities website or to motivate others to visit the TRSHC themselves.

While there certainly is a sense of being proud of showing Tibetan culture to others, when asking about the desire to attract tourists, the answers were to the most extent related to monetary income. Not only does the collective past get kept alive within the Tibetan exile community and beyond, but it also undergoes a process of commercialization, as visible in the

TRSHC. The center is one of the so called “Seven Points²²” of Darjeeling, which refers to the top seven tourist places, with travel agencies and private tour guides offering excursions to visit them. The TRSHC can therefore be classified as a key touristic place within the region and as it is self-providing, relies on this attraction of visitors. Thus, the desire to visit the place needs to be maintained, which relies on the interest and sympathy of these visitors with the Tibetans, which is almost intrinsically linked to their embodiment of refugee- and victimhood.

The center needs to attract tourists, in order to sustain itself. This is a shared consensus at the research site. Pelmo-la puts this into quite drastic words:

“If there was no tourism, we would all be starving literally. {...} As long as the tourists are coming, the center is ok.” Similarly, an elderly carpet weaver says:
“When many tourists come here then we sell a lot. This is good for the community.”

Again, Sakit and Amrith (2022) with their extended temporality framework come into the picture, as they say that one of the areas through which the present is negotiated in accordance with other temporalities is that of economic pressures. This becomes visible here, as the financial struggles of the Tibetans at the TRSHC rely on the income generated through not only the preservation of Tibetan material culture in exile but also on the public presentation of their violent collective past.

4.2.2. Refugee Business

While this thesis isn’t providing an in-depth overview onto the cross-national dynamics and evolution of Tibetan carpet production, but focuses on that at the TRSHC, this subchapter aims to highlight broader dynamics of how Tibetan carpets post-1959 gained the label of “refugee carpets” and how these goods are entangled in political-economic spheres.

For this, we will start in Nepal. With the market interest in Tibetan carpets expanding (as this chapter will outline), factories in Nepal, where according to O’Neill (2004, 219) less than 1%

²² The Seven Points include: Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, Darjeeling Rangeet Valley Passenger Ropeway, Gombu Rock, Tea Garden, Tibetan Refugee Self Help Centre, Gorkha Stadium and Akshaya Kumar Maitreya Heritage Museum.

of the workforce was constituted by Tibetan refugees, quickly expanded and industrialized its production means. (Zhang 2009, 39f) In the 1960s, when Nepal and India allowed Western tourists to explore the Himalayan region and its culture, some of them developed an interest in Tibetan carpet production. Out of these individuals, a network emerged,

“{consisting of} anthropologists, art historians, connoisseurs, and dealers. Their activities gave rise to a corpus of literature on “traditional” Tibetan rugs and introduced these woolen textiles as pre-modern artefacts into the Western arts world. The rug specimens and their images were promoted through museum exhibits, gallery shows, professional publications, and even small media such as postcards sold in museum gift shops.” (Zhang 2009, 41)

Tibetan carpets were classified as “folk art”, a requisite of pre-modern times, that could be traced back to the Early Middle Ages. Authors like Denwood (1974) and Kuløy (1982), describe Tibetan carpets by emphasizing on their utilitarian characteristics, highlighting their use in the Tibetan household, in monasteries, and so forth. Furthermore, the non-industrial method of Tibetan carpet weaving was portrayed as the inherent quality of this handicraft, asserting that the carpets must be hand-knotted and that the used wool must equally be dyed by hand. Tibetan carpets were thus classified as a handicraft production, ignorant to the dynamics of industrialization in Tibet before their occupation by China. (Zhang 2009, 42f) Not only were Tibetan carpets described in such a light, but the preservation of this distinct, ancient style of production was encouraged to be employed and to preserve and to revive traditional Tibetan carpet weaving, in order to counter industrial rug productions, that treat carpets more as a good than as a form of art. (Guta 2007, 24)

Tibetan carpets thus evolved into a valuable good of Tibetan’s material culture. Linked with the Western pursuit to preserve this ancient handicraft, the Tibetan carpets were integrated into a specific stream of commercialism. (Zhang 2009, 46f) Leaning Arjun Appadurai (1986, 28), in products such as “traditional” Tibetan rugs *“we see not only the equation of the authentic with the exotic everyday object, but also the aesthetics of diversion. Such diversion is not only an instrument of decommunitization of the object, but also of the (potential) intensification of commoditization by the enhancement of value attendant upon its diversion.”*

These backgrounds are important, when aiming to understand the Tibetan carpet production in exile, as use is made of the Western approach towards this handicraft, as a political and

economic link has been established between Tibetan carpet productions in exile, the Tibetan Government in Exile (TGIE) and the international market. In the last decades of the 20th century, Tibetan settlement camp factories, that were originally sponsored through aid money, were incorporated into the TGIE. Thus, income generated from Tibetan carpet production went into its administration. Denwood (1974) postulates a dislike of Tibetans regarding industrial labor and thus concluded that by maintaining traditional carpet methods, Tibetans in exile could maintain their “traditional” lifestyle and stay within their community – an idea, seemingly taken up by the TGIE. (Zhang 2009, 48f) Of course, the TRSHC and its handicraft production is independent from the TGIE and can therefore not be directly positioned within these processes. Nevertheless, the TRSHC equally profits from a niche market that emerged – namely that of “refugee carpets”.

The sympathy and empathy of foreigners that favor the Tibetan cause became a profitable source regarding the selling of Tibetan carpets. We see this dynamic clearly in the TRSHC, whose main source of income is the selling of their carpets. As Zhang (2009, 50) summarizes neatly:

„The Tibetan government-in-exile (and I argue the TRSHC as well) and their marketers have successfully married their “free Tibet” discourse to the Western idea of “Tibetan folk art.” This enables them to retain a special “refugee business.” More significantly, in this case, the exile Tibetans appropriated the European discourse of “liberation” and belief in commodity trade: making carpets to free Tibetans from Chinese repression and to conserve Tibetans’ cultural and religious tradition. “

5. Negotiation Temporalities along Generational Lines

The way the Tibetan refugees at the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre, Darjeeling, negotiate their experienced temporalities – their connectedness to the (collective) past, their decision making in the present, in prospect to their (imagined) future – differs, evidently, from individual to individual. Still, shared trends and patterns have been found among the community. Especially, along generational lines, distinct characteristics about how certain time frames are perceived and dealt with unfolded.

This chapter deals with the act of Tibetan culture preservation and its gendered and especially generational characteristics, leaving the handicraft production at the TRSHC to the older (female) generations. Based on these observations, the chapter will investigate how distinct dynamics emerge. The refugees' perceived possibilities and obstacles in India and the resulting impacts on community building will be highlighted, showcasing how different generations deal with different resources and what effects this has on their life in the present, in light of future prospects and what role the handicraft production at the TRSHC plays in this context. Also, monetary influences will be discussed, that highly influence the refugee's decision making on whether they see their future as being located at the settlement or if they opt for a life outside of the facility.

5.1. Tibetan Culture Preservation, An Elderly Female Practice?

The Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre, Darjeeling is home to around 50 families that reside, and to a large extent work, in the facility. Outstanding demographic characteristics can be found along gender lines. Pelmo-la, daughter of the current president, describes that despite a few exceptions, usually only either the wife or the husband is employed in the facility, with both commonly residing in it. However, the vast majority of workers in the center are female. During the conducted fieldwork, only seldomly has one seen male residents. Only at festivities, such as the Tibetan Democracy Day, male residents assemble in the courtyard to play and drink. The male residents usually do business outside of the center, for example, running small shops in Darjeeling town, participating in seasonal work, or are part of the Army.

One key obstacle that the center faces is also visible in its generational gap. The average age of the inhabitants is increasingly rising, with the young people generally leaving to go to

university or work outside, in India or abroad. Out of all the permanently employed people at the TRSHC, only two are under the age of 40. With the older generation steadily dying away, the number of workers also declines. The question of why the younger generation commonly decides to move away from the facility is crucial in comprehending the attitudes and efforts towards the preservation of Tibetan art and the embedded negotiation of temporality.

While in the headquarters in Darjeeling town, as well as on the managing level, males dominate, the workers directly in the settlement are by and large outweighed by females: in the showroom and in the kitchen, only women are working. The largest sector of employment is the artisanal sector. Here, out of the around 25 workers, only four are male. What is especially interesting here is that the males work in the wood sector, the sewing sector, the dying sector and the wool opening sector. Hence, at this moment, the activity of carpet weaving is left solely to women. While there isn't a concrete agenda or protocol for only employing women in this area, and the photo exhibition at place does mention male workers in the 90s, as well as reports from scholars as Denwood (1974, 122) who state that both women and men were involved in carpet weaving back in Tibet, still, no men are currently working there. To understand this observed gendered nuances, an election of biographies showcases gender dynamics at place, which are linked to the processes and structures Tibetan refugees were faced with upon arrival, which will be briefly outlined:

As a response to the arrival of tens of thousands Tibetan refugees in 1959, India established two transit camps. One in today's Arunachal Pradesh and one in West Bengal. To cope with the overpopulation in those camps, many Tibetans were sent to build roads in the hill areas. (Bentz 2012, 87f) For that, several road construction camps were established and overall, around 20.000 Tibetans have worked in road building in the 1960s in India. (Tibet Documentation n.D.) One of them is Mr. Passang-la, who now works in the artisanal sector of the TRSHC. He represents the generation of Tibetan refugees that crossed the borders as a young adult – he was 23 years old. His biography is displaying a typical development that young male Tibetans faced upon their arrival to India. Passang-la first worked as a road worker in Sikkim before he was appointed to the Army from 1965-1989 by the Indian government. This is a common path, as male Tibetans were often times recruited to the Indian Army, especially the Special Frontier

Force (a special operations unit established in 1962, encompassing mainly Tibetan refugees²³). Colloquially, a branch referred to as “Tibetan Army”. During his service, Passang-la fought in the Bangladesh Liberation War²⁴ of 1971. After that, he settled in the center, where his wife and children were already residing. Due to his sewing skills from the Army, he started working in that respective section of the center. Another testimony of the Tibetans recruitment into the Indian Army comes from Mr. Chomphel-la, one of the few men working in the artisanal sector of the TRSHC, who fought in the Kargil War²⁵ during his 24-year service, after graduating Tibetan school at the refugee center. He still reminisces of his time in the military of Ladakh, bordering Kashmir, and his activities in rock-climbing, parachuting, and passing the glaciers. After his service, he returned to the center and started working in the wood carving section. Due to a shortage of people, he was transferred to the dyeing section, where he is employed till this day, although his wish is to go back to wood carving. The few men that work in the artisanal section as of right now all share that their original work wasn’t related to Tibetan art, but that

²³ A particularity of the Tibetan refugee community in India lies in their political scope within the host country. Ravi Nair (2023), in an opinion piece, raises the point of the involvement of Tibetan refugees in activities of the Indian government, for example, their recruitment into the Indo-Tibetan-Border Police in Ladakh. This correlates with the findings of my qualitative research conducted in Darjeeling, where many (especially male) Tibetan residents of the Refugee Self Help Centre, were or are part of the Indian Army, especially the Special Frontier Force, to which the Indian government sent them in many instances upon their arrival to India. Nair states that the involvement of Tibetan refugees in internal security affairs is troubling for many Indians, as well as the involvement of the political leadership of the Tibetan government in exile in Indian internal affairs. Such statements offer fertile soil for (decolonial) scrutinizing (which I only hint to here), by pointing to Tibet's inherent entanglement in Indian-Chinese relations as an occupied border area and through the targeted involvement, and one could argue exploitation, of Tibetans into internal affairs, by recruiting them into the Indian army.

²⁴ Conflicts between the Hindu and Muslim communities in India led to a partition on religious grounds in 1947, forming the state of Pakistan, which was considered to be the state of the Muslims, whereas India was ought to be that of Hindus. In 1971, another partition took place between the East and the West of Pakistan. In the East, Bengalis fought, with the help of India, for independence from West Pakistan. As a result of this armed conflict that endured around eight months, the state of Bangladesh was formed. (Shamshad 2017)

²⁵ The Kargil War was an armed conflict between India and Pakistan, over the territorial conflict of Kashmir, triggered by Pakistani intruders that were suspected to be appointed by Pakistan in an area occupied by India. India won the war, however, the issue of Kashmir remained/s. (Qadir 2002)

they took upon this work once settling in the center after having worked outside – commonly, for the Indian state within the army.

Similar to the biographies of the male workers, the female workers equally don't have a linear life story that starts within the TRSHC. While some stories also involve the recruitment into road work, women weren't part of the Indian Army back then, but more commonly told of having worked in the care sector or the handicraft sector. Thus, some female residents lived and worked outside of the TRSHC prior and came or returned to the center, mainly due to marriage or other family bonds. Upon their arrival to the center, some women got trained at carpet weaving at the facility and started working in that section right away. For instance, Budhi-la, a woman from Gum, who joined the center at the age of 19 in 1988 after marrying her husband who was already staying there. She got trained at the center for six months in the dyeing section, where she works till now. Some other female employees worked in another sector at place (for example in the nursery), but transferred to the artisanal section, due to the shortage of employees there.

While the female and male biographies aren't linear or homogenous, it is still noteworthy to mention that around half of the women currently working in the carpet section started their work-life in the realm of handicrafts.

Apart from the gender aspect, the factor of age becomes pressing, as no person under the age of 40 is working in the artisanal sector of the TRSHC. (The two young employees work in the snack shop and in the Showroom.) Manager Mr. Dorjeen explains that the center is supporting their young residents – financially and spiritually - until they finish college and oftentimes ask them afterwards to work for the center for five to seven years. However, this isn't legally binding and during my stay, not one young person was doing so, except occasionally helping with the renewal of the center's roofs. The consensus has been that the staff is downsizing, as the young people leave the center, and the old people, who in turn are more committed to the center as a place of residence, start to pass away. Pelmo-la outlines that the shortage of staff is usually handled by shifting people from one section to another. Meaning that people who have worked as teachers in the center, now work in other sectors, where staff is needed and help out, for example in the Showroom, when they have the time.

The first question that arose in the course of the fieldwork was to name the drivers for keeping the young people out of the artisanal sector and the center in general, while the older generation

generally commits to a life in the settlement. The research around this question, consisting of conversations with a handful of people of the younger generation, as well as interviews with the elderly employees and the management level, pointed to two main drivers: possibilities and money.

5.2. The Interplay of Possibilities and Community Building

Especially the older generation, those who crossed the Tibetan-Indian border in 1959 either as (young) adults or children or those who were born shortly after their parents fled to India, describe how they settled in the center and how their life is anchored in this specific territory, which represents their community to them. The research participants were asked the question of why they decided to stay at the TRSHC. What kept them from building a home outside of the facility? The answers to this question were primarily two-fold. On the one hand, the elderly feel committed to the community there, (also because initially, they perceived their time in India as only temporary) on the other hand, they don't feel as if there were many other options available to them other than living in the facility. I will argue that these two aspects are informing each other. Namely, that the lack of possibilities fosters the need to build and maintain community bonds. Furthermore, as the community bonds in the TRSHC revolve around Tibetan identity, the eagerness to maintain Tibetan heritage (in the form of handicraft) gets put in forefront.

As a starting point to grasp this intersecting web of possibilities and community building, the element of possibilities will be discussed. Heavily playing into this discourse are the aspects of education, language, and nationality.

Compared to the younger generation of Tibetans in the center, the elderly, and to some extent also middle-aged residents, are to the most part not considered as highly educated in an academic sense. Refugees that came to India as adults didn't profit from the Tibetan schools that were established in exile and were, as shown, often recruited for roadwork or to the Army, instead of being put in educational institutions. Another critique lies in the structure of the Tibetan schools, which emphasize is to foster Tibetan identity. With that comes a focus on the Tibetan language, and only a secondary focus on Hindi and English. While the maintenance of Tibetan language is, and from a de-colonial standpoint, should be prioritized, residents of the

TRSHC find themselves with close to little knowledge on languages prominent in India. During the research conducted, interviews with the first-generation refugees have only been able to be conducted with a translator, as sufficient language proficiency was solely present in Tibetan. Furthermore, in the district of Darjeeling, the most prominent language is Nepali (around 60%) which is also the co-official language in the subdivisions of Darjeeling and Kurseong, followed by Bengali, the official language of the overall district. (Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities 2014 ,95) Thus, Tibetans residing in Darjeeling, even with training in English and/or Hindi, may face obstacles when entering the workspace in the district of Darjeeling, with the dominant language being Nepali. Another aspect that plays into the perception of the elderly residents at the TRSHC to being bound to the center, is that of nationality. Contrary to Tibetans born in India, first generation refugees do not have (immediate) access to the Indian citizenship, leading to different implications on their political participation within the nation-state they are located in, as well as opportunities in the labor market, as Indian citizenship is required for government jobs. (Legal Service India, n.D). While Tibetans in India, who are not born in India, under certain circumstances²⁶, are also eligible to obtain Indian citizenship, elderly research interlocutors homogeneously speak of refraining from claiming Indian citizenship, as a matter of demonstrating Tibetan identity and expression of political obligation towards Tibet and especially in obedience to the Dalai Lama. This is particularly interesting as many of my male interlocutors have been recruited to the Indian Army upon their arrival to India. One might assume that a sense of commitment towards India emerged as being part of the India army, however, since the primary involvement circulated around border control issues between China and India (hence around Tibet), my research participants viewed their work often rather as connected to their homeland than the nation-state that the army is affiliated with.

²⁶ Indian Citizenship can be obtained by Tibetans not born in India under the premise of naturalization, which requires having resided in India for ten years and denouncing any other nationality. However, “at any rate, citizenship by naturalization has not, in practice, ever been a realistic option for Tibetans. The U.S. Department of Citizenship and Immigration Services, UNHCR, and the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, uniformly confirm that Tibetans cannot become citizens in this way despite their apparent eligibility under Section 6 of the Citizenship Act, as amended.” (Legal Service India)

The older generation has held on tightly to their Tibetan identity and sense of obligation towards their homeland within their life in India, where they have now resided for several decades already. While their life clearly is embedded into the state of India, as their land of exile, allowing them to live-out their traditions that they are not able to do back home, and by recruiting them into the army or also as road workers upon their arrival, the shared understanding of this generation persists to be that their belonging resides within Tibet. Hence, they view themselves as citizens of Tibet, participating in the elections in exile, while generally not making an effort to acquire the Indian citizenship to directly participate in India's political sphere. This generation expresses gratitude towards the Indian state as it provides them with safety and the right to live within their Tibetan community. Nevertheless, their life revolves around life in the center: work and income are devoted to the community and the welfare of the settlement, with most residents carrying out work within the facility. While many first-generation residents of the center have at some point in their life's lived outside for career or job opportunities, most have ultimately returned to or settled in the Tibetan Refugee Self -Help Centre, as they faced hardship in maintaining a life in India and due to a better life quality, health support in sickness, family ties and an expressed sense of belonging to their community.

Within migration studies, the question arises how migrants negotiate their identity within the host country and what processes lead to migrants staying within their home-community abroad. Berry (1997) proposes in his acculturation model four strategies of migrants within the receiving state: integration (accepting both the host and home culture); assimilation (accepting the host culture and rejecting home culture); separation (rejecting the host culture and accepting the home culture) and marginalization (rejecting both the host and home culture). When looking at the research participants of the TRSHC, we can see the notion of "separation" unfold, which according to Berry entails a neglect of interaction with the members of the dominant culture (here, mostly Nepali and Indian) and the formation of a sense of "ghettoization". When we look at the permanent residents and the overall structure of the TRSHC, we can see such an approach unfold, as contact and interaction with people outside of the facility is fairly limited. Also, on an institutional level, communication is kept within the facility and to a limited extent with the Tibetan Government in Exile. Thus, the life of the inhabitants of the center is, although located in India, detached from it and embedded in the Tibetan context.

Scholars like Weinreich (2009, 125) critique Berry's models, pointing out that individuals don't necessarily get to choose which one of his proposed strategies they opt for. For one, as the distinction between "home" and "host" culture is mostly too simplistic, and as processes of identity formation are at large unconscious, but rather are constituted via the identification of elements within a culture, rather than perceiving the culture as a holistic entity. When looking at the example of the Tibetan refugees in India, I argue, however, that the dynamic of distancing themselves from the host culture and society is in some respects a conscious one. While a lack of work and educational possibilities informs the need to build a home within and surrounded by the Tibetan community, the fact that Tibetan identity is aimed to be eradicated in their homeland, efforts are being made to preserve this identity in exile, through the community. The emotional attachment to the community at the TRSHC can be analyzed through what Sakti and Amrith (2022, 460f) call 'affective dimensions of long-term displacement', dealing with

"how people forge new caring relationships, or re-imagine existing ones as a way to confront feelings of loss and loneliness that are often prompted by everyday realities marked by hostility, othering, exclusion, bureaucratic murkiness, and sometimes violence. As the four ethnographies suggest, the process of 'doing family' takes shape through complex articulations of choice and necessity."

The loss of community ties, as a result of the expulsion of Tibet and the hardships faced within exile, can then be understood as fostering the creation of new affective dimensions, as a sort of coping mechanism within the new reality.

Testimonies from TRSHC residents shall now demonstrate the discussed interconnectedness of (lack of) possibilities and community building further:

Crossing the Tibetan-Nepali border at the age of 12 and reaching India one year later, Sangmo-la was appointed to road work before being put in a Tibetan school to learn English, Tibetan, nursing, and tailoring. After having worked as a caregiver, her husband and herself got trained and worked in the carpet weaving industry. The husband ultimately got an Indian government job and got transferred a lot within India, from Delhi to Sikkim, but Sangmo-la, who had to take care after her child, couldn't travel with him and wasn't able to find a well-paying job and therefore decided to join the TRSHC in 1967 at the age of 24 and lived and worked there ever since. The husband, when retired, joined the center as well. She tells that since she fled Tibet

so early, she wasn't really connected to her homeland until she joined the center, where she learned how to pray and was introduced to other cultural traditions.

Some additional interview excerpts shall give more insight into the personal explanations for opting for a life in the facility, in light of possibilities and community building:

The eldest resident of the camp tells: *"I believed in the Tibetan camp, so I stayed. Here, no worries. Outside I get problem because of language. Here it was safe."*

Mrs. Wong says *"in the Center I got a job. Here I raised my son because I had to send him to a Tibetan school in Darjeeling. If I do business {outside} me and my son can't stay together, that's why I joined the center. We live together here – it's good. If we get sick, we are all helping each other. If I am not staying in the center I will get problems, because I don't have much family. Only my son and I, so it's better if I stay here."*

Residents and workers also commonly describe a notion of commitment and gratitude towards the elderly at place:

Worker Bhuti-la states: *"I married here, so I had to stay with the family. There is no way to go. I have to look after my husband and his mother and father. They are very old. In our Tibetan tradition, once married, we have to stay. We go during holiday time in winter to spend {time} outside {of the center} but during work we have to stay."*

Manager Mr. Dorjeen states that he decided to stay in the center because *"if all {younger people} go {away from the Center} there no one is looking after our old people. Because their whole life is sacrificed for the center. And we look after them."*

Secretary Mr. Rinchen similarly says: *"{I stayed} because my family is here. On top of that the community is here. (...) They are very old people. Some of their children are also outside, in the USA, they have bought a house here and then their parents they are not willing to go to their house, they want to stay {in the center}."*

Because from the beginning to now, they want to live in the center itself. Even if they are more comfortable outside they don't want to go. Only go for a few days, then they come again {to the center}.

Obstacles regarding educational background, language proficiency, as well as Indian citizenship claims and attitudes surrounding it, thus inform the aspect of community building and its maintenance that the TRSHC embodies, at least when looking at the older generation. The younger generation, specifically those born in India, can claim Indian citizenship if wanted, usually have fewer obstacles regarding local languages, and have access to education up to university level, which the TRSHC encourages and finances to pursue. This generation is therefore not faced with the same obstacles as their ancestors in exile and seemingly have more options to make a life outside of the center. An option that they generally take upon. While the older generation speaks of having a harder time regarding life quality, the younger generation is perceived as having to face a greater amount of competition, in relation to the Indian labor market within a more capitalized sphere than their ancestors are locating themselves into.

The younger generation generally refrains from building their life around the center and a shift in perception regarding community is visible, as the “I” comes more and more in the forefront. It wasn't noted that a lack of interest in keeping the Tibetan art alive led to the aversion towards this labor in the center, but that the focus rather lies on one's personal development and future prospects. While these individuals aren't as strongly physically embedded or dependent on the TRSHC, and seemingly aren't as dependent on the community, it still can't be said that the aspect or relevance of community building isn't visible here too. For instance, the young people gather to a large extent on Wednesday evenings, when Tibetan dances are performed in the center's courtyard, in honor of the Dalai Lama. With the elders wearing the traditional clothing, the younger generation participates actively while wearing sweatpants and hoodies.

While the younger generation does face fewer obstacles regarding education and the job market in India, a sense of commitment/obligation towards the center has been observed, as it operates as a provider for their education until university level. The community ties may not be as straightforwardly visible as by the permanent, older residents of the center, as these ties aren't located and expressed in the physical proximity and the shared life within it, but rather is manifesting through other means. The most prominent one – the internet. To come back to the

example of the Wednesday's Tibetan dances; typically, one person is filming parts of it, in order to put it on YouTube, for other people and especially relatives and friends to see. This is reportedly done to spread Tibetan culture and to make relatives outside of Tibetan settlements and abroad get in touch with Tibetan traditions, so that they don't get forgotten. Tibetans who have thus left Tibetan settlements (mostly younger generations) keep community ties and interactions alive, through shared content online, which can be viewed as a transnational social space.

With an anthropological gaze, one can argue that the need for the younger generation to maintain ties to the Tibetan community in exile, is partially due to their self-identification in relation to their ethnic identity, relying on distinct shared cultural values and beliefs. (Romanucci-Ross/ De Vos/ Tsuda, 2006)

“One's ethnic identity is defined as that part of the totality of one's self-construal made up of those dimensions that express the continuity between one's construal of past ancestry and one's future aspirations in relation to ethnicity “ (Weinreich, 1986, 308).

In contrast, permanent (elderly) residents of the center share the sentiment that their life has to circulate around the center, or at least within the Tibetan community, as possibilities to “make it” in India or abroad seem highly difficult. While a lack of possibilities can be attributed to the strong sense of community-life of the Tibetans in exile and specifically in the TRSHC, it can't be limited to it. Another key aspect is the preservation and creation of Tibetan identity in exile, in light, or as a result of, the geopolitical processes the Tibetans in exile find themselves embedded in.

5.3. Monetary Aspects of Staying and Leaving the TRSHC

Interestingly, the financial component related to the carpet weaving activities in the TRSHC is at the same time an articulated reason to stay at the settlement, as well as a reason to leave that same facility. This subchapter outlines the different ways in which the Tibetan refugees connect their monetary prospects with the decision on whether to make a life – in the present and in the future - inside the center or outside.

Working at the TRSHC, which, almost exclusively entails the work in the artisanal sector, receives a salary of approximately 2 000 rupees per month, which equals around 22 euros. In comparison, the average per capita income in the district of Darjeeling was around 7 3000 rupees per month (+/- 80 euros) in 2022. (Thukral 2024) Worthy to add is that workers in the center receive free housing, education (until grade 12) and health care for them and their family (commonly their children and spouses). As unfolded in the previous chapter, many residents view their work-life in the center as one of the only possibilities to survive, seemingly lacking opportunities in India and abroad. Thus, the income, although low, in connection with the received benefits of housing, food, health care and education for their children, keeps the permanent, and especially elderly, residents bound to the facility.

The administrative staff of the TRSHC is aware of the low salaries that the center is able to provide. Pelmo-la points to the amount of expenses that the center has to pay, with monetary income stemming almost entirely from the selling of the artisanal products produced at place, making it difficult to give out higher salaries, especially, as a stable funding from outside isn't implemented. Prior, the acceptance of monetary aid from outside has been approached with hesitation, as the self-providing philosophy of the facility was wanted to be maintained. During conversations with Pelmo-la, a shift has been contested, hinting at an increasing openness to the inquiry of funding from other sources. This change of attitude is also linked to the downsizing of staff of the center, which in turn, leads to a smaller amount of production and thus fewer products for sale, making help from outside a necessity in the future. As the artisanal workers are quite literally dying away, so is the center's main source of income. Paradoxically, the downsizing of staff, which disables the center to pay higher salaries, is attributed largely to the low salary. Pelmo-la thus argues that to counter the downsizing of staff, the increase of salary would be the necessary step, which would hopefully attract more people to pursue this profession.

Conversations with the younger generation at the TRSHC showed that the factor of money was the key element of why they chose not to learn Tibetan handicrafts but opted for jobs outside of the center and thus, in consequence, commonly outside of the Tibetan community. Not only do these young people regard the salary as low, but they also critique it in relation to the hours and hardship that the labor entails.

One Tibetan, age 23, who asked to stay anonymous, states:

I didn't learn {carpet weaving} because you get very less amount of salary. You get everything very less compared to your hard work. You have to work from 9 till 5 and you get one hour gap in between for lunch and then back to work. You're spending so much of energy so much of hard work. It's not as easy as staying in the office and type. All handicrafts... it hurts the finger. Hurts everything. They {the elderly} are used to it they're not complaining about it but now our generation starts questioning: is it really worth it?

While there is a certain ambiguity regarding the younger generation refraining from working in the center's handicraft sectors – sorrow, as the artform might get lost and joy, as the young people have more opportunities in India and abroad at hand – it isn't only the young generation that chooses to pursue other career paths, but this endeavor is also largely approved and even advocated by the older generation, as the following subchapter will showcase.

5.3.1. Leaving to Stay – Children as a Financial Security Blanket

Wong-la's son worked for the Tibetan Government in Exile after finishing college in India, he now lives in France.

Passang-la's son works in Dharamsala, as the secretary for the Dalai Lama.

Chomphel-la's daughter emigrated to Australia.

The oldest residents' children migrated to France and Canada.

Dolma-la's daughter works in a bank in Darjeeling.

While a shared sentiment of worry for the center's future is being communicated, as the younger generation generally leaves to study and work, the parents generally encourage their children to pursue careers outside of the center. While at the first glance this might seem as a merely benevolent sentiment of wanting their children to have a “better life” than themselves, when asking about the motivations of such an encouragement, the aspect of financial security for themselves comes to the foreground.

Manager Mr. Dorjeen explains in an interview conducted during the course of the research, that if the young people don't want to work in the TRSHC, they can work outside, in order to serve "our own people" and to support their parents. Narrations of Tibetans at place confirm this approach, stating that it is normal to send at least one child abroad, in order to sustain the family "left behind". As mentioned, the center does provide education for the children of their residents and encourage them to get a higher education. In this light, it can be seen as a self-interest of the facility to produce a qualified labor force, to generate financial support through them. The success of the individual is regarded as a success for the whole community, at least, for the respective family. Such an approach gets confirmed by interviews conducted with residents, who have children living abroad.

For example, Passang-la, whose son works for the Dalai Lama, states:

"Younger generation need to go outside, so they can support the parents. That's why we are sending generation outside, giving them education so that they earn more."

Similarly, Tsering-la answers to the question on how he feels about his children living abroad with: *"Yes, it's good. Now I have pension per month. 10 000 per month."*

This aspect of the pension has been referred to by various research participants, who, working in the facility and complaining about the low salaries, state that the money they get from their children are a vital component of their livelihood, that allows for them to travel (for instance to Dharamsala to see the Dalai Lama speak), to buy more exquisite foods, clothing's, and so on.

The younger generation leaving the center and often also crossing the border of the Indian nation-state, to subsequently send money back to their home (in this case the center), can be regarded as participating within a transnational social field.

Calling upon Pries (2001, 55-60) transnational migration is a type of international migration (alongside immigrants/emigrants, return migrants and diaspora migrants). Transnational migration challenges the common notion of the social space being linked to one geographical space and social institutions being linked to a nation-state. Transnational family life entails renegotiating communication between spouses, the distribution of work tasks, and who will

migrate and who will stay behind via long distance (Pessar and Mahler, 2001). By creating a so-called transnational social space, the social space expands over multiple geographical spaces that aren't limited to the borders of a nation state. Transnational migrants are people whose social, political and/or economic lives revolve around at least two locations: their home and host country/countries. This means that whilst they form a life in the host country, they are still connected to their home country through different possible means like money making or participation in the political elections in the home country through voting. The intensity and forms of bonds to the different locations vary from individual to individual. (Levitt 2003: 850f)

Relating this theoretical gaze to the described dynamics, I argue that the Tibetans that are going abroad to work, to sustain the family "back home", participate in exactly such a transnational social field. The sending of money presents not only a cross-border activity, but also a connection to their family and culture, a bond that links their life abroad to their home. A shortcoming in the discourse on transnational migration and the connected transnational social fields, are their essential referral to nation states. In the case of the TRSHC, which is embedded in the nation state of India, it still forms a quite isolated entity, at least in its self-understanding. While transnational migration discourse commonly uses terms as "host" and "home" or "receiving" and "sending" state, to refer to the different places into which migrants are embedded, I argue that the TRSHC can be translated into the category of "home" or "sending" state and the places where the people leaving the facility settle, as "host" or "receiving" states. This means that dynamics found in the discourse on transnational social fields can also be observed when looking at Tibetans working in different parts of India, most prominently Delhi or Calcutta in the case of people coming from the TRSHC, in order to send money back to the community in the center.

In summary, financial prospects both keep residents bound to the TRSHC, as well as push them towards work opportunities outside. This difference is drawn especially among generational lines, as the younger generation, growing up in India and having the possibility to obtain Indian citizenship are able to work towards a career driven future outside of the Tibetan community of the center. They generally thus negotiate their present, in accordance with future goals and aren't satisfied with the low salaries that the TRSHC offers. Rather, they pursue careers outside, that, in turn, enables them to send money back to their community. In contrast, older generations who face obstacles to establish a career outside of the protection of the community,

experience rather an “unending present” (Feldmann, 2018), as their life in the refugee center is regarded as a permanent settlement. Because of the hardship they experience outside of their settlement, they locate their financial stability within the center and its artisanal sectors.

By reflecting upon the dynamics that have been explored in this chapter, it becomes evident that the act of working within the handicraft section of the TRSHC isn’t only an act of preserving Tibetan culture but is connected with temporal negotiations. Within the elderly generation, the present is negotiated in relation to a perceived lack of possibilities outside the center and dependence on the acquired salary at place. The present represents a form of temporal stasis. Contrastingly, younger generations, with higher prospects outside the TRSHC, negotiate their present much more in accordance to an aspired future filled with greater possibilities and financial stability. The experienced “unending present” of the older generation can be regarded as juxtaposed with the younger generation’s projection into a cosmopolitan future. However, these temporal divides are bridged by familial and cultural ties.

6. Buddhist Influences and Time-Embeddedness

“You can’t separate the Tibetan from the Buddhist”, a statement that accompanied the conducted research and which implications, as this chapter will demonstrate, play into the exploration of this thesis research field of temporality negotiations. Tibetan Buddhism has been exhaustively studied (see Powers 2007 or Kaptsein 2013 as references), hence, this chapter doesn’t provide an excessive exploration of this stream of Tibetan Buddhism, but, rather, the perceived linkage that the refugees at place employ between their Buddhist understanding and their work in Tibetan artisanal crafts, will be explored. A focus will lie on how Buddhist understandings influence the people’s perception of their embeddedness into time, specifically in relation to the past and present, that encompass spheres of reincarnation.

Jampa-la, former assistant manager of the TRSHC, teacher in the dyeing section and current keeper of the wool stockroom, was my primary guide through the facility and a respected person of authority within the center. As such, he took it upon his duty to introduce me to the techniques of carpet weaving and wool production. However, before undergoing this endeavor, he classified it as imperative that I, the researcher, need to understand basic Tibetan Buddhist concepts, as this Tibetan handicraft is linked to them. This assessment proved to be true on grounds that will now be unfolded.

For starters, Tibetan carpets in themselves are soaked in Buddhist meanings – from color schemes (red and orange being commonly used for within monasteries), to the motifs depicted on them (e.g., the Eight Lucky Signs of Tibet).

The following two pictures, taken from a catalog of carpets up to sale by the TRSHC, show Tibetan carpets, whose designs are up for purchase at the center. The first carpet, entitled “Two Dragon and Cloud Design” showcases two dragons of serpentine nature, representing the bound with earth and primal energies, and clouds that are connected to the concept of impermanence and the delicate nature of existence. (Enlightenment n.D.)



fig. 7 Carpet 'Dragon and Cloud Design'

The second carpet titled “Small Lotus Design” depicts one of the Eight Lucky Signs – the Lotus flower. The Lotus flower holds various meanings throughout Buddhist teachings, and in the Tibetan context is associated with Prajna-Paramita, an incarnation of the Universal Buddha. (Ward 1952, 139) According to info sheets that the TRSHC offers in the Showroom, the Lotus is a pledge of salvation and a symbol of divine origin. It states: ‘like Lotus which though grown in the mud remains free from the muddy dirt, one’s mind and deeds are pure and are free from the dirt of sins.’



fig. 8 Carpet 'Small Lotus Design'

More valuable to this thesis are however the Buddhist attitudes, that are connected to the work in the Tibetan handicraft itself. More specifically, in doing Tibetan handicraft as an act of culture preservation.

The research participants have shown themselves to be embedded into Tibetan Buddhism. Especially the women, who often participated in pujas in the center. The high status of Tibetan Buddhism is also virtually visible in the TRSHC, through the monastery/temple and praying room, as well as the Tibetan Buddhist monk residing there. The key point of reference to Tibetan Buddhism for the residents is, however, the Dalai Lama, whose picture can be found in every home visited and for whom pujas and Tibetan dances are conducted weekly. This high position of the Dalai Lama in the research participant's life is crucial, as references made towards Tibetan Buddhism were close to always related back to him.

“We are all the same”, was a key phrase repeated by the workers at the TRSHC, when asked about their emotions towards their labor in the center, which preserves their culture in resistance to Chinese oppression in Tibet. “We are all the same”, represents the emphasis on humanness and brother and sisterhood among all mankind. This approach is a replica of the words of the Dalai Lama, who stressed during a visit at the TRSHC the human nature that connects all people. While frustration and sadness were equally expressed among the research participants regarding their life in exile and the need to preserve their culture due to the occupation of their homeland, a general consensus was still to view the Chinese – the proclaimed enemy – as brothers and sisters, even as friends. This attitude was again explained with the figure of the Dalai Lama, who spreads such an approach and whose words are of great value to the Tibetans consulted for this thesis. A quote from a statement of the Dalai Lama titled “An Appeal to the Chinese People” (2008) shall showcase his forms of expression:

„ Chinese brothers and sisters, I assure you I have no desire to seek Tibet's separation. Nor do I have any wish to drive a wedge between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples. On the contrary, my commitment has always been to find a genuine solution to the problem of Tibet that ensures the long-term interests of both Chinese and Tibetans.”

Tibetan Buddhism thus influences the refugees at the TRSHC through the teachings about worldviews of the Dalai Lama, which are expected to be adapted by the community. The teachings of the Dalai Lama can be traced to the 37 Practices of Bodhisattvas²⁷. Regarding the

²⁷ The 37 practices of Bodhisattvas are conducts to be implemented into everyday life, in order to overcome current struggles and/or to achieve liberation from the circle of samsara. The text was

attitude of brother and sisterhood towards perceived enemies, excerpts from practice 2 “Hating your enemies you burn like fire” and 13 “Even if someone tries to cut off your head, when you haven’t done the slightest thing wrong, out of compassion take all his misdeed upon yourself” can be referred to.

This interconnection between morals, Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama has been articulated by his brother Gyalo Thondup:

„We Tibetans have lost our land and our national independence. What we have never lost is our moral compass. Our belief in Tibetan Buddhism and His Holiness the Dalai Lama gives us a set of ethical values (...).” (Thondup & Thurston 2015, 301)

Relating this to the production of Tibetan carpets, it can thus be concluded that Tibetan Buddhism and especially the teachings of the Dalai Lama encourage this labor as a form of culture preservation, while at the same time trying to detach it from hatred towards Chinese oppression of their cultural heritage.



fig. 9 Tibetan Buddhist Wheel of Life, depicting the different realms according to its cosmology. (Second circle from the outside depicting clockwise the realm of the Gods, the human realm, the hungry ghost's realm, the eight cold hells, the eight hot hells, the animal's realm and the demi-god realm. (Wheel of Life (Tibetan painting). (n.d.). Visual Arts Legacy Collection. Artstor.)

written in the 14th century by Bodhisattva Tokme Zangpo. A Bodhisattva is a person who wants to obtain Buddhahood in order to help others. (Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery 2009, 6 + 29)

Another crucial influence on the refugee's attitude towards their work in the center is related to their understanding of time that, again, is linked to Buddhist concepts – mainly those of karma and of samsara. Karma refers to an ethical concept, that in short means that good actions result in good consequences and bad actions result in bad consequences. The self, in turn, connects with its accumulated good and bad karma, and, depending on what karma has been accumulated, reincarnates to higher or lower beings of existence in the next life cycle.

However, as this constant cycle of re-birth is viewed as painful, one's goal is to escape this cycle, which is called samsara. (Freiberger/Kleine 2015, 198) To be able to escape samsara, one has to follow the Noble Eightfold Path, which consists of: right view²⁸, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation. (ibid., 201f) Therefore, when wanting to lead a life that is in accordance with Buddhist teachings, one's everyday actions and attitudes are permeated by its instructions and guidance.

In accordance with this doctrinal background, to advance in this cycle of samsara, Jampa-la highlights the need to put one's knowledge into practice. For him, Buddhism is a practical spirituality. In short, it doesn't suffice to know about Buddhist teachings, but the goal is to implement them into one's life and behavior. In this context, Jampa-la sees his work at the Centre connected to this spiritual aspect of "putting things into practice". This notion is visible in how Buddhist teachings are presented, namely mostly in the form of real-life analogies – making abstract concepts graspable and applicable in everyday life. For Jampa-la, this approach translates to every aspect and activity in life, including his work at the center. This can mean making sure that the wool doesn't spoil for the sake of the community, as they need the wool to produce their products, and to subsequently uplift his spirit for the next life. Other workers of the facility provide similar approaches to their work at the center, seeing its value in doing good for the community – not only at place, but also in Tibet, by preserving its culture (through the production of handicrafts), which, in turn, is related to accumulating good karma.

On the one hand, karma can thus play into the Tibetans work ethic in the center, as through good work and the connected maintenance of the well-being of the community, good karma

²⁸ The right view means having the knowledge over karma, rebirth, causality of one's actions, as well as of the Four Noble Truths (Harvey 2013, 83): the truth of suffering (beings are in a constant state of suffering), the truth of the suffering's origin, the truth of cessation (one can escape the suffering) and the truth of a path, which allows this escape. (Britannica b) 2024)

can be accumulated. On the other hand, karma also operates as an explanation towards their life in exile. Research participants narrated how they analyze their life because of bad karma. Bad things that were done in the individual's past life were named as the cause for the suffering endured in the current life. In the most extreme assessment, it has been explained by one of the carpet weavers that the suffering of the Tibetans can be viewed as a collective punishment for bad karma. In turn, bad karma was described as the reason for why Chinese oppressors will suffer in their next life. Here again, the 37 practices of Bodhisattvas can be named as a dogmatic source, when looking at the cause for suffering in the present. Practice number eight states: "The Subduers said all the unbearable suffering of bad rebirths is the fruit of wrong-doing."

As Buddhists believe in reincarnation, and the Tibetans at place view their identity inherently linked with it, their understanding of their time-embeddedness differs from those leading in Western contexts. The notion of the future, when talking about the Tibetans at the TRSHC, cannot be limited to a future in this current life but can also entail prospects regarding the next life. Equally, the past may refer to previous lifetimes.

Linear models of forced migration have already been contested, as current debates show the trend of moving away from viewing forced migration as a linear temporal endeavor. Forced migration isn't a one-time activity, but rather a lived experience that stretches over time, space and generations (Ramsay 2017). Migration is thus viewed as a rather circular, temporary activity, instead of following the basic scheme of movement, settlement and integration (Castles 2002). Scholars like Robertson (2014, 1918), for example, critique the linear migration understanding that *"migration [...] is traditionally understood as temporally linear, a move from the past of the 'old country' to the present and then the future of the new home."*

Through the example of Tibetan refugees this critique gains weight. For starters, as their forced migration histories show a-linear courses (see Chapter 5.1.), but also due to their reliance on Buddhist teachings, as the ontological view of this community isn't reconcilable with a time frame that is restricted to one lifetime. Thus, activities, emotions, hopes and fears, that are expressed in the (current) lifespan of the refugees in exile, aren't understood as being entangled only within it.

7. The Agency of Research

This thesis is not solely an analysis of the negotiation of temporality of Tibetan refugees at the TRSHC through the preservation of culture in the form of handicrafts, but the research itself is entangled in these processes just as well. As research can mount to a form of culture preservation itself, and as such, entails agency.

The research participants at the TRSHC are used to foreign researchers coming to the facility, mostly for PHD pursuits. Most researchers were interested in Tibetan carpets stemming from an approach to art. What is noteworthy is that foreign researchers, also coming from China, were not only allowed into the center to conduct their research but were even welcomed and encouraged to do so. The center wants to be talked about. This became clear in my own solicitation for a research place at the site, as I was granted permission without having outlined my research question. A sentiment that came out clear during the research was that this work was regarded by the research participants as a tool for themselves, to achieve the inherent goal of the center: to spread awareness about it and the Tibetan cause to the world. (The methodological chapter outlined these expectations for me and the implications for the research and how this has been dealt with.) Regardless, this thesis captures the status quo of the facility as of 2023 and as a written document, being published as a MA thesis by the University of Vienna, has the potential to transmit its content to others and through that, keeps the discourse about Tibetan refugees alive. For the research participants, the written document and also my own narrations stemming from my fieldwork towards others, constitute a means of extending their agency beyond the confines of the center. The research thus has the proclaimed potential to fulfill the refugees hopes for the present and future: preserving and transmitting the knowledge of Tibetans, their arts and culture to others.

Conclusion

Through the production of Tibetan carpet weaving and the preservation of this artform at the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre, Darjeeling, India, the refugee's negotiations of multiple temporalities can be made tangible. Opposing linear models of forced migration, the research showed that the Tibetan refugees' present is not only informed, but also consciously makes use of narratives of the (collective) past and (imagined) future, with the additional cosmological notion of past and present not being limited to one lifetime, but to a cycle of reincarnation. The notion of "time" is a valuable asset regarding the self-representation of the exile community to the outside – as a means to argue for their political claim of independence, and connected to that, generating financial security through tourism that is based on political claim making and narratives of victimhood.

The production of Tibetan carpets at the refugee settlement can roughly be assigned to two main drivers for the artisans in place; a visual testimony to the preservation of Tibetan material culture and the main source of income that sustains the settlement and its residents. Regarding the former, the Tibetan communities' grand narrative of their oppression in their home country and subsequent life in Indian exile constitutes a collective past, operating as a key event for identification. This past expresses the necessity to preserve Tibetan culture in exile, stressing the danger of extinction otherwise, as well as the need to demarcate their cultural heritage from other cultural systems, to claim rights of autonomy and international support, in order to work towards the aspired future of a free Tibet. In this light, the collective past becomes a crucial notion within the here and now in the exiled Tibetans everyday life. As that artisanal work at center is preserving Tibetan handicrafts and through that is acquiring income to quite literally survive, the Tibetan carpet weaving activities at the center in turn undergoes a process of commercialization and the facility is classified as one of the seven most prominent tourist attractions in Darjeeling. The interest and empathy of foreigners that favor the Tibetan cause thus are a profitable financial source.

Through the carpet weaving at the TRSHC, not only can one see a certain negotiation of the past, but different attitudes towards the future unfold (especially) along generational lines. The older generations coming from Tibet perceive their future as being rather contained within the community or/and are formulating future aspirations onto the next life. These sentiments were expressed because of an experienced lack of (monetary) possibilities in exile to establish a life

outside of the settlement (due to insufficient educational background and language skills, and access to Indian nationality), as well as to the created bond of community at the TRSHC. In contrast, the younger generation born in exile, that experiences an easier access to an established life in India outside the TRSHC, generally refrains from building their life around the center and a shift in perception regarding their community is visible, as the “I” comes more and more in the forefront. The younger generation views their future rather as being filled with opportunities that can lead them to a life outside of the TRSHC, which however doesn’t coincide with an inherent lack of community bonds. This becomes visible in the common practice of Tibetans working outside of the center to send back part of their income to support their family that remained there. The trend of the younger generation leaving the TRSHC in turn affects the preservation of Tibetan carpet weaving, as this task is left to the older generation, which, due to age, undergoes a downsizing in staff. The future of the center’s activity of preserving material culture is therefore regarded with incertitude.

While entanglements with the (collective) past and the (imagined) future are expressed in the refugees’ negotiations in their present, attitudes towards past and future lives unfold as well. The accumulation of good karma, which is needed to advance in the cycle of reincarnation (samsara) plays into the Tibetans work ethic in the center, as through good work and the connected maintenance of the well-being of the community, good karma is generated. At the same time karma also operates as an explanation towards their life in exile, as suffering in the current life is perceived as a result of accumulated bad karma in the previous life.

The Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre in Darjeeling exemplifies how Tibetan refugees navigate their collective past, present circumstances, and future aspirations through the craft of carpet weaving. This practice not only preserves their rich cultural heritage but also acts as a critical means of economic sustenance for the community and political claim making. The TRSHC is a living testament to the resilience of the Tibetan people, who use their craft to maintain their identity and cultural memory while adapting to the realities of their life in exile.

Building on the presented thesis, further research regarding the younger generation of Tibetans in exile is intriguing, and how their attitudes and practices regarding culture preservation unfold, especially for those living outside of the TRSHC. Of interest is also a continuous examination of how the TRSHC will continue to operate, and how the described worries about the downsizing of staff and residents will unfold in the future.

List of Abbreviations

CTA	Central Tibet Administration
CTRC	Central Tibetan Relief Committee
TRSHC	Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre
PLA	Chinese People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
RC	Registration Certificate
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

List of Figures

fig. 1. Map of the TRSHC.....	37
fig. 2. Living room and bedroom of a single residential room.....	37
fig. 3. Residential Complex.....	38
fig. 4. Women softening sheep wool.....	40
fig. 5. Boiler for dyeing wool with green dyed wool on top to dry.....	40
fig. 6. “Workshop”, carpet weaving room, depicting looms.....	40
fig. 7. Carpet 'Dragon and Cloud Design'.....	76
fig. 8. Carpet 'Small Lotus Design'.....	76
fig. 9. Tibetan Buddhist Wheel of Life, depicting the different realms according to its cosmology. (Second circle from the outside depicting clockwise the realm of the Gods, the human realm, the hungry ghost’s realm, the eight cold hells, the eight hot hells, the animal’s realm and the demi-god realm. (Wheel of Life (Tibetan painting). (n.d.). Visual Arts Legacy Collection. Artstor.).....	78

Literature

ADHYA, C. 2022. *Declining number of Tibetan refugees in India*. The Peninsula Foundation. <https://www.thepeninsula.org.in/2022/07/19/declining-number-of-tibetan-refugees-in-india/> (accessed 18.10.2023).

APPADURAI, Arjun. 1986. *The social life of things. Commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge University Press.

BAAS, Michael/YEOH, Brenda. 2019. *Introduction: Migration studies and critical temporalities*. In: Current Sociology Monograph. 2019. Vol. 67/2. pp. 161.168

BENTZ, Anne-Sophie. 2012. *Being a Tibetan Refugee in India*. In: Refugee Survey Quarterly. Vol. 31/1. Pp. 88-107

BERRY, J.W. 1997. *Integration, acculturation and adaptation*. In: Applied Psychology: An International Review. Vol. 46. Pp. 5–34

BRITANNICA. 2010. *Tibetan Carpet*. <https://www.britannica.com/art/Tibetan-carpet> (accessed 09.08.2024)

BRITANNICA a). 2024. *Dalai Lama*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Dalai-Lama> (accessed 29.08.2024)

BRITANNICA b). 2024. *Four Noble Truths*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Four-Noble-Truths> (accessed 22.08.2024)

BRUN, Catherine., 2015. *Active Waiting: Toward a Time Perspective on Protracted Displacement*. In: Social Analysis. Vol. 59. pp. 19–37.

ÇAĞLAR, Ayşe. 2018. *Chronotopes of Migration Scholarship: Challenges of Contemporaneity and Historical Conjuncture*. In: Gardiner Barber, Pauline/Lem, Winnie. (Eds.) 2018. Migration, Temporality, and Capitalism. Entangled Mobilities across Global Spaces. Cham: Springer. Pp. 21-62

CASTLES, Stephen. 2002. *Migration and Community Formation under Conditions of Globalization*. In: International Migration Review Vol. 36/4. p. 26.

CENTLIVRES, Pierre. 1990. *Marcel Mauss (1872-1950)*. In: MARSHALL, Wolfgang. (Ed.) *Klassiker der Kulturanthropologie*. München: Beck. Pp. 171-197

CHODRAK, Trinley. 2000. *Of Wool and Loom*. Weatherhill.

COMMISSIONER FOR LINGUISTIC MINORITIES. 2014. *50th Report of the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities in India*. Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India.

CTA a). n.D. *Department of Education*. <https://tibet.net/department/education/> (accessed 26.07.2024)

CTA b). n.D. <https://tibet.net/about-tibet/worldwide-tibet-movement/> (accessed 29.08.2024)

CTA. 2001. *Facts about the 17-Point Agreement Between China and Tibet*. Dharamsala: DIIR Publications.

CTA. 2019. *Tibetan Settlements in India*. <https://centraltibetanreliefcommittee.net/settlements/tibetan-settlements-in-india/> (accessed 29.08.2024)

CTRC. n.D. *Central Tibetan Relief Committee*. <https://centraltibetanreliefcommittee.net/about-us/about-the-ctrc/> (accessed 18.10.2023).

CWERNER, Saulo. 2001. *The times of migration*. In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies. Vol. 27/1. pp. 7–36

DALAI LAMA. 2008. *An Appeal to the Chinese People*. <https://www.dalailama.com/messages/tibet/appeal-to-the-chinese-people/> (accessed 21.08.2024)

DALRYMPLE, William. 2015. *The great divide: The violent legacy of Indian Partition*. The New Yorker. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/the-great-divide-books-dalrymple> (accessed 18.10.2023).

DECOLONIALIDAD EUROPA. 2013. *Charter of Decolonial Research Ethics*.
<https://decolonialityeurope.wixsite.com/decoloniality/charter-of-decolonial-research-ethics>
(accessed 03.09.2023)

DENWOOD, Philip. 1974. *The Tibetan Carpet*. England: Aris and Phillips Ltd.

DROPENLING. 2024. <https://shorturl.at/2w6dD> (accessed 30.08.2024)

ENLIGHTENMENT. n.D. *Dragon Symbolism in Buddhist Art and Tradition: A Visual Odyssey*. <https://enlightenmentthangka.com/blogs/thangka/buddhist-dragon> (accessed 01.09.2024)

FAVELL, Adrian. 1998. *The Europeanisation of Immigration Politics*. In: European Inmigration Online Papers. Vol.2/10.

FELDMAN, Ilana. 2018. *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

FPMT. 2009. *What is a Geshe?* Portland. <https://shorturl.at/kZrZ6> (accessed 28.08.2024)

FREIBERGER, Oliver/KLEINE, Christoph. 2015. *Buddhismus: Handbuch und kritische Einführung*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

GETZELMAN, Sarah. 2008. *Forbidden Image: The 1996 Chinese Ban on Images of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama*. In: Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs. Vol. 8/ 1. Pp. 44-55.

GIL EVERAERT, Isabel. 2020. *Inhabiting the Meanwhile: Rebuilding Home and Restoring Predictability in a Space of Waiting*. In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies. Vol. 47/19. pp. 4327–4343.

GLOBAL DETENTION PROJECT. 2023. *The Threat of Detention for Myanmar Refugees in India*. <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/the-threat-of-detention-for-myanmar-refugees-in-india> (accessed 19.10.2023).

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA. 2014. *Office Memorandum: Subject: The Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy*. Ministry of Home Affairs: New Delhi.

GOLDSTEIN, Melvin. 1989. *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913–1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

GRIFFITHS, Melanie. 2014. *Out of time: The temporal uncertainties of refused asylum seekers and immigration detainees*. In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies. Vol. 40/1. pp. 1991–2009

GUTA, Thomas. 2007 (1993). *Snowlions Dancing on Clouds: Stylization and The Tibetan Carpet*. <http://www.asianart.com/articles/carpets/snowlions/index.html> (20.08.2024)

HAMMAR, Thomas. 1994. *Legal Time of Residence and the Status of Immigrants*. In: Bauboeck, Rainer. (Ed.). *From Aliens to Citizens: Redefining the Status of Immigrants in Europe*. Aldershot: Avebury. pp. 187–197.

HARVEY, Peter. 2013. *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

HERZFELD, M. 200. *The Body Impolitic: Artisans and Artifice in the Global Hierarchy of Value*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

HOPF, Christel. 2000. *Qualitative Interviews – ein Überblick*. In: FLICK, Uwe/v.

KARDORFF, Ernst/STEINKE, Ines (Hg.): *Qualitative Sozialforschung*. Reinbek: Rowohlt. pp. 349–359

INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT 2022. *Migration Profile: India*. <https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/india/> (accessed 10.09.2023).

INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET. 2023. *Order from Chinese authorities: No more Tibetan in eastern Tibet schools*. <https://savetibet.org/order-from-chinese-authorities-no-more-tibetan-in-eastern-tibet-schools/> (accessed 10.08.2024)

JACOBSEN, Christine, et.al. 2021. *Waiting and the Temporalities of Irregular Migration*. Routledge: London & New York.

KAPSTEIN, Matthew. 2006. *The Tibetans*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

KAPSTEIN, Matthew. 2013. *Tibetan Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

KELLER, Stephen. 1975. *Uprooting and Social Change: The Role of Refugees in Development*. Delhi: Manohar

KOLAS, Ashild. 1996. *Tibetan Nationalism: The Politics of Religion*. In: Journal of Peace Research. Vol. 33/1. Pp. 51-66.

KONG MENG SAN PHOR KARK SEE MONASTERY. 2009. *The 37 Practices of Bodhisattvas*. Singapore: Awaken Publishing & Design.

KULOY, Hallyard. 1995. *Tibetan Rugs*. Bangkok: Orchid Press.

LA BARBERA, MariaCaterina. (Ed.) 2015. *Identity and Migration in Europe: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Switzerland: Springer.

LARSSON, Lennart. 1988. *Carpets from China, Xinjiang & Tibet*. London: Bamboo Publ.

LEGAL SERVICE INDIA. n.D. *Legal Overview of the Status of Tibetans in India*. <https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-4571-legal-overview-of-the-status-of-tibetans-in-india.html> (accessed 29.07.2024)

LEEPER, Arthur. 1984. *Origins of the Tibetan Pile Carpet: Archaeological Evidence*. In: MYERS. *Temple, Household, Horseback: Rugs of the Tibetan Plateau*. pp. 21-25

LEVITT, Peggy. 2003. "You Know, Abraham Was Really the First Immigrant": Religion and Transnational Migration. In: The International Migration Review. Fall 2003, Vol.37/3, *Transnational Migration: International Perspectives*. New York: Sage Publications, Inc. pp. 847-873

- LIPTON, Mimi. 1988. *The Tiger Rugs of Tibet*. Thames and Hudson: London.
- MALKKI, Liisa. 1995. REFUGEES AND EXILE: From "Refugee Studies" to the National Order of Things. In: *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.* 1995/24. Irvine: University of California. pp.495-523
- MAUSS, Marcel. 1925. *The gift: Forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies*. London: Cohen & West.
- NAIR, Ravi. 2023. *India's Tibet policy and Dharamshala's shambolic India policy*. The Leaflet. <https://theleaflet.in/indias-tibet-policy-and-dharamshalas-shambolic-india-policy/> (accessed 11.09.2023).
- NAMGYAL, Tsewang. 2013. *Central Tibetan Administration's Financial Viability*. <http://www.phayul.com/news/article.aspx?ii=33499> (accessed 29.08.2024)
- NORBU, Dawa. 2003. *The Settlements: Participation and Integration*. In: BERNSTOFF, Dagmar/VON WELCK, Hubertus (eds.). 2004. *Exile as Challenge: The Tibetan Diaspora*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman. Pp. 186-206
- O'NEILL, Tom. 2004. *Weaving Wages, Indebtedness, and Remittances in the Nepalese Carpet Industry*. In: *Human Organization* Vol. 63/2. Pp. 211-220
- PESSAR, Patricia/MAHLER, Sarah. 2003. *Transnational Migration: Bringing Gender In*. In: *International Migration Review*, Vol.37/3. Pp. 812-843
- PIERS, Ludger. 2001. *The Disruption of Social and Geographic Space: Mexican-US Migration and the Emergence of Transnational Social Spaces*. In: *International Sociology* 2001, 16. SAGE. pp. 55-74
- POWERS, John. 2007. *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*. Ithaca: Shambala.
- QADIR, Shaukat. 2002. *An Analysis of the Kargil Conflict 1999*. *RUSI Journal*. April. Pp. 24-30
- RAI, Harshit/DWIVEDI, Vaibhav. 2021. *Constitutional provision regarding refugee law in India*. In: *International Journal of Law Management and Humanities*, Vol. 4/3. Pp. 261-272.

- RAMSAY, Georgina. 2017. *Incommensurable Futures and Displaced Lives: Sovereignty as Control Over Time*. In: Public Culture. Vol. 29. pp. 515–538
- RAYMOND, Eliza/ HALL, Michael. 2008. *The Development of Cross-Cultural (Mis)Understanding Through Volunteer Tourism*. In: Journal of Sustainable Tourism. Vol. 16/5. Pp. 530-543
- ROBERTSON, Shanthi. 2014. *Time and temporary migration: The case of temporary graduate workers and working holiday makers in Australia*. In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies Vol. 40/12. pp. 1915–1933.
- ROBERTSON, Shanthi. 2015. *The temporalities of international migration: Implications for ethnographic research*. In: Castles S, Ozkul D and Cubas MA (eds). *Social Transformation and Migration: National and Local Experiences in South Korea, Turkey, Mexico and Australia*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 45–60.
- ROMANUCCI-ROSS, Lola/DE VOS, George A./TSUDA, Takeyuki. (Eds.). 2006. *Ethnic identity: Problems and prospects for the twenty-first century*. Lanham: Rowman Altamira.
- SAKTI, Victoria/AMRITH, Megha. 2022. *Introduction: Living in the 'Here and Now': Extended Temporalities of Forced Migration*. In: Journal of Intercultural Studies. Vol. 43/4. pp. 457-463
- SCHINKEL Willem. 2017. *Imagined Societies: A Critique of Immigrant Integration in Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- SHAMSHAD, Rizwana. 2017. *Bangladeshi Migrants in India: Foreigners, Refugees, or Infiltrators?* Oxford University Press.
- SPRADLEY, James. 1980. *Participant Observation*. Wadsworth Inc. Fulfillment: Ohio.
- STRAUSS, Anselm /CORBIN, Juliet. 1996. *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. SAGE: Thousand Oaks & London.
- STEIN, BN. 1981. *The refugee experience: defining the parameters of a field of study*. In: Int. Migrat. Rev. Vol.15/1. Pp. 320-330

TAZZIOLI, Martina. 2018. *The times of migration*. In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies. Vol. 27/1. pp. 7–36.

THE GU CHU SUM MOVEMENT OF TIBET. 2005. *Tibetan Envoy. Issue No. 9*. Dharamsala.

THONDUP, Gyalo/THURSTON, Anne. 2015. *The Noodlemaker of Kalimpong*. My untold story of the struggle for Tibet. United Kingdom: Rider.

THUKRAL, R.K. 2024. *West Bengal District Factbook: Darjeeling District*. IndiastatPublications.

TIBET DOCUMENTATION. n.D. *Survival – Living for a Day*. <https://www.tibetansinexile.org/survival.html> (accessed 26.07.2024)

TRSHC. n.D. *About Us*. <https://tibetancentredarjeeling.com/about-us/> (accessed 29.08.2024)

UNHCR. 2015. *States Parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol*. Ireland. <https://www.unhcr.org/ie/media/states-parties-1951-convention-and-its-1967-protocol> (accessed 10.09. 2023)

UNHCR. 2022. *Fact Sheet: India. April 2022*. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/2681> (accessed 18.10.2022).

WARD, William. 1952. The Lotus Symbol: Its Meaning in Buddhist Art and Philosophy. In: The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism. Vol. 11/2. pp. 135-146

WEINREICH, Peter. 1986. *The operationalisation of identity theory in racial and ethnic relations*. In: REX/MASON (Eds.), Theories of race and ethnic relations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

WEINREICH, Peter. 2009. ‘Enculturation’, not ‘acculturation’: Conceptualising and assessing identity processes in migrant communities. In: International Journal of Intercultural Relations. Vol. 33. pp. 124–139

ZETTER, Roger. 1998. *Refugees and refugee studies – a label and an agenda*. In: Journal of Refugee Studies. Vol. 1/1. p. 1-6

ZHANG, Tracy. 2009. *Carpet Worlds: The Cultural Representation and Production of Tibetan Carpets*. Canada: Simon Fraser University.

ZHGANG, Tracy. 2012. *The making of 'valuable' carpets in Lhasa*. In: Journal of Material Culture. Vol. 71/1. Pp. 83-101