# Landscapes of Resistance: Tibetan Modernity and the Online Politics of Representation in Contemporary China

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# Abstract

This thesis examines the online politics of representation surrounding Tibetan modernity in contemporary China. Contextualised within the rapid modernisation that has characterised the Great Western Development Campaign (*xibu da kaifa* 西部大开发), I focus on Chinese state media and Tibetan discourses relating to material transformation, economic development and cultural commercialisation, and historical progress. I use Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse the ways in which the state harnesses the speed, scope, and scale of online media to frame and communicate representations of Tibetan modernity to audiences across China. I argue that this functions as a form of cultural governance, deploying a set of representational strategies across diverse cultural fields in order to manage public discourse about Tibet and consolidate state authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty. I also examine how Tibetans use online spaces to produce counter discourses in order to challenge official representations and generate new public understanding about life in contemporary Tibet. I describe how notions of homeland form a core part of this process, functioning as a discursive practice that mobilises various cultural and spiritual attachments to Tibet in order to decentre state place-making practices, reaffirm a distinctly Tibetan territory, and disrupt the prevailing hegemonic representations of Tibetan modernity across Chinese state media. In doing so, I advance a new theoretical approach that explains homeland as a discursive practice that is embedded and mobilised within broader social, cultural, political, and economic relations in order to effect political change.

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# Table of Contents

# List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| CCND | China Core Newspapers Full-text Database |
| CCP | Chinese Communist Party |
| CDA | Critical Discourse Analysis |
| CMDA | Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis |
| CNKI | China Knowledge Resource Integrated Database |
| DRA | Dialectical-Relational Approach |
| GWDC | Great Western Development Campaign |
| PRC | People's Republic of China |
| TAR | Tibet Autonomous Region |

# List of Figures

## Note of Transliteration

This thesis uses Pinyin Romanisation for Mandarin Chinese and Wylie for Tibetan.

## Translation

Unless otherwise stated, all translations in this thesis are my own.

# 1. Context and Research Aims

## 1.1 Introduction

In April 2015, Gerong Phuntsok and Dawa Drolma uploaded their pre-wedding photographs to Chinese social media. Within hours, their images had become an internet sensation and captured national attention across China.[1] The collection featured the Chengdu-based Tibetan millennials inhabiting two very distinct social, cultural, political, and economic worlds (Fig. 1). In one, Gerong and Dawa appear in stylish pinstripe suits as they stroll past Prada stores, drive Lamborghinis through city streets, and relax on exotic beaches. The couple are depicted as confident, affluent and hypermobile citizens of the world. In the second set of images, however, things look very different. This time, the couple move through the circumambulation circuit of Lhasa's historic Barkhor. They do prostrations, raising their clasped hands in devotion toward the Potala Palace. They walk through bare pastoral lands, wearing traditional Tibetan *chuba* as they herd yaks and goats, collect yak dung, spin wool outside their tent, and drink butter tea. Side by side, the two sets of images contrast two distinct worlds: one a fast-moving, commercial and hyper-modern cosmopolitan space full of all the hallmarks of consumer culture, and the other a largely rustic and remote place characterised by spirituality, traditional nomadic living, and raw natural beauty.

[1] "Across China: Tibetan Couple's Wedding Photos an Internet Hit." *Xinhua*, April 15, 2015, accessed June 3, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-04/15/c_134154267.htm


*Fig. 1: Gerong Phuntsok and Dawa Drolma's Wedding Photos*[2]

The images were quickly republished by Xinhua.[3] The state media outlet celebrated the "alternative" (*linglei* 另类) photography series as an integration of scenes "from bustling city and nomadic life" (*fanhua dushi he gaoyuan youmu shenghuo* 繁华都市和高原游牧生活). In many ways, Gerong and Dawa's photographs perfectly encapsulated a discourse of Tibetan modernity that state media have been vigorously promoting for years: Tibetans reaping the benefits of state-led modernisation while still comfortably enjoying their traditional culture.

While some Tibetan social media users expressed delight at the notion of Tibetans so comfortably moving between different socio-cultural worlds, others were more critical and asked how realistic such a life could ever be for the vast majority of Tibetans in China today. Indeed, for many, the images did not represent an adroit fusion of "bustling city and nomadic life." Instead, they visualised the pressures of state-led modernisation. They raised questions about the perceived fading of traditional cultural practices, a growing sense of alienation and detachment from homeland, an identity crisis, and the near total erasure

[2] Ibid.

[3] "Yi dui zangzu 80 hou xinren de jiehun zhao zouhong weixin pengyou quan" 一对藏族 80 后新人的结婚照走红微信朋友圈 [One Pair of Newly-Wed Tibetan Millennials' Wedding Photographs Went Viral in Wechat Friend Circles]. *Xinhua*, April 10, 2015, accessed June 3, 2017, http://sc.people.com.cn/n/2015/0410/c345167-24452152.html

of all these concerns within the resoundingly positive representations of contemporary Tibet in state media.

Gerong and Dawa's pre-wedding photos were but the latest example in an enduring series of contentions between state media and Tibetans over how Tibetan modernity ought to be represented in an era of rapid modernisation under China's Great Western Development Campaign (*xibu da kaifa* 西部大开发). Extending to questions of urbanisation, infrastructural development, inward migration, resource extraction, rampant tourism, cultural commodification, and various other forms of unprecedented transformation that have taken place across Tibet since 2000, the cultural struggle over how Tibetan modernity should be represented has never been so intense.

This politics of representation surrounding Tibetan modernity has become an increasingly online affair. The advances and popularization of digital media technologies have expanded possibilities for the state to advance discourses about Tibetan modernity that consolidate its power over Tibet. However, these new technologies have also provided Tibetans new platforms for constructing and disseminating counter discourses. With this has come a new opportunity for Tibetans to challenge official discourses and promote an alternative vision of Tibetan modernity to Chinese audiences.

This thesis examines the online politics of representation surrounding Tibetan modernity in the era of China's Great Western Development Campaign (GWDC). Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), I analyse how the state harnesses the speed, scope, and scale of online media to frame and communicate representations of Tibetan modernity to Chinese audiences. I argue that this functions as a form of cultural governance, deploying a set of representational strategies across diverse cultural fields of society in order to manage public discourses and consolidate state authority, legitimacy and sovereignty over Tibet. I also examine how Tibetans use online spaces to promote counter discourses that challenge

official representations and attempt to generate new understanding about Tibet among Chinese audiences. I describe how homeland forms a core part of these Tibetan discourses of resistance, functioning as a discursive practice that mobilises various cultural and spiritual attachments to Tibet in order to decentre state place-making practices, reaffirm a distinctly Tibetan territory, and disrupt the prevailing hegemonic representations of state media. In doing so, I propose a new theoretical approach to the study of homeland that moves beyond human-land relations as a people's deep emotional attachment for a particular place. I develop a theory that explains homeland as a discursive practice that is embedded within broader social, cultural, political and economic relations, and is mobilised to effect political change.

This chapter describes the context, scope and significance of this research. I begin by providing an overview of some of the key contentions surrounding what 'Tibet' refers to, and justify my own particular approach for this thesis. I then outline some of the defining moments in modern Sino-Tibetan relations. Here, I pay particular attention to the GWDC, and how this has shaped life in contemporary Tibet. I then consider the role of representation in sustaining and reproducing Chinese state power in Tibet, and the crucial ways in which media has contributed to this ongoing project. I then describe how online media has become an increasingly important part of this process. Following this, I explain the new opportunities online media has provided Tibetans in terms of contesting official representations. I note some of the reasons why homeland occupies such an important place within these Tibetan counter discourses, and why this requires greater academic attention. Finally, I conclude this chapter by describing the guiding rationale and core research questions of this thesis, and provide some detail concerning the overall structure and content for the subsequent chapters.

### 1.2 Mapping 'Tibet'

What 'Tibet' ought to refer to is a point of both confusion and contention inside and outside academic circles. Should the term designate the

broader geopolitical area that encompasses Ü-Tsang, Kham and Amdo, the three traditional cultural, religious, and linguistic regions of Tibet that are today spread across China's Tibet Autonomous Region, Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan, or should 'Tibet' conform to the Chinese party-state discourse and refer only to the Tibet Autonomous Region (Fig. 2)? The question of how the territory of Tibet, home to around six million Tibetans today,[4] is both defined and mapped remains a serious issue with important implications for how any study of Tibet is both demarcated and conceptualised.

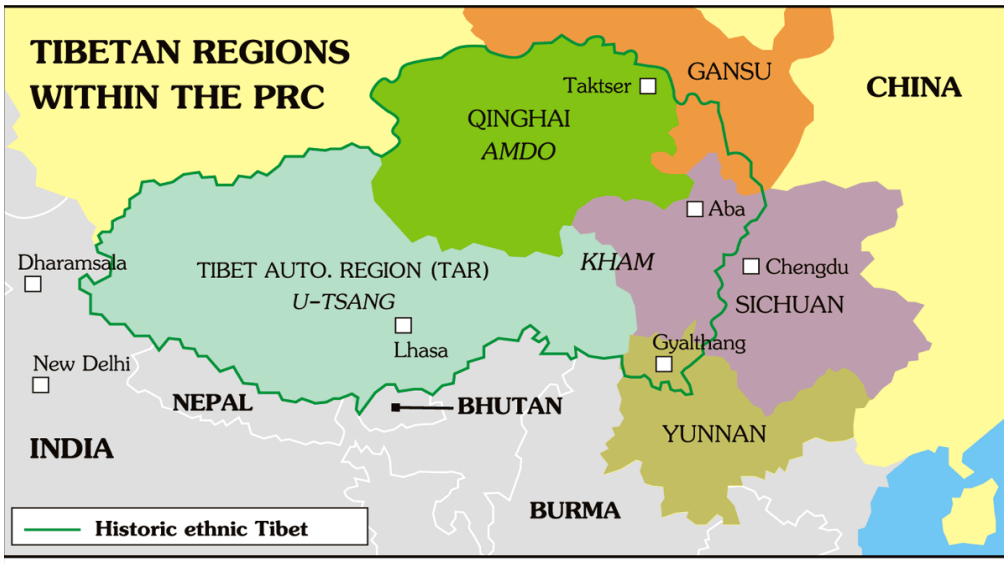


*Fig. 2: Map of the three Tibetan provinces across PRC*[5]

Scholars have long drawn attention to the inherent politics and immense discursive power of place-naming and mapping.[6] Maps are a technology

[4] Karl E. Ryavec, *A Historical Atlas of Tibet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 180.
[5] "Plateau Maps," *Meltdown in Tibet*, accessed June 17, 2018, https://www.meltdownintibet.com/f_maps.htm
[6] Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974); Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London: New Left Books, 1978); Denis Wood, *The Power of Maps* (London: Routledge, 1993); Jeremy W. Crampton, "Maps as Social Constructions: Power, Communication and Visualization," *Progress in Human Geography*, 25, no.2 (2001): 235–252; Ann L. Stoler and Carole McGranahan, "Introduction: Refiguring Imperial Terrains" in *Imperial Formations*, ed. Ann L. Stoler, Carole McGranahan, and Peter C. Perdue (Santa Fe, N.M.: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007), 3-42.

of place-making and of encoding space, a visual discourse "loaded with the meanings and values of nationhood."[7] More than mere media for visually representing the world, maps represent a "naturalising imagery of geography" that produces and reproduces particular forms of power-knowledge relations while erasing others.[8] For Anand, it is important to critically interrogate such "cartographic desires", rather than simply taking "for granted the legitimacy of the Chinese nation-state."[9] Indeed, as Rabgey has argued, taking most current maps of China at face value sanitises "the fact of colonial occupation out of scholarly representations of Tibet."[10] These maps obscure the ways in which "the notion of Tibet as an integral part of China is a recent invention by the Communist Party in its process of nation building" since 1949.[11] Such practices work to consolidate a unified notion of Chinese sovereignty, while simultaneously displacing traditional Tibetan conceptions of place and nation.

While rarely identified on current maps, the names of Tibet's 'three provinces' (*chol kha gsum* ཆོལ་ཁ་གསུམ།) of Ü-Tsang, Kham and Amdo continue to be used very commonly by Tibetans in both Tibetan and Mandarin. Despite the fact that many regional differences exist in terms of culture, dialects, and religious practices, McGranahan notes that these contradictions are largely "bypassed in favour of articulating a strong, united front."[12] This "strong integrationist sentiment" is reflected across

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[7] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 1994), 138.
[8] Fernando Coronil, "Towards Post-Imperial Geohistoric Categories," *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no.1 (1996): 51-87.
[9] Dibyesh Anand, "Colonization with Chinese Characteristics: Politics of (In)Security in Xinjiang and Tibet," *Central Asian Survey*, 38, no.1 (2019): 131-132.
[10] Lobsang Rabgey, "Engendering Tibet: Narration, Nation and the Woman's Body in Transnational Diaspora" (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 2006), 44.
[11] Tsering Shakya, "Blood in the Snows: Reply to Wang Lixiong," *New Left Review* 15 (2002): 60.
[12] Carole McGranahan, *Arrested Histories: Tibet, the CIA, and Memories of a Forgotten War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 51.

contemporary popular media,[13] as well as various Tibetan and Mandarin terms used by Tibetans, such as: “Tibetan lands” (Tib. *Bod kyi sa cha* བོད་ཀྱི་ས་ཆ།; Ch. *Zang di* 藏地), “Tibetan areas,” (Tib. *Bod yul* བོད་ཡུལ།; Ch. *Zang qu* 藏区), “Tibetan Plateau” (Tib. *Bod sa mtho* བོད་ས་མཐོ།; Ch. *Qingzang gaoyuan* 青藏高原), “Land of Snows” and (Tib: *gangs can yul* གངས་ཅན་ཡུལ།, or *gangs ljongs* གངས་རྫོང་།; Ch. *xueyu* 雪域).[14] These examples demonstrate the importance of indigenous imaginaries of geography in contemporary Tibet.

In an attempt to account for the very different historical and political experiences of populations across the three traditional Tibetan regions, some scholars have advocated for understanding Tibet in terms of a “political Tibet” and an “ethnographic Tibet”.[15] “Political Tibet” refers to the polity of Central Tibet (Ü-Tsang) that was traditionally ruled over by the Dalai Lama and is today officially known as the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). “Ethnographic Tibet” denotes all traditional Tibetan areas both inside and outside the Dalai Lama’s realm of power, namely Ü-Tsang, Kham, and Amdo, which are today spread across China’s TAR, Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan. As Barnett notes, “ethnographic Tibet” also broadly “reflects official Chinese practice to the extent that

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[13] Topgyal Tsering, “Identity Insecurity and the Tibetan Resistance against China,” *Pacific Affairs* 86, no.3 (2013): 525.

[14] “Fatherland” (Tib. *pha yul* ཕ་ཡུལ།; Ch. *zu guo* 祖国) is another example of a term that is often used to refer to a Tibetan homeland, but sometimes it is used in relation to regional areas of Tibet rather than a larger Tibetan homeland. See: Charlene Makley, *The Violence of Liberation: Gender and Tibetan Buddhist revival in Post-Mao China* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2007), 32-33. Anna Morcom, “The Political Potency of Tibetan Identity in Pop Music and Dunglen,” *The Journal of the Assocaition for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*, 38, no. 1 (2018): 135.

[15] Melvyn C. Goldstein, “Change, Conflict and Continuity Among a Community of Nomadic Pastoralists: A Case Study From Western Tibet, 1950-1990,” in *Resistance and Reform in Tibet,* ed. Robert Barnett and Shirin Akiner (London: Hurst & Co., 1994), 76; Melvyn C. Goldstein and Mathew T. Kapstein, *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival & Cultural Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 5; Hugh Richardson, *Tibet and its History* (Boulder: Shambala, 1984), 308.

almost all these areas have been formally conferred the status of Tibetan autonomous areas by Beijing."[16] Goldstein argues that, though culture and religion were a unifying force that bridged both "political Tibet and "ethnographic Tibet", it is necessary to acknowledge the intensely formative role different experiences of political power, both before and after Tibet's 'incorporation' into the PRC, have played and continue to play across the region.[17] Distinguishing between "political Tibet" and "ethnographic Tibet", he claims, will help reduce methodological and conceptual inconsistencies in Tibetan Studies.

McGranahan has argued, however, that the model of "political Tibet" and "ethnographic Tibet", first proposed by Charles Bell, a British Political Officer in Sikkim from 1904 – 1921, is rooted in British imperialism and represented an attempt "to combine a European model of statehood with Lhasa models of local governance" prior to the Chinese invasion, failing to accept "Tibetan forms of socio-political organisation that look different than those of the dominant nation-state model."[18] Instead, she advocates "the contested model", which recognises the current boundaries of Tibet as defined by the PRC, areas under contention between Tibet and China, and between Tibet and India, as well as those Tibetan societies that "exist in a continuous social field".[19] This model strives to capture the current reality of Tibet's colonisation, Tibetan geopolitics in the pre-1950s era, as well as post-1950s Tibetan sentiment about what constitutes Tibet.

In this thesis, where necessary, I broadly follow McGranahan's "contested model" approach. As noted above and based on my own

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[16] Robert Barnett, "Preface," in *Tibetan Modernities: Notes from the Field on Cultural and Social Change*. *PIATS 2003: Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies,* ed. Robert Barnett and Ronald Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2003), xix.
[17] Goldstein, "Change, Conflict and Continuity among a Community of Nomadic Pastoralists: A Case Study from Western Tibet, 1950-1990," 76-79.
[18] Carole McGranahan, "From Simla to Rongbatsa: The British and the "Modern" Boundaries of Tibet," *The Tibet Journal* 28, no. 4 (2003): 52-53.
[19] Ibid., 53-54.

observations, Tibetans generally refer to Tibet as 'the three provinces', reflecting broader pan-Tibetan expressions of identity. I do, however, where relevant, also acknowledge the important divergences in terms of political, historical and socio-economic experiences between different parts of Tibet.

### 1.3 A History of Modern Sino-Tibetan Relations

Beyond contentions surrounding what 'Tibet' ought to refer to, an even greater issue of polemics concerns Tibet's historical relationship with China. The Chinese state holds steadfastly to its claims that Tibet has been an inalienable and integral part of China since the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), when the Mongols conquered both China and Tibet. This has been variously challenged by scholars who draw attention to the many moments of political instabilities, the rise and fall of different local and national power centres, as well as the wide variety of relationships that existed between emperors, officials, kings, chieftains, lamas and other authorities across the centuries.[20]

During the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), Tibet's relationship with China could largely be described as ceremonial and diplomatic, rather than political.[21] Under the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), the Manchu authorities began to take more interest in Tibet as concerns grew for the stability of borders with British India. It was during this time that the Chinese presence in Lhasa began to grow, most notably through the establishment of a Chinese garrison and the appointment of *amban* or

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[20] Smith, *Tibetan Nation,* 55; Tsering Shakya*, The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet Since 1947* (London: Pimlico, 1999), 9; John Powers, *History as Propaganda: Tibetan Exiles versus the People's Republic of China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Sam Van Schaik, *Tibet: A History* (London: Yale University Press, 2013); Yudru Tsomu, *The Rise of Gonpo Namgyel in Kham: The Blind Warrior of Nyarong* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).

[21] Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990); Elliot Sperling, "The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)," in *Authenticating Tibet: Answers to China's 100 Questions*, ed. Anne-Marie Blondeau and Katia Buffetrille (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

'high officials' whose duty it was to manage Chinese affairs in the city.[22] During this period, China maintained "a loose Manchu protectorate" over Tibet.[23] As the 14th Dalai Lama would later note, the relationship between Tibet and the Qing "had been that of patron and priest and not been based on the subordination of one to the other."[24] Following the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912, the 13th Dalai Lama declared Tibetan independence and expelled all Chinese troops from Central Tibet. Over the next 36 years as China endured the turmoil of the Republican period (1912–49), Central Tibet enjoyed de facto independence.[25]

Kham and Amdo, on the other hand, had historically had a much more complex relationship with the Central Tibetan government, which had largely lost control over the two traditional Tibetan provinces to the Manchu during the 18th century. Differing across each region, Kham and Amdo held varying degrees of autonomy from both Lhasa and Manchu authorities during the Qing period, operating in a very dynamic fashion that involved much negotiation and accommodation between both regimes.[26] Rather than the *amban* system implemented in Central Tibet, the Manchu established a system of *tusi* 土司 to administrate in both Kham and Amdo, which combined local religious leadership with a court-appointed secular minister.[27] While religious loyalty to the Dalai Lama remained, various struggles for power and authority between Lhasa and

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[22] Luciano Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early 18th Century: History of the Establishment of Chinese Protectorate in Tibet* (Westport: Hyperion Press, 1973), 74.
[23] Thomas C. Laird, *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama* (New York: Grove Press, 2006), 192.
[24] Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa*, Tibet: A Political History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 246.
[25] Melvyn C. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913 – 1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State* (Berkeley: University of California, 1989), 538-543.
[26] Goldstein, "Change, Conflict and Continuity among a Community of Nomadic Pastoralists: A Case Study from Western Tibet, 1950-1990"; Tsomu, *Gonpo Namgyel*.
[27] Chia Ning, "Lifanyuan and the Management of Population Diversity in Early Qing (1636-1795)," *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthorpology Working Papers* 139, 3.

the Manchu dominated the Qing era in these regions.[28] Following the Dalai Lama's declaration of independence in 1912, representatives from the Tibetan government announced their claim over both Kham and Amdo at the Simla Convention of 1913-14.[29] China maintained administrative control over both regions during China's Republican era, though this was largely nominal.[30]

When the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded in 1949, Central Tibet was still more or less operating with a de facto independent government that enjoyed some degree of international status, and "was strongly opposed to becoming part of China."[31] The political and religious authority of the Dalai Lama, particularly within Central Tibet, proved a significant challenge to the newly-established socialist state's efforts to secure territorial power and integrity.

Concerned that invasion was imminent, Lhasa asked that Chairman Mao and his government respect Tibetan independence, but the Chinese swiftly rejected this and instead offered a proposal that autonomy would be guaranteed to Tibetans under the PRC.[32] Soon afterwards, on October 7th, 1950, the People's Liberation Army invaded Tibet, quickly defeating the Tibetan army.[33] The Chinese state then requested that representatives from the Central Tibetan government be sent to Beijing to negotiate an agreement, which became known as the 'Seventeen Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet' or 'The Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet' (*Zhongyang renmin*

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[28] Tsomu, *Gonpo Namgyel*, 2014, xx.
[29] Goldstein, "Change, Conflict and Continuity among a Community of Nomadic Pastoralists—A Case Study from western Tibet, 1950-1990," 77.
[30] Jianglin Li, *Tibet in Agony: Lhasa 1959* (London: Harvard University Press, 2016), X.
[31] Goldstein and Kapstein, *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet*, 6.
[32] Tsering Shakya *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 26-31.
[33] Tom Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet* (London: Zed Books, 1987), 198.

*zhengfu he Xizang difang zhengfu guanyu heping jiefang Xizang banfa de xieyi* 中央人民政府和西藏地方政府关于和平解放西藏办法的协议). Reluctantly signed by the Tibetan delegates, the agreement became the first formal written acknowledgement by Tibet of Chinese sovereignty.[34] Tibet was now an integral part of the PRC.

Over the course of the 1950s, Tibet experienced profound political, economic, social, and cultural transformation. Tibetans suddenly found themselves confronted with a situation in which they were "ruled by outsiders who neither spoke Tibetan nor understood much about the people they had subjugated."[35] These deep-seated cultural, linguistic and social differences between Han and Tibetans marked Tibet as an especially difficult case in the Chinese state's nation-building project.

The Chinese state first pursued a gradualist approach to integrating Tibet through allowing traditional religious, economic and political practices to continue. However, Tibetan fears that Tibetan Buddhism would come under attack, combined with a growing opposition to Chinese rule, seriously hindered progress.[36] Attempts to accelerate collectivisation through 'Socialist Transformation' (*shehui zhuyi gaizao* 社会主义改造) and 'Democratic Reforms' (*minzhu gaige* 民主改革) in the 1950s brought tensions further to the fore. The expropriation of land from Tibetan religious and lay elites prompted major uprisings and violent crackdowns across Tibet.[37] The unrest later escalated in the TAR, culminating in the Lhasa Rising in 1959, which resulted in the Dalai Lama fleeing to India and denouncing Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.[38] From this point

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[34] Melvyn C. Goldstein, *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama* (California: University of California Press, 1997), 46-49.
[35] Andrew Fischer, *The Disempowered Development of Tibet in China: A Study in the Economics of Marginalization* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), xxxix.
[36] Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 380– 381.
[37] Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 140– 141.
[38] Goldstein and Kapstein, *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet*, 8-9.

onwards, monasteries were viewed by the state with heavy suspicion and hostility, and their power and influence was variously targeted through incarceration of religious figures and lack of funding provision for monasteries and nunneries.[39]

As in the rest of China, the Cultural Revolution represented a turbulent and violent time across Tibet. The political campaign called for the destruction and elimination of the 'Four Olds' (old customs, old culture, old habits and old ideas) in order to promote a new socialist culture across all of China.[40] There were many specific and localised ways in which Tibetan cultural practices and socio-political orders were targeted. For example, during this time, religious beliefs came under particular attack, leading to a prohibition on all Buddhist and other popular religious practices, the burning of religious texts, the persecution of religious figures, and the destruction of monasteries and nunneries.[41] All of this was especially traumatic given the central place of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibetan culture and society. The Cultural Revolution also included deeply damaging campaigns against the Tibetan language, with all teaching and publishing in Tibetan (apart from translations of work by Chairman Mao) grinding to a halt during this time.[42] Combined with growing food shortages, the chaos of the Cultural Revolution spurred waves of resistance across the TAR's Nyemo County (Tib. Snye mo rdzong ཉེ་མོ་རྫོང།; Ch. Nimo 尼木县) in the late 1960s. This soon spread to other rural areas

[39] Ibid., 9.
[40] Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution - 1. Contradictions among the People, 1956-1957* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).
[41] Smith, *Tibetan Nation*; Melvyn C. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet. Volume 3: The Storm Clouds Descend, 1955–1957* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).
[42] Patricia Schiaffini, "The Language Divide: Identity and Literary Choices in Modern Tibet," *Journal of International Affairs* 57, no.2 (2004), 81-98; Kamila Hladíková, *Self-Representation of Tibet in Chinese and Tibetan Fiction of the 1980s* (Olomouc: *Palacký University Press*, 2013).

across Tibet.[43] PLA units eventually brutally suppressed the Nyemo revolt, but the violence and chaos of the Cultural Revolution continued on across some Tibetan areas until as late as the spring of 1970.[44] As Jabb argues, the Mao era threatened the very survival of Tibetan culture and has left a deep sense of collective cultural trauma among those who experienced the violence first hand and their descendants even today.[45]

In 1978, China initiated a series of major reforms following the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee, embarking on an ambitious path of rapid economic growth and accelerated modernisation that would affect virtually every aspect of life across the country. Along with opening the door to market forces, the reforms also led to a "significant liberalization of previous regime practice in terms of party control over the economy and society."[46] While the Mao years wreaked havoc on traditional Tibetan socio-cultural structures and triggered a "dislocation of identity and traditional epistemology,"[47] the reform era saw Beijing acknowledging the various failures of the hard-line approach that had defined the previous three decades of Chinese rule in Tibet. Starting in the 1980s, the party-state attempted to reverse the damage done by taking a relatively lenient and conciliatory approach. As in other parts of China, this period in Tibet was characterised by widespread and enthusiastic cultural and religious revival by both monastic communities and lay persons, all of whom were careful to navigate the various tensions between state policies and desires for restoring many practices

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[43] Melvyn C. Goldstein, Ben Jiao, and Tanzen Lhundrup. *On the Cultural Revolution in Tibet: the Nyemo Incident of 1969* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2009); Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet*.
[44] Warren W. Smith Jr., *China's Tibet? Autonomy or Assimilation* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 128.
[45] Lama Jabb, *Oral and Literary Continuities in Modern Tibetan Literature. The Inescapable Nation* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015).
[46] Tony Saich, *Governance and Politics of China: Comparative Government and Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 57.
[47] Tsering Shakya, "The Waterfall and Fragrant Flowers: The Development of Tibetan Literature since 1950," *Manoa* 12, no. 2 (2000): 29.

banned during the Mao years.[48] During this time, efforts were also made to normalize relations with the Dalai Lama. In 1982, the Chinese state even issued official invites to him to send representatives for face-to-face negotiations.[49] Significant attempts were also made to improve Tibet's grassroots economy.[50] Following a visit to the TAR by Hu Yaobang, the then General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, the government initiated a number of major construction projects that aimed at encouraging economic production and stimulating development across the region. The 1980s also saw the development of a tourism industry in the TAR, leading to a rapid growth in the number of tourists visiting the area.[51]

Although the Chinese state's experimentation with social and economic liberalisation during the 1980s undoubtedly brought about some improvements in terms of standards of living across Tibet, it was also met with much frustration, resentment and suspicion. Many Tibetans saw development and modernisation as representing "a forced process of attempting to assimilate the resource-rich hinterland into the booming mainland economy." [52] This soon led to open revolt. Street demonstrations led by monks and nuns erupted across Tibet between 1987 and 1989 to mark the 30th anniversary of the 1959 uprising against Chinese rule. China's claims over Tibet were again questioned and demonstrators called for Tibetan independence.[53] Police opened fire on

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[48] Goldstein and Kapstein, *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet*, 10.
[49] Ibid., 11.
[50] Ibid; Xiaowei Zang, *Ethnicity in China: A Critical Introduction* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).
[51] Barry Sautman and June Teufel Dreyer, "Introduction: The Tibet Question in Contemporary Perspective," in *Contemporary Tibet: Politics, Development and Society in a Disputed Region*, ed. Barry Sautman and June Teufel Dreyer (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 3-24.
[52] Human Rights Watch, *Cutting Off the Serpent's Head: Tightening Control in Tibet, 1994-1995* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1996), 20.
[53] Robert Barnett, "Symbols and Protest: The Iconography of Demonstrations in Tibet, 1987-1990," in *Resistance and Reform in Tibet*, ed. Robert Barnett and Shirin Akiner (London: Hurst & Co., 1994), 238-259.

protesters and martial law was soon imposed. China's insecurities over the "demands of increasingly assertive and restive Tibetans" were only further heightened by regional, domestic, transnational and international events in the late 1980s.[54] This signalled a new era across Tibet and began a return of the hard-line approach from Chinese authorities, increased security measures, as well as less space for cultural and religious practices.

In the early 1990s, relations between China and the Dalai Lama worsened considerably in the wake of the political upheavals of the late 1980s as well as various disagreements and deadlocks over what kind of political autonomy Tibet should enjoy.[55] The Chinese state, anxious of threats to national security and territorial integrity, put forward new regulations in 1994, emphasising a more assimilationist approach. These regulations promoted campaigns in 'Patriotic Education' (*aiguozhuyi jiaoyu* 爱国主义教育), banned government employees and students from taking part in Buddhist practices, and prohibited worship of the Dalai Lama and the display of his image.[56] Much of the space for cultural and religious revival work that had opened in the early 1980s had once again been closed down. The 1990s also saw above national-average levels of economic growth across Tibet,[57] and introduced much resented incentives encouraging non-Tibetans (mostly Han Chinese) to migrate to Tibet.[58] For Tibetans in Tibet, the perceived greater prosperity of these new migrants "generated a simmering resentment and hostility."[59] Yet, street protests and demonstrations of any kind during this period remained relatively few owing to "an increasingly rapid response

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[54] Tsering Topgyal, "The Insecurity Dilemma and the Sino-Tibetan Conflict" (PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011), 126.
[55] Goldstein and Kapstein, *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet*, 11.
[56] Robert Barnett, "Political Self-Immolation in Tibet: Causes and Influences," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* no. 25 (2009): 22.
[57] Fischer, *The Disempowered Development of Tibet in China*, 5.
[58] Emily Yeh, *Taming Tibet: Landscape Transformation and the Gift of Chinese Development* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).
[59] Van Schaik, *Tibet*, 264.

of security forces" and "the severity of prison sentences for protestors".[60] The 1990s in Tibet was thus largely a period defined by a hard-line approach from the Chinese state.

### 1.3.1 The Great Western Development Campaign (GWDC)

The 2000s began a new era of rapid and unprecedented transformation across Tibet. In 1999, President Jiang Zemin launched the GWDC. Acknowledging that China's western regions had been largely left behind in the national economic boom of the 1990s, the policy aimed to stimulate economic growth across the six provinces of Gansu, Guizhou, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Sichuan and Yunnan, and the five autonomous regions of Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Xinjiang and Tibet. At the 16th Party Congress in 2002, Jiang announced that advancing the development of China's western region was a main task for the party, exclaiming that it bore "on the overall situation of national development, the ethnic unity and the stability in border areas."[61] This was to be achieved through developing infrastructure, attracting foreign investment, promoting education and information technologies, urbanisation, and commercialisation of agricultural and pastoral production.[62]

The GWDC has continued to occupy a significant level of importance under successive leaders, forming a guiding principle of China's governance of Tibet. No single policy document provides a summary of precisely what the GWDC is or details how it should be implemented. It can broadly be understood as "an amorphous set of diverse policy agendas and instruments not designed to form a complete and coherent programme, but rather appeal to as many interests as possible

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[60] Barnet, "The Tibet Protests of Spring," 8.

[61] "Full Text of Jiang Zemin's Report at 16th Party Congress on Nov 8, 2002." *People's Daily,* November 18, 2002, accessed June 10, 2018, http://peopledaily.com.cn/20021 l/18/eng20021118_ 106983.shtml

[62] Adrian Zenz, *"Tibetanness" Under Threat? Neo-Integrationism, Minority Education and Career Strategies in Qinghai, P.R. China* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 43.

simultaneously."[63] Nonetheless, media reports have repeatedly centred on the campaign as an attempt to develop:

> state capacity and nation-building, particularly in relation to the integration of ethnic minorities living in many interior and western China[64]

Tibet has been a particularly central focus in these integration efforts. The stress on strengthening Tibet's place within the PRC reflects the ways in which the region, with its history of public calls for independence, the Tibetan government in exile, and the international reputation of the Dalai Lama, continue to stoke the state's insecurities.[65] As Malik notes, "from

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[63] Heike Holbig, "The Emergence of the Campaign to Open up the West: Ideological Formation, Central Decision-making, and the Role of the Provinces," *The China Quarterly* 178 (2004): 335-336.

[64] David S.G. Goodman, "China's Campaign to 'Open Up the West': National, Provincial and Local Perspectives," *The China Quarterly* 178 (2004): 319-320.

[65] There are many similarities between Tibet and Xinjiang, particularly in terms of claims to political independence and geostrategic importance to the state owing to natural resources and their location as border regions. Both have been the objects of internal orientalism, the targets of the state's obsession with social stability and national security, and used as justification for the GWDC and the consolidation of a paternalistic state. Even state discourses on Tibetan and Uyghur serfdom (discussed in detail in Chapter Six) prior to 1949 bear striking similarities. In response to the range of social engineering policies that have been implanted and the rapid modernization that has taken place across Xinjiang under the GWDC, Uyghurs too have experienced anxiety over identity, particularly those educated in Chinese. Discontent regarding that nature and/or lack of religious and cultural preservation, as well as assimilationist pressures, inward Han migration and socio-economic inequalities also mirror Tibetan responses to state-sponsored modernization drives under the GWDC. Yet Xinjiang is distinct in a number of key ways. Firstly, internationally, the Uyghurs are not nearly as well-known as Tibetans, who are much more established and politically active in exile, and enjoy much more media visibility, in large part due to Western popular imaginaries of Shangri-la and Tibetan Buddhism, and the international profile of the Dalai Lama as a spiritual leader. Uyghurs, in contrast, have received relatively little international attention. Uyghurs also face the problem of global Islamophobia, which also hampers attempts to generate greater public sympathy and support. Moreover, the state's positioning of Xinjiang within the 'Global War on Terror' also marks an important difference between the experiences of Tibetans and Uyghurs under the GWDC. These differences have significant

Beijing's perspective, any weakening of the Chinese stand on Tibet could mark the beginning of their losing control over China's restive periphery consisting of Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia."[66] Moreover, sharing a 4,056 kilometre land border with India that has been and continues to be subject of dispute, Tibet also serves an important strategic and security interest. Indeed, as former Chinese President Hu Jintao stated:

> The development, stability and security of Tibet have a direct bearing on the fundamental interests of people of all ethnic groups in Tibet as well as ethnic solidarity, national unity and state security.[67]

The GWDC seeks to resolve these political insecurities through economic development. In 2017, Premier Li Keqiang stated that the campaign should do so by specifically working to:

> streamline administrative approvals, reduce taxation and fees, cut transaction costs, improve business environment, promote entrepreneurship, encourage private capital to participate in the development of the western regions.[68]

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impact on the ways in which both Tibet and Xinjiang are represented in state media, the discourses they produce, and the ways in which Uyghurs and Tibetans respond. For more on similarities and differences between Xinjiang and Tibet, see: Ben Hillman and Gray Tuttle, eds, *Ethnic Conflict and Protest in Tibet and Xinjiang: Unrest in China's West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); Trine Brox and Ildikó Bellér-Hann, eds, *On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society: Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2014); Valentine Guerif, "Making States, Displaced Peoples: A Comparative Perspective of Xinjiang and Tibet in the People's Republic of China," *Refugee Studies Centre Working Paper Series*, no.61 (2010): 1-45.

[66] Mohan Malik, *China and India: Great Power Rivals* (Boulder: First Forum Press, 2011), 126.

[67] "Full Text of Speech by Hu Jintao at Tibet's Peaceful Liberation." *People's Daily*, December 12, 2008, accessed June 10, 2018, http://chinatibet.people.com.cn/96062/96104/6552511.html

[68] "Premier Urges Efforts to Boost Development of China's West." *Xinhua*, December 26, 2016, accessed August 14, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-12/25/c_135931586.htm

Such texts emphasise tackling economic underdevelopment and lack of economic infrastructure as a principle way of bringing these regions into closer proximity to national market structures through a high degree of state intervention.[69] Designed to modernize and develop these regions, this fusion of state and market forces under the GWDC is described by Fischer as "fiscal Maoism", denoting the ways in which these development strategies rely heavily on state subsidization and are tightly linked with and even guided by security and ideological concerns.[70] Indeed, as Clarke argues, one guiding principle of the campaign is to work towards achieving a "more thorough integration of China's predominantly ethnic minority populated "western regions."[71] The GWDC forms a crucial part of a broader nation-building project that seeks to strengthen state security, social stability, and ethnic unity integrationism.[72]

The GWDC has had an especially large impact on Tibet and marks a pivotal moment in modern Tibetan history. It has led to the most intensive phase of capitalist development that Tibet has ever experienced.[73] Through rapid urbanisation, development of infrastructure and information technologies, and expansion of trade and commercial

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[69] Goodman, "China's Campaign to 'Open Up the West': National, Provincial and Local Perspectives."

[70] Andrew Fischer, "The Revenge of Fiscal Maoism in China's Tibet," *ISS Working Papers – General Series*, No. 547 (2012): 5.

[71] Michael Clarke, "China's Internal Security Dilemma and the "GWD": The Dynamics of Integration, Ethnic Nationalism and Terrorism in Xinjiang," *Asian Studies Review* 31, no.3 (2007): 321.

[72] Jarmila Ptackova, "The Great Opening of the West Development Strategy and its Impact on the Life and Livelihood of Tibetan Pastoralists: Sedentarisation of Tibetan Pastoralists in Zeku County as a Result of Implementation of Socioeconomic and Environmental Development Projects in Qinghai Province, P.R. China" (PhD thesis, Humbolt- Universitaet zu Berlin, 2013), 8.

[73] Andrew Fischer, "The Great Transformation of Tibet? Rapid Labour Transitions in Times of Rapid Growth," *The Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies* 30, no.1-2 (2011), 63.

activities,[74] the campaign is, as Fischer notes, akin to what Polanyi described of 1944 England as "the Great Transformation" when the rise of market institutions, industrialisation and urbanisation had an enormous impact on social structural and lived realities.[75] Although it is certainly not the first development strategy implemented by the Chinese state across Tibet, the scale and impact of the GWDC is wholly unprecedented.[76]

Under the GWDC, a series of social engineering projects have been implemented across rural Tibet and are having huge implications for economic, social and cultural life there. Since 2006, the 'Build a New Socialist Countryside' (*jianshe shehuizhuyi xin nongcun* 建设社会主义新农村) initiative has sought to promote modernisation through bringing "economic efficiency, market-oriented personhood, comfortable living and, most importantly, environmental protection and national security" to China's western regions.[77] As part of this initiative, the 'Comfortable Housing Program' (*anju gongcheng* 安居工程) has moved an estimated two million Tibetans across the TAR into new houses or rebuilt their own houses between 2006 and 2012.[78] While in 1999, 76 per cent of the TAR workforce was agrarian, by 2010 that number had dropped to 53 per cent.[79] Aiming to improve grassland conditions, the 'Ecological Migration Policy' (*shengtai yimin zhengce* 生态移民政策) has relocated thousands

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[74] "Haiwai kan lianghui: Zhongguo 'xibu da kaifa' zhanlüe shi zhengque de" 海外看两会：中国"西部大开发"战略是正确的 [Overseas Watching the 'Two Sessions': China's 'GWD' Strategy is Correct]. *Xinhua*, March 7, 2016, accessed August 14, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-03/07/c_128780730.htm

[75] Fischer, *The Disempowered Development of Tibet*, 192.

[76] Ptackova, "The Great Opening of the West," 8.

[77] Huatse Gyal, "The Politics of Standardising and Subordinating Subjects: the Nomadic Settlement Project in Tibetan Areas of Amdo," *Nomadic Peoples* 19, no. 2 (2015), 241.

[78] Human Rights Watch, *"They Say We Should Be Grateful": Mass Rehousing and Relocation Programs in Tibetan Areas of China* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2013), 40-41.

[79] Fischer, *The Disempowered Development of Tibet*, 138; Fischer, "The Great Transformation of Tibet? Rapid Labour Transitions in Times of Rapid Growth," 63.

of nomadic herders, with an estimated 90 per cent of all nomadic herders in Qinghai province moved off their land and into permanent structures between the early 2000s and 2013. Many complain of the "increased living costs, indebtedness, loss of assets, and profound alteration of community structures" as well as the broader cultural impact of these moves.[80] These dramatic changes to living conditions have also had a major impact on animal husbandry practices, which have traditionally been the primary occupation and livelihood of Tibetan pastoralists. This process of sedentarisation is transforming "the entire living and survival patterns of Tibetan pastoralists" and raising profound questions about Tibetan identity today.[81]

Alongside these large-scale social engineering projects, other forms of widespread material transformation have been taking place across Tibet under the GWDC. Massive construction projects of railway lines, highways, airports, hydraulic dams and other forms of power stations, as well as large-scale urbanisation across the region have had a huge impact on the landscape and its demographics. The need to maintain high levels of economic development across China has also led to intense interest in Tibet's rich natural resources, such as copper, ore, lithium, gold and silver.[82] The subsequent environmental degradation through the extraction of natural resources, pollution of sacred lakes and mining of sacred mountains, and deforestation have all fundamentally altered the material and cultural landscape of Tibet.[83] As Kolas notes, these various forms of displacing Tibetan constructions and practices of

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[80] Human Rights Watch, "*They Say We Should Be Grateful,"* 7.
[81] Ptackova, "The Great Opening of the West," 9.
[82] Gabriel Lafitte, *Spoiling Tibet: China and Resource Nationalism on the Roof of the World* (London: Zed Books, 2013).
[83] Emily Yeh and Mark Henderson, "Interpreting Urbanization in Tibet: Administrative Scales and Discourses of Modernization," *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* no. 4 (2008), 1-44; Lafitte, *Spoiling Tibet*, 2013; Yeh, *Taming Tibet.*

place, have had enormous implications for Tibetan "religious geography", particularly in terms of the worship of local territorial deities.[84]

Although some Tibetans have undoubtedly benefited from economic growth, widespread anxiety and discontent exist in response to political, economic and social marginalization relative to Han Chinese. A large number of Han migrants have moved (mostly temporarily or seasonal) to Tibet for employment in state investment projects, while others were attracted by the less competitive environment and the economic opportunities on offer. The skills and experience of these migrants, often benefiting from better education opportunities in interior China and experience of urban work environments, leave Tibetans at a disadvantage and faced with strong competitive pressures that exacerbate economic inequalities across the region.[85]

The wide-ranging impact of the GWDC and rapid transformation of Tibet over the course of the 2000s have fuelled tensions, resentment and nationalist sentiment across the region. Many remain discontent about state policies relating to religious freedoms, cultural preservation and the aggressive promotion of Mandarin in schools. Political independence continues to be an aspiration for many, particularly given the perceived threats to Tibetan identity and culture under Chinese policies, and inward migration, all of which have intensified greatly during the era of the GWDC in the name of national integration.[86] In 2008, as China was preparing to stage the Olympic Games, some Tibetans saw a chance to draw attention to these frustrations and grievances, and pressure the central government to change their approach. A wave of protests broke out, with an estimated 150 demonstrations taking place across Tibet in

[84] Ashild Kolas, "Tourism and the Making of Place in Shangri-La," *Tourism Geographies* 6, no.3 (2004): 262-278.
[85] Fischer, *The Disempowered Development of Tibet,* 311.
[86] Tsering Topgyal, "Identity Insecurity and the Tibetan Resistance against China," 531.

2008 involving monks, laypeople, farmers, nomads and students.[87] Those who took part rallied against restrictions on religious practice, 'patriotic education', and forced denunciations of the Dalai Lama. The protests were met with violent suppression by police, killing somewhere between 8 and 200 Tibetans.[88] The protests further resulted in an intense tightening of security measures across the region.[89] As part of the crackdown, a number of Tibetan intellectuals and public figures who were in some way involved or spoke out about the protests were detained, imprisoned or put under house arrest.[90] More broadly, tighter restrictions on expressions of Tibetan religion, language and cultural identity also followed.[91] Starting in 2009, self-immolation became the "new and extreme form of ethnic protest in various parts of the plateau," with over 140 known cases as of June 2017.[92] Shakya argues that the intensification of state power and the growing sense of "impossibility of change" in social, cultural, political and economic terms under the current state marks an important reason for self-immolation in Tibet.[93] As Topgyal observes, self-immolation and other forms of Tibetan resistance should be seen as a response to identity insecurity, and a deep-seated fear for the survival of Tibetan culture and identity under the unprecedented transformations of the GWDC era as well as Chinese rule more broadly.[94]

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[87] Robert Barnett, "The Tibet Protests of Spring 2008," *China Perspectives* no.3 (2009): 6.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ben Hillman,"Interpreting the Post-2008 Wave of Protest and Conflict in Tibet," *Far East* 4, no.1 (2014): 54.
[90] Tsering Topgyal, "Identity Insecurity and the Tibetan Resistance against China," 531.
[91] Eric D. Mortensen, "Prosperity, Identity, Intra-Tibetan Violence, and Harmony in Southeast Tibet: The Case of Gyalthang," in *Ethnic Conflict and Protest in Tibet and Xinjiang: Unrest in China's West*, ed. Ben Hillman and Gray Tuttle (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).
[92] Ibid., 54.
[93] Tsering Shakya, "Transforming the Language of Protest," *Hot Spots: Cultural Anthropology*, April 8, 2012, accessed June 12, 2018, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/94-transforming-the-language-of-protest.
[94] Tsering Topgyal, *China and Tibet: The Perils of Insecurity* (London, UK: Hurst, 2016); "Identity Insecurity and the Tibetan Resistance against China";

Having left few parts of life in Tibet unaffected, the deep and wide-ranging impact of the GWDC is a defining feature of Tibetan modernity and marks a new era in Sino-Tibetan relations. It has produced various policies that have physically uprooted Tibetans through land grabs, inward migration, material development and urbanisation and culturally dislocated Tibetans through socio-political marginalization and displaced traditional ways of living on land, as well as understandings of peoplehood, memories and meanings.[95] Working to territorialize Tibet through the making of both landscapes and subjects, the GWDC represents a project of state place-making that aims to consolidate its authority and power across the region.[96]

While force and coercion have undoubtedly been an important part of Tibet's 'incorporation' into and subjugation within the PRC, a further important dimension of Chinese state power relates to practices of representation. Indeed, the GWDC is much more than simply a spatial reorganisation of Tibet; it is also a cultural struggle that involves an ideological rethinking of Tibet's place within the People's Republic of China (PRC).[97] It involves a public relations effort that requires careful framing and communication to Chinese audiences in order to generate public support for its implementation, and reinforce the state's "performance-based legitimacy" more broadly.[98] By examining the ways in which Tibetan modernity in the era of the GWDC has been represented across China, we can gain an understanding of how particular forms of

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"Insecurity Dilemma and the Tibetan Uprising in 2008," *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no. 69 (2011): 183–203.

[95] Janet McGaw, Anoma Pieris and Emily Potter, "Indigenous Place-Making in the City: Dispossessions, Occupations and Implications for Cultural Architecture," *Architectural Theory Review*, 16, no. 3 (2011): 297.

[96] Yeh, *Taming Tibet*, 5.

[97] Ralph Litzinger, "The Mobilization of 'Nature': Perspectives from Northwest Yunnan," *The China Quarterly* 178 (2004): 490.

[98] Anne-Marie Brady, "Mass Persuasion as a Means of Legitimation and China's Popular Authoritarianism," *American Behaviour Scientist* 53, no. 3 (2009): 434.

knowledge, institutions, and policies are enabled, sustained, and reproduced in order to justify, legitimise, and sustain state power in Tibet.

### 1.4 Internal Orientalism and the Politics of Representation

Representations of Tibetan modernity in the era of the GWDC are carefully managed across diverse cultural fields in Chinese society. They also intersect with longstanding representational practices relating to ethnicity. This section examines how these practices work to seduce, solicit, and win public support and consent for Chinese policies and rule in Tibet, particularly from Han Chinese.

Since the establishment of the PRC, the management of ethnicity has been an important issue in the Chinese state's "quest for political stability."[99] The administrative task of identifying and classifying ethnic groups across China formally began after the establishment of the PRC in an attempt to order and organise governance across the newly-established socialist state. In practice, this process varied across different regions, but was generally informed by "schemes of anthropology, Stalinist criteria, and Confucian culturalism,"[100] as well as administrative convenience and Han-chauvinism. [101] Today China officially recognises 56 ethnic constituencies (*minzu* 民族). Han are the majority ethnic group and make up just over 91% of the total population, while Tibetans constitute the ninth largest group with an official population of 6,282,187 across China.[102]

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[99] Anne-Marie Brady, "Ethnicity and the State in Contemporary China," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 41, no. 4 (2012): 3–9.
[100] Melissa J. Brown, "Ethnic Classification and Culture: The Case of the Tujia in Hubei, China," *Asian Ethnicity* 2, no.1 (2001): 70.
[101] Brown, "Ethnic Classification and Culture: The Case of the Tujia in Hubei, China"; Jiao Pan, "Deconstructing China's Ethnic Minorities: Deorientalization or Reorientalization?" *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 42, no.4 (2010): 46-61; Stevan Harrell, *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).
[102] Population Census Office under the State Council Department of Population, *Tabulation of the 2010 Population Census of the People's Republic of China* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2012).

While all ethnic groups fall under the umbrella of 'Chinese nationality' (*Zhonghua minzu* 中华民族), the Han and non-Han ethnic groups are subject to very different representational practices. Contemporary representations reflect, to some degree, power-relation practices in the traditional Chinese state, they are also "a product of a China's rise as a nation-state". [103] The superiority of Han culture is a long-standing narrative that is regularly reproduced through official propaganda, media, and educational resources.[104] Within this system of representation, the Han are depicted as the modern, civilized, and selfless 'big brother', bringing modernity to the exotic, primitive ethnic Other. As Harrell describes, a core part of this "civilizing project" rests upon the idea "that the peripheral peoples are like children – inferior but potentially educable."[105] The Han are often characterised as working hard to support ethnic minorities "to remain carefree and unencumbered by the heady concerns of the advanced nationality, whose difficult task involves running the country and instructing backward compatriots." [106] This system of representation is based on a presumed clear-cut typological contrast between 'modernity' and 'tradition' wherein the Han 'modernize' China's always already helplessly backward ethnic minority population. As Gladney notes, "the objectified portrayal of minorities as exoticized, and even eroticized, is essential to the construction of the Han Chinese

[103] Dru C. Gladney, *Dislocating China: Reflections on Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects* (London: Hurst, 2004), 77.
[104] Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); Louise Schein, "Gender and Internal Orientalism in China," *Modern China* 23, no.1 (1997): 69-98; Tenzin Jinba, *In the Land of the Eastern Queendom: The Politics of Gender and Ethnicity on the Sino-Tibetan Border* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014).
[105] Stevan Harrell, *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996): 14.
[106] John Powers, *The Buddha Party: How the People's Republic of China Works to Define and Control Tibetan Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 200.

majority, the very formulation of the Chinese "nation" itself.""[107] In this way, these practices work to make Han political and economic dominance appear natural, inevitable and justified, while also playing a key role in the construction of Han identity and Han nationalism more broadly. Schein describes this as a process of "internal orientalism," which describes "a relation between imaging and cultural-political domination that takes place interethnically within China."[108]

A relatively constant representation of ethnic minorities has persisted to varying degrees since the Mao era.[109] It is however also important to attend to the historical specificities of representational practices surrounding ethnic relations and the particular purposes they served at different points in time. After the Cultural Revolution and the many transformations of the reform era, ethnic minorities were heavily romanticised and essentialised as a way for the Han to tackle a perceived "void at the core of Chinese ethno-nationalism" and unlock a more 'authentic' past.[110] In the 1980s and 1990s, following the ideological vacuum that emerged in the decline of Maoism and the advance of rampant materialism and consumerism in the reform era, the production of ethnic difference became interlinked with the state's efforts to promote Han nationalism in an effort to shore up legitimacy. Han Chinese embarked on a soul searching mission, seeking to rediscover their cultural heritage and diversity through the 'ethnic Other'.[111] The development of the Tibetan town of Dechen (Tib. Bde chen བདེ་ཆེན།; Ch. Deqin 德钦) into a tourist hotspot named Shangri-la marks a prime

[107] Dru Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 53, no. 1 (1994): 94.
[108] Schein, "Gender and Internal Orientalism in China," 73.
[109] Schein, "Gender and Internal Orientalism in China"; Louisa Schein and Luo Yu, "Representations of Chinese Minorities" in *Handbook on Ethnic Minorities in China*, ed. Xiaowei Zang (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016), 263-290.
[110] Schein, "Gender and Internal Orientalism in China," 72.
[111] Ben Hillman, "Paradise under Construction: Minorities, Myths and Modernity in Northwest Yunnan," *Asian Ethnicity* 4, no.2 (2003): 175-188.

example of this, packaging ethnic difference and 'authenticity' for middle-class Han consumption.[112] Commenting on the popularity of Jiang Rong 姜戎's best-selling novel *The Wolf Totem* (*Lang tuteng* 狼图腾) (2004), which tells the story of a Han student sent to Inner Mongolia to teach shepherds but who instead learns about wolves, Bulag has argued ethnic minority bodies are portrayed as a source of primitiveness, savageness, and virility that can provide vital answers for the civilisational malaise and crisis of masculinity in contemporary China.[113] Similarly, Jinba notes that *The Wolf Totem* characterises ethnic minorities as wild, untamed 'Others' whose "animal nature" and vitality can revive Han spirit and national character in an era defined by rising nationalism and ever-growing global power.[114] Indeed, across the history of the PRC, representations of ethnic minorities have always been informed by the needs of the nation-building project at particular moments in time.

All of this is also largely true of Tibet, which is especially celebrated as "an Arcadia outside alienating modernity."[115] Full of eternal happiness, spiritual enlightenment, and endless mysteriousness, such representations symbolically position Tibet as detached from the socio-historical conditions of modernity and create "phantasmagoric simulacra that invite imaginations of a radically othered time-space."[116] As a playground for Han Chinese imaginations, such singular constructions of Tibet showcase cultural authenticity, timelessness and a disinterest in the material world, contrasting with the modern, hard-working and forward-looking world of the Han. These images of Tibet as an idealized place of natural and spiritual purity "appeal to members of China's new middle class looking for escape from the competition and congestion of their

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[112] Kolas, "Tourism and the Making of Place in Shangri-La."
[113] Uradyn Bulag, *Collaborative Nationalism: The Politics of Friendship on China's Mongolian Frontier* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 2.
[114] Jinba, *In the Land of the Eastern Queendom*, 39.
[115] Hong Zhu and Junxi Qian, "Drifting" in Lhasa: Cultural Encounter, Contested Modernity, and the Negotiation of Tibetanness," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 105, no.1 (2015): 150.
[116] Ibid., 145.

urban working lives."[117] Yet Tibetans, especially Tibetan men, are also sometimes represented as dangerous[118] and as possessing a "virile, brutish sexuality".[119] These representations of Tibetans as enlightened but also potentially threatening are contradictory, marking "both a nostalgia for an innocence lost forever to the civilized, and the threat of civilization being over-run or undermined by the recurrence of savagery, which is always lurking just below the surface; or by an untutored sexuality threatening to 'break out'."[120] In this sense, Tibetans are at once desirable and to emulated, and a threat to be contained and brought under control.

Representations of Tibet form an important part of the state's strategy to deal with the specific challenges that Tibet presents, especially in terms of international profile,[121] the Tibetan government in exile, the religious leadership of the Dalai Lama, and the related issues all of this raises for

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[117] Ben Hillman, "Ethnic Tourism and Ethnic Politics in Tibetan China," *Harvard Asia Pacific Review* 10, no.1 (2009): 3–6.
[118] Ben Hillman and Lee-Ann Henfry, "Macho Minority: Masculinity and Ethnicity on the Edge of Tibet," *Modern China* 32, no.2 (2006): 268.
[119] Charlene Makley, "On the Edge of Respectability: Sexual Politics in China's Tibet," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 10, no.3 (2002): 629.
[120] Stuart Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media," in *Gender Race, and Class in Media: A Critical Reader*, ed. Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez (London: SAGE, 2011), 41.
[121] While Tibet occupies a prominent place within the Chinese official and popular imagination as an otherworldly Shangrila, it has also been the subject of Western fascination for centuries. It became especially popular during the New Age Movement in the 1960s and 1970s. During the 1990s, American studios produced a number of major films such as *Kundun* (1997) and *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997). Several Hollywood stars also converted to Tibetan Buddhism during this time and publicly spoke out against the Chinese occupation of Tibet and various human rights abuses there. For more on representations of Tibet in Western popular culture, see Dibyesh Anand, *Geopolitica Exotica: Tibet in Western Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2008); Peter Bishop, *The Myth of Shangri-la: Tibet, Travel-writing and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Vanessa Frangville, "Mis-representations of Tibet in the West and in China: Seven Years in Tibet versus Red River Valley," *EastAsiaNet Workshop: Mis-taking Asia*, Leeds, May 2008, https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00306262/document

the PRC's territorial integrity, national security and social stability. These representations promote particular kinds of knowledge about Tibet and Tibetans to Han audiences, often exploiting Han nationalist sentiments to forge a set of counter arguments that obscure, dismiss and ridicule any claims of human rights abuse, colonialism or otherwise from Western media, the Tibetan government in exile or ordinary Tibetans themselves with grievances to air.[122] Indeed, rather than expressions of shock or sympathy for reports of protests, uprisings or even self-immolation, Han Chinese often respond with "a violent rage at the Tibetans' incomprehensible failure to act properly grateful at the generous bestowal" of modernisation, development and the various other gifts from the state[123] or with accusations that Tibetans have been misled by "foreign influence".[124] In this sense, Tibet's unique positioning within China and the various national security and stability issues it embodies for the Chinese state further complicate practices of representation.

In the era of the GWDC, new ways of representing Tibet and Tibetans work to satisfy new goals and challenges. Litzinger notes that these representational practices circulate through:

> the production of new circuits of commodity production and consumption, middle-class encounters with Tibet, new film and documentary productions (both Chinese and, more recently, by Tibetan intellectuals in China), the relentless 'opening up' of the Tibetan plateau for resource extraction, new ecological discourses

[122] Kingsley Edney, *The Globalization of Chinese Propaganda*: *International Power and Domestic Political Cohesion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 69.
[123] Yeh, *Taming Tibet*, 14.
[124] "Tibet Religious Urged to Resist Foreign Influences." *Global Times*, August 15, 2016, accessed June 30, 2018, http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1000443.shtml

about planetary and Third Pole crises, the forced migration of nomads to lifeless new towns.[125]

Current representational practices surrounding Tibetan modernity are deeply caught up in broader questions of state-led development, policy practices, and nationalism. They are crucial in enabling, upholding, and reproducing particular kinds of knowledge that normalize, sustain and render necessary the consolidation of state power in the name of territorial integrity, national security, and social stability. Indeed, they are part and parcel of the state's attempts to territorialise Tibet firmly within the Chinese nation-building project.[126] This necessitates an in-depth examination of how the state represents Tibetan modernity in order to better understand the ways in which new and evolving forms of representations work to seduce, solicit and win mass support and consent for continued state rule and power across Tibet in the era of the GWDC.

### 1.4.1 State Media in Contemporary China

In order to think about the mechanisms through which particular representations of Tibetan modernity under the GWDC are produced and circulated, it is important to consider the role of the media in contemporary China.

Media represent a powerful tool for promoting discourses about political and social issues, and plays a major role in influencing views, attitudes, cultures, social structures and political policy. As Grossberg et al. note,

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[125] Ralph Litzinger, "Afterword: The Afterlives of Shangrila," in *Mapping Shangrila: Contested Landscapes in the Sino-Tibetan Borderlands*, ed. Emily Yeh and Chris Coggins (Washington: University of Washington, 2014), 280.

[126] Klimeš has explored similar practices of ideational governance in Xinjiang, which work to "define and regulate Uyghur values, beliefs and loyalties" in order to promote "ethnic unity" and "de-extremization". See: Ondřej Klimeš, "Advancing 'Ethnic Unity' and 'De-Extremization': Ideational Governance in Xinjiang Under 'New Circumstances' (2012–2017)," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 23, no.3 (2018): 415.

media are probably the most important producer of meaning, as when they make claims about the way the world is, they becomes a powerful ideological institution.[127] Media discourses are thus never politically neutral, but instead play a key role in producing and communicating messages to audiences about how particular groups and issues should be represented and understood.[128]

Since the establishment of the PRC, media has always been an important platform for the state to promote its ideology and persuade "the public that it is performing the tacks of government effectively and equitably."[129] During the Mao era, the media became the "tongue and throat" (*houshe* 喉舌) of the party-state, functioning as a central apparatus of persuasion "to indoctrinate the population to accept and incorporate the norms of the new political order."[130] Modern communication technologies such as radio, newspapers and public bulletin boards, were all embraced and strictly controlled by the newly-established socialist state early on, functioning as "particularly important transmitters of government information."[131]

Despite the sweeping changes and large-scale commercialisation that occurred across China's media industry since the reform era, the state "continues to monitor, censor, and manufacture the content of the mass media" to ensure that information reaching the public does not "inspire people to challenge party rule."[132] In order to maintain their control and

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[127] Lawrence Grossberg, Ellen Wartella, and D. Charles Whitney, *Media Making: Mass Media and Popular Culture* (London: Sage, 1998), 182.
[128] Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992).
[129] Brady, "Mass Persuasion as a Means of Legitimation and China's Popular Authoritarianism," 434.
[130] Ibid., 437
[131] Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship*: *Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Lanham, MD: Rowland & Littlefield, 2008), 2.
[132] Susan L. Shirk, "Changing Media, Changing China," in *Changing Media, Changing China*, ed. Susan L. Shirk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

relevance, major state media outlets such as *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日报), *Xinhua* 新华, and *China Daily* (*Zhongguo ribao* 中国日报) have all had to adapt to China's fast-changing media landscape. This has involved embracing online media as a way of conducting positive propaganda for Party ideology and policy.[133] It has also entailed a radical updating of the traditional practices of persuasion. Chinese propaganda today can be characterised as "market friendly, scientific, high tech, and politics-lite," often harnessing culture and entertainment as vehicles for political messages.[134] As Yang and Tang note, this produces a form of "optimistic and non-critical journalism that focuses on the positive and hopeful aspects of Chinese society" and forms part of the state's wider discursive repertoire in encouraging "the mass's [*sic*] identification with the regime."[135] As such, the various changes that have taken place across China's media industry since the reform era have played a central role in the construction of a "socialist harmonious society" and the rejuvenation of state capacity "via the market, to affect the agenda of popular culture."[136]

The emergence of various technologies have posed new challenges to the state's attempts to maintain a monopoly over media reportage. In the 1990s, underground media production and distribution channels thrived, enabled by "the proliferation of commercial printing facilities and the availability of cheap video and audio reproduction technologies."[137] Since the mid 2000s, the proliferation of social media platforms such as Wechat

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[133] Qing Dai, "Guiding Public Opinion," *Media Studies Journal* 13, no.1 (1999): 78–81.
[134] Brady, "Mass Persuasion as a Means of Legitimation and China's Popular Authoritarianism," 437.
[135] Peidong Yang and Lijun Tang, "Positive Energy": Hegemonic Intervention and Online Media Discourse in China's Xi Jinping Era." *China: An International Journal* 16, no.1 (2018): 2.
[136] Jing Wang, "Culture as Leisure and Culture as Capital," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 9, no.1 (2001): 70.
[137] Yuezhi Zhao, "Media, Market, and Democracy in China," in *Who Owns the Media?: Global Trends and Local Resistances*, ed. Thomas Pradip and Nain Zaharom (Penang: Southbound, 2004), 182.

and Weibo have also undermined the state's ability to manage and control information across China's media landscape. Political satire, parody, and jokes are a staple of the Chinese internet experience and mark a form of grassroots political expression that challenges the state's monopoly over public discourse.[138] Tang and Sampson draw attention to the ways in which high-profile cases of online activism have critiqued government policies, practices, and abuses of power.[139] In response, censorship has formed an important part of the Chinese state's media regulation strategy of online spaces, regularly banning "news that directly threatens the legitimacy of the regime."[140]

Censorship is however only one aspect of controlling the production and dissemination of information. Media management increasingly entails sophisticated methods of "digital persuasion and propaganda" in order "to sway public opinion in favour of the party."[141] As Hu Jintao remarked on his visit to media outlet and official organ of the CCP, the People's Daily in 2008, news propaganda work should focus on "correctly guiding public opinion."[142] Quickly realising the scope, scale and speed of online media, China's propagandists began emphasising "the importance of the Chinese media going online, digitalizing, and contracting regular audience surveys to monitor public opinion and taste."[143] In recent years, as a result of this shift in approach, China's propaganda apparatus has "banned fewer reports and guided more of them."[144]

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[138] Guobin Yang and Min Jiang "The Networked Practice of Online Political Satire in China: Between Ritual and Resistance," *International Communication Gazette* 77, no. 3: 215–231.
[139] Lijun Tang and Helen Sampson, "The Interaction between Mass Media and the Internet in Non-democratic States: the Case of China," *Media, Culture & Society* 34, no.4 (2012): 457–471.
[140] Qiuqing Tai, "China's Media Censorship: A Dynamic and Diversified Regime," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 14, no. 2 (2014): 186.
[141] Maria Repnikova, "Media Openings and Political Transitions: Glasnost versus YulunJiandu," *Problems of Post-Communism* 64, no.3-4 (2017): 147.
[142] Ibid., 145.
[143] Brady, "Mass Persuasion as a Means of Legitimation and China's Popular Authoritarianism," 441.
[144] Tai, "China's Media Censorship: A Dynamic and Diversified Regime," 186.

The state is now a savvy internet user with an extremely strong online presence aimed at engaging China's 772 million online users.[145] All major state media outlets such as *People's Daily* and *Xinhua* have launched official Weibo and Wechat accounts. On Weibo alone, *People's Daily* has several accounts, with its primary account having over 65 million followers.[146] *Xinhua* has followed a similar strategy and has over 41 million to date.[147] Indeed, the state has been extremely quick to capitalise on the potential of online technologies to reach a broader audience and shape public opinion through exploiting new consumption demands.[148] As such, while the pluralisation of news media outlets has challenged the traditional stronghold of state media over information production and dissemination, state media has quickly adapted to online media to secure their base and trust in state media remains high.[149]

Given Tibet's unique standing within the PRC in relation to social stability, border security, and nation-building, it is important to examine how particular kinds of representations are produced and circulated in the

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[145] Jesper Schlæger and Min Jiang, "Official Microblogging and Social Management by Local Governments in China," *China Information* 28, no.2 (2014): 189–213.

[146] "Renmin ribao faren weibo《人民日报》法人微博, *Weibo*, accessed August 10, 2018, https://www.weibo.com/rmrb?refer_flag=1001030101_&is_hot=1

[147] "Xinhua wang faren weibo 新华网法人微博," *Weibo*, accessed August 10, 2018, https://www.weibo.com/newsxh?refer_flag=1001030201_&is_hot=1

[148] Rongbin Han, *Contesting Cyberspace in China: Online Expression and Authoritarian Resilience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Yu Xiaoming, "Over 770m Internet Users in China," *China Daily*, July 13, 2018, accessed August 10, 2018, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201807/13/WS5b48384ea310796df4df64ec.html

[149] Jie Xu, "Trust in Chinese State Media: The Influence of Education, Internet, and Government," *Journal of International Communication* 19, no.1 (2013): 69-84; Qing Yang and Wenfang Tang, "Exploring the Sources of Institutional Trust in China: Culture, Mobilization, or Performance?" *Asian Politics & Policy* 2, no.3 (2010): 415-36; Tao Liu and Benjamin J. Bates, "What's Behind Public Trust in News Media: A Comparative Study of America and China," *Chinese Journal of Communication* 2, no.3 (2009): 307-29.

media in order to shape national discourses. Indeed, Chinese media plays a significant part in shaping public opinion about Tibet, representing an important site where the state has "wielded its powers to galvanize Han Chinese support for central government policies" in Tibet.[150] As Barnett notes, it is important to attend to the "powerful interaction between technology and politics" in terms of the state's exploitation of online media forms to promote official accounts of various issues both in and outside of contemporary Tibet.[151] However, to date, little research exists to explain how the state is harnessing online media to produce and disseminate news about Tibet in the era of the GWDC.

### 1.4.2 Tibetans and Online Media

Online media has provided the Chinese state a new space to consolidate its power, but it has also transformed the landscape of popular expression in China. Social media platforms such as Weibo and Wechat enable online users to organize, protest, and influence public opinion in unprecedented ways.[152] Although censorship remains a serious problem for free expression across Chinese online spaces, beyond the realm of openly confrontational politics much space exists for political discussion, critique and resistance.[153] As such, while it is necessary to examine the discursive strategies deployed by the state in order to promote particular understandings about Tibet, it is also important to consider the ways in

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[150] Dali L. Yang, "China's Developmental Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Pitfalls," *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2016): 100-123.
[151] Robert Barnett, "Authenticity, Secrecy and Public Space: Chen Kuiyuan and Representations of the Panchen Lama Reincarnation Dispute of 1995," in *Tibetan Modernities: Notes from the Field on Cultural and Social Change*. *PIATS 2003: Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies,* ed. Robert Barnett and Ronald Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2003b), 353-422.
[152] Guobin Yang, *The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online* (New York: Columbia Press, 2011).
[153] James Leibold, "Blogging Alone: China, the Internet and the Democratic Illusion?" *Journal of Asian Studies* 70, no.4 (2011): 1023–1041; Jingsi C. Wu, "Cultural Citizenship at the Intersection of Television and New Media. *Television & New Media* 14, no.5 (2012): 402–420.

which online media platforms provide a valuable space for Tibetan counter-expression.

While research on the topic still remains scarce, a few studies illustrate the ways in which Tibetans are engaging online media. Robin notes that online spaces are lively in literary activity and grassroots activism,[154] and has also observed the creative ways in which Tibetans navigate censorship to discuss highly sensitive issues such as self-immolation by using metaphors and similes of fire, flames, butter lamps, and dust.[155] As such, while Chinese censorship regulations exert pressure on Tibetan online spaces and the threat of arrest remains for those who cross the line of permissible expression, creative strategies ensure that even the most sensitive of topics continue to be discussed. In her exploration of the 'New Tibet' website in the early 2000's, Rabgey argued that online spaces "had cleared a new discursive terrain for a self-conscious Tibetan public." [156] Focused largely on intra-Tibetan online activities, these studies demonstrate how Tibetans are making use of online media to discuss issues of identity, community, social change and political struggle.

Less attention has been given to the question of how Tibetans use online spaces to challenge official representations and present counter discourses to influence public opinion about contemporary Tibet across China. Online spaces mark a central site where a politics of representation between state and Tibetans plays out. This offers considerable potential for illuminating the struggle for control over the kinds of knowledge produced and meanings ascribed to Tibetan modernity across China and Tibet today. While of course not all Tibetans

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[154] Françoise Robin, "Fire, Flames and Ashes. How Tibetan Poets Talk about Self-Immolations without Talking about Them," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 2, no.5 (2012), 123.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Tashi Rabgey, "Newtibet.com: Citizenship as Agency in a Virtual Tibetan Public," in *Tibetan Modernities: Notes from the Field on Cultural and Social Change*, ed. Robert Barnett and Ronald Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 333.

are opposed to Chinese rule or to the GWDC, nor do all those who are necessarily post about it online, challenges to official discourses and a struggle for recognition are nonetheless a prominent dimension of Tibetan online activities. Online media offers a valuable opportunity to examine how Tibetans publicly resist the rapid state-led modernisation under the GWDC, and related questions concerning the perceived threat to Tibetan identity and culture. While Tibetan-to-Tibetan engagement on social media certainly offers crucial insights into the politics of contemporary Tibet, so too do discussions of how Tibetans use social media to engage a broader audience to challenge official discourses and attempt to shape public opinion in China. Doing so will help to broaden understandings of everyday practices of Tibetan resistance as well as the possibilities of online spaces for marginalised groups in China.

A deliberate effort to reach out to Han Chinese, create dialogue and challenge popular understandings about Tibet, most notably as they appear in state media, is an important part of Tibetan online spaces that has received little academic attention to date. Indeed, while Tibetans and other ethnic minorities across the PRC may be largely "powerless to prevent the dissemination of essentialised representations, or the circulation of pejorative stereotypes by Han people," online spaces can represent one of the "creative means" through which they attempt to make themselves heard.[157] As I will discuss in further detail in the following two chapters, desires to advance "a different understanding of Tibet" (*liaojie zangdi de butong shijiao* 了解藏地的不同视角), "advance communication and exchange among nationalities" (*tuidong minzu jian de goutong he jiaoliu* 推动民族间的沟通和交流), and "clear up misunderstandings" (*xiaoshi wuhui* 消失误会) all feature prominently among Tibetans' online discussions and even as a core goal of some leading Tibetan online websites. Online spaces are an increasingly important site where representations of Tibetan modernity are highly

[157] Joanne Smith Finley, *The Art of Symbolic Resistance: Uyghur Identities and Uyghur–Han Relations in Contemporary Xinjiang* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 6.

politicized "as a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it."[158] It is thus important to consider how Tibetans on social media platforms in China promote counter discourses about Tibetan modernity in an effort to resist the hegemonic representations of state media and influence public opinion on contemporary Tibet.

To talk about Tibetan counter-stories of Tibetan modernity is to talk about homeland. Indeed, in order to fully understand Tibetan discourses of resistance in relation to state media representations of the GWDC, the question of human-land relations cannot be ignored. As this thesis will argue, a deep attachment to place is a central feature of the ways in which Tibetans challenge state media representations. As the following chapter will explore in detail, this emotional bond that Tibetans express for the place of Tibet is well-established. As Smyer Yu argues, Tibet is often characterised as "an emotional embodiment of their personal upbringing, their family and communal ties, and their cultural memory," particularly for those Tibetans who find "their lives split between urban China and their homeland."[159] Moreover, Hladíková writes that landscape is an important symbol of Tibetan identity.[160] While these descriptions clearly describe the centrality and pervasiveness of homeland in Tibetan culture, it is important to consider how this plays out discursively in response to the deeply placial dimensions of the GWDC. Indeed, while many expressions of Tibetan identity have become highly politicized and politically suspect in the eyes of the state, this thesis will show some of the subtle, low-profile ways in which Tibetans discursively mobilise homeland as a public form of resistance and also as a "marker of Tibetan

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[158] Paul Chilton and Christina Schaffner, "Introduction: Themes and Principles in the Analysis of Political Discourse," in *Politics as Text and Talk: Analytic Approaches to Political Discourse*, ed. Paul Chilton and Christina Schaffner (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2002), 5.
[159] Dan Smyer Yu, *Mindscaping the Landscape of Tibet: Place, Memorability, Ecoaesthetics* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 156.
[160] Kamila Hladíková, *Self-Representation of Tibet*, 215.

separateness." [161] Examining these activities will not only provide important insights into the contemporary nature of Tibetan practices of resistance and identity, but will also raise important theoretical points about homeland as a form of discursive practice.

### 1.5 Research Motivation and Aims

This thesis examines the online politics of representation surrounding Tibetan modernity in the era of the GWDC. It analyses how online state media platforms promote particular discourses about Tibetan modernity and for what ends, as well as the ways in which Tibetans challenge and contest these representations across social media. It describes the ways in which homeland occupies a central position within Tibetan discourses of resistance, with particular attention to the ways in which Tibetans mobilise homeland to challenge and counter state media representations of Tibetan modernity. In doing so, it asks:

1. How does Chinese state media represent Tibetan modernity under the GWDC, and why?
2. How do Tibetans challenge and counter these representations, and what is the role of homeland in this process?
3. What can these findings tell us about homeland as a form of discursive practice?

An in-depth examination of the role of state media in promoting Chinese rule in Tibet will provide valuable insights into how the state engages online media to generate public support for its GWDC policies and stymy public sympathy for Tibetan grievances, frustrations and protests against rapid modernisation. It will also demonstrate the ways in which the material territorialisation of Tibet is enabled and sustained through discursive practices. As such, this study will also contribute more broadly to understanding everyday practices of power and resistance in Tibet by focusing on the role of online media. Moreover, analysing the ways in

[161] Tsering Shakya, The Waterfall and Fragrant Flowers: The Development of Tibetan Literature since 1950," 23.

which Tibetans use online media will broaden and deepen understandings of online activities in China, particularly in relation to practices of resistance among marginalised groups. Finally, this study will make an important contribution to homeland theory, which has to date focused solely on questions of attachment to place. It will address this issue by developing a new theory which focuses on homeland as a discursive practice that is embedded and mobilised within a web of power relations to pursue particular goals.

### 1.6 Overview of Thesis

In this chapter I introduced the context, scope and significance of this research. I provided context for these issues through a brief history of modern Tibet under Chinese rule, with a particular focus on the various forms of social and economic transformation that have taken place under the GWDC. I then moved on to describing some of the key features of the politics of representation surrounding Tibet and Tibetans in China, and the significance of this for the maintenance of Chinese state power. Following this, I detailed the relationship of online media to the reproduction of state power, but also online media as a site of resistance. I argued that while online spaces have received some attention in Tibetan Studies in terms of community and identity-making, scholars have not moved further to consider how Tibetans use online spaces to challenge and resist what are perceived to be misrepresentations propagated by state media. I then concluded by noting the importance and centrality of homeland within Tibetan online discourses of resistance, and why it is important to theoretically develop our understanding of homeland as a form of discursive practice.

In Chapter Two, I provide a literature review to identify and critically examine views, approaches and discussions about core conceptual and theoretical issues relevant to this thesis. I describe how human-land relations, modernity, power and representation, and resistance have been studied, with particular attention to the areas of Cultural Studies, Cultural Geography, Tibetan Studies, and Chinese Studies. In doing so,

I establish how to locate my thesis within existing literature and determine discussions and debates to which my research would contribute. I also describe the core theoretical and conceptual building blocks informing how I address my research questions, examine what I argue to be intricate relationship between these different variables, and then weave them together into a framework specifically geared towards tackling my specific research questions. I bring together theoretical insights from a range of disciplinary backgrounds on homeland, modernity, representation, hegemony, and resistance to develop a framework for thinking about homeland as a form of discursive practice.

The third chapter describes my methodological approach. I begin by explaining why Critical Discourse Analysis makes a suitable approach for addressing my research questions and its applicability in the case of Chinese-language texts. I then provide a detailed description of my data collection and selection methods. Finally, I discuss my own role as researcher and how this impacts the research design and analytical process.

Having presented my literature review, methodological approach, and theoretical framework, I then move to my three empirical chapters. To cover all aspects of homeland in a systematic and thorough way, each of these chapters will focus on either one or two of the core ingredients that make up homeland: *people, place, sense of place, control of place,* and *time.*

In Chapter Four, I examine the online politics of representation surrounding the material transformation of the Tibetan landscape. I argue that state media representations of material transformation across Tibet promote stories of engineering wonders, environmental protection and happy Tibetans. I describe how these texts generate discourses of national struggle, achievement, and glory, and thus work to reinforce state legitimacy, authority and sovereignty over Tibet. I then analyse Tibetan counter discourses, with a particular focus on the work of two of

Tibet's most well-known, critically acclaimed, and prolific Sinophone writers, Tsering Woeser and Baima Nazhen. I demonstrate how these centre upon discourses of environmental degradation and cultural erosion. Focusing on *place* and *sense of place*, I describe how homeland forms a key part of these discourses and is mobilised to express historical, cultural, and spiritual attachments to Tibet as Tibetan territory and as a critique of state power.

In Chapter Five I examine the online politics of representation surrounding economic development and cultural commercialisation in contemporary Tibet. I describe the ways in which state media promote economic development as a story of harmony between economic development and cultural preservation, and promote a Tibetan subjectivity grounded in diligence, self-responsibility, and dreams of 'ethnic entrepreneurship'. I argue that these texts produce discourses of the state as the guardian of Tibetan culture and facilitator of Tibetan empowerment in order to generate public support for state policies in Tibet and further embed Tibet within the national market-based economy. I then describe how Tibetans counter this, with a particular focus on the case of the trade and slaughter of the Tibetan mastiff in 2015. I explain how Tibetans produce a discourse that emphasises a collective anxiety over the impact of cultural commercialisation in terms of cultural values and identity. I analyse how homeland is operationalised across these discourses through *people* to critique the perceived negative impact of state-led economic development and cultural commercialisation on Tibetan identity and to reject the market ideologies of the state.

In the final empirical chapter, I examine the online politics of representation surrounding historical progress in Tibet. Using a combination of written and visual texts, I analyse the ways in which state media characterise 'Old Tibet', or pre-'liberation' Tibet, as a place of cruelty, misery and cultural oppression to represent 'New Tibet', or post-'liberation' and contemporary Tibet, as a site of progress, prosperity and freedom. This, I argue, reinforces state legitimacy, authority and

sovereignty by embedding Tibet within a state-defined temporality of linear progress and reinforcing a discourse of the state as the liberator and protector of Tibet. I then describe how Tibetans counter these discourses by producing texts that celebrate 'Old Tibet' as modern, globally integrated and culturally diverse. Through *control of place* and *time*, I describe how homeland is deployed as a discursive practice to assert value and attachment to an ancestral past and challenge the singular official narrative of 'Old Tibet' as 'hell on earth' and ruptures the neat trajectories of historical progress upon which the GWDC rests.

I then conclude by bringing together the main arguments of each empirical chapter to discuss the key findings of this thesis. I describe how this research makes significant contributions to homeland theory, Tibetan Studies, and also Chinese Studies. Finally, I provide a short discussion of the implications this research holds, its limitations, and the possibilities it opens up for future research in these areas of study.

# 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

## 2.1 Introduction

In 2013, *Xinhua* published a news piece entitled "Tibet's 'Plateau Redness' is Becoming Rarer" (*Xizang de 'gaoyuan hong' bian shao le* 西藏的"高原红"变少了).[162] The article explained that plateau redness, the unique ruddy colour Tibetans have historically borne on their faces on account of living at high altitudes, was disappearing. The reason, they noted, was that Tibetans had gained "knowledge of scientific culture" *(kexue wenhua de liaojie* 科学文化的了解) and now better understood how to "protect themselves" *(baohu hao ziji* 保护好自己). The claim echoed a number of similar state media stories in previous years. For instance, a 2015 article from another state media news outlet likewise suggested that plateau redness, rather than being a mark of beauty, was in fact "a type of plateau illness" *(yi zhong gaoyuan jibing* 一种高原疾病).[163] Having acquired greater understanding of "modern" health issues, these pieces celebrated, Tibetans would no longer suffer the affliction of plateau redness.

"Tibetan Girls, We are Losing Our Plateau Redness" (*Zangzu guniang, women zhengzai xiaoshi de na zhu gaoyuan hong* 藏族姑娘，我们正在消失的那抹高原红) an essay written by a Tibetan university student named Phuntsok Drolma (Pingcuo Zhuoma 萍措卓玛*)*, offered a radically different reading of the decline of plateau redness.[164] Posted on the

[162] Jingpin Zhang 张京品 and Peng Li 李鹏, "Xizang de 'gaoyuan hong' bian shao le" 西藏的"高原红"变少了 [Tibet's 'Plateau Redness' is Becoming Rarer]. *Xinhua*, August 18, 2013, accessed July 12, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/2013-08/19/c_116995912.htm

[163] "Chaoyang Tang 唐朝杨, "Tongxun: Zhengzai xiaoshi de 'gaoyuan hong'" 通讯：正在消失的"高原红" [Communication: The Plateau Redness That is Now Disappearing]. China News, August 10, 2015, accessed July 12, 2016, http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2015/08-10/7458599.shtml

[164] Phuntsok Drolma (Pingcuo Zhuoma 萍措卓玛*)*, "Zangzu guniang, women zhengzai xiaoshi de na zhu gaoyuan hong" 藏族姑娘，我们正在消失的那抹高

popular Tibetan Wechat platform *Qumi* 趣觅 in February 2016, Phuntsok's essay attracted much attention. She lamented how rare it had become to see Tibetan women with plateau redness on the streets of Lhasa. The distinctive feature from which "everyone can immediately identify a dear Tibetan girl" (*bianshi chu qin'ai de zangzu guniangmen* 辨识出亲爱的藏族姑娘们**)** was vanishing as more and more Tibetan women strive for the whiteness promoted in cosmetics advertisements and TV shows from Hong Kong, South Korea and Japan. For Phuntsok, to look upon these women now "fair complexioned and kitted out in the latest fashion" (*miankong baixi, chuanzhuo shishang* 面孔白皙，穿着时尚), one would never even know they were Tibetan.[165]

Phuntsok's essay, without making explicit reference, challenged the official discourse of plateau redness that pervades state media. Rather than celebrating improved "scientific knowledge" or dismissing plateau redness as a form of illness, Phuntsok instead asserts plateau redness as a source of pride in both people and place. Her essay, while undoubtedly essentialising in some ways, resonated with many other Tibetans. Many critiqued what they felt to be a hegemonic discourse of whiteness that characterises the Chinese beauty industry. Others drew attention to broader forms of transformation taking place within Tibet itself. They questioned the effects of climate change and the impact of increasing numbers of Tibetan children attending boarding schools in interior China. Issues such as these were causing Tibetans to become

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原红 [Tibetan Girls, We are Losing Our Plateau Redness], *Wechat*, February 19, 2016, http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzI5NjA2NDI0OQ==&mid=403904084&idx=1&sn=769eb54664f991999667f35d691a8a37&scene=0#wechat_redirect

[165] The essay is largely more emotive than practical. Focusing more on the immediate pressures of cultural assimilation facing Tibetans within the PRC, it does not, for example, discuss the impact of globalisation or cosmopolitanism on changing beauty norms. For more on the politics of national boundary-making and global flows in the case of Tibet, see: Craig James, "Buddhism, Science, and Market: The Globalisation of Tibetan Medicine," *Anthropology and Medicine*, 9, no. 3: 267-289.

alienated from their homeland and culture, they argued, and the fading of plateau redness was simply a physical manifestation of much larger problems.

As in the case of Gerong Phuntsok and Dawa Drolma's wedding photographs described in the previous chapter, plateau redness also found itself at the centre of a politics of representation concerning Tibetan modernity. Was plateau redness simply fading away because of growing health awareness and better education, or had it more to do with the pressures of cultural assimilation to particular beauty norms, boarding schools in interior China and even climate change across the Tibetan Plateau? What can the above accounts tell us about the politics of representation between state and Tibetans surrounding the nature of Tibetan modernity? What kinds of discourse does the state produce and promote about Tibetan modernity, and why? How do Tibetans contest and counter these discourses, and why does homeland feature in such a prominent way? What might this reveal about the ways in which homeland is mobilised to resist hegemony in contemporary Tibet?

In this chapter, I present a broad overview of the core ideas, key conceptual and theoretical approaches, and debates concerning these questions in the relevant academic literature. I examine academic discussions across Tibetan Studies, Chinese Studies, Cultural Geography and Cultural Studies on human-land relations, modernity, power and representation, and resistance. In doing so, I locate my research questions within the wider literature, and identify lacunae in existing research for further development. I also describe the core theoretical and conceptual building blocks informing how I address my research questions, examine what I argue to be intricate relationship between these different variables, and then weave them together into a framework that advances homeland as a form of discursive practice.

In terms of structure, this chapter is divided into five sections. I begin with an overview of human-land relations, how they have been approached in

studies of contemporary Tibet, and why the theory of homeland makes a fitting approach for this thesis but requires further development. The second section focuses on the relationship between modernity, discourse and power. Following this, the third section considers how media generate ideas about modernity in order to consolidate power, with particular reference to the case of Chinese state media and Tibet. In the fourth section, I consider resistance and online practices among Tibetans. The final section then describes my theoretical framework.

### 2.2 Human-land Relations

In this section, I outline the concept of homeland and consider how it fits within the broader literature of human-land relations. I examine how human-land relations has been treated in Tibetan Studies to date, and why homeland offers an important conceptual lens to examine power relations in the case of Tibet. I then demonstrate how discussions about human-land relations in Tibetan Studies and in the literature more broadly raise important questions about the current state of homeland studies and how they need to develop a greater understanding of the ways in which homeland is embedded and mobilised within contexts of power.

Homeland is most commonly associated with Cultural Geography, an approach that examines the dynamic relationship between people and place and the ways in which landscape is collectively experienced and mediated by cultural structures.[166] Definitions of homeland emphasise a people's emotional attachment to a particular place. As Nostrand and Estaville argue, homeland denotes "places people identify with and have strong feelings about."[167] O'Roarke, finessing the concept further, argues

[166] Marie Price and Martin Lewis, "The Reinvention of Cultural Geography," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83, no. 1 (1993): 1; Audrey Kobayashi, "People, Place, and Region: 100 Years of Human Geography in the Annals," *Annals of the Association of American Geographer*s 100, no.5 (2010): 1095-1106.

[167] Richard L. Nostrand and Lawrence Estaville, Jr., "Introduction: The Homeland Concept," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 13 (1993): 1.

that homeland is “the bonding of ethnic groups to the land.”[168] He also draws attention to the ways in which various belief systems provide cultural foundations for emotional ties between ethnic groups and their territories. The most thorough and comprehensive definition of homeland is offered by Jordan, who states:

> Homeland is a geographical area long inhabited by a self-conscious group exhibiting a strong sense of attachment to the region and exercising some measure of social, economic, and/or political control over it, while at the same time functioning as a peripheral part of a larger and more powerful independent state.[169]

As Smith and White argue, by foregrounding a sense of “potency of place” and psychological anchorage to a particular territory, no other geographic term succeeds in capturing the essence of a people’s attachment to place than that of homeland.[170] Homeland is thus defined by its particular focus on emotional attachment to place.

Nostrand and Estaville offer what they argue to be five core criteria for identifying homeland: *people, place, a sense of place, control of place,* and *time*.[171] It is worth elaborating on each of these essential ingredients:

1. People: This refers to a self-conscious people who exhibit a strong sense of attachment to their social territory. This ingredient emphasises an awareness of a distinct common heritage, culture, memories, religion, and experience. In this

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[168] Michael O’Roarke, “Homelands: A Conceptual Essay,” *Journal of Cultural Geography* 13, no.2 (1993): 5.
[169] Terry G. Jordan, “The Anglo-Texan Homeland,” *Journal of Cultural Geography* 13, no.2 (1993): 75.
[170] Jeffrey Smith and Benjamin N. White, “Detached from Their Homeland: The Latter-day,” *Journal of Cultural Geography* 21, no.2 (2004): 57.
[171] Richard Nostrand and Lawrence Estaville, Jr., "Introduction: The Homeland Concept," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 13 (1993): 1-4.

sense, homeland is considered to be a geographic expression of ethnicity.[172] A sense of peoplehood is a core criterion of homeland and essential to on-going projects of collective identity construction.[173] Examples of this in Tibet might include shared self-referential terms that are embedded in place such as 'people of the land of snow' (Tib. *gangs can pa* གངས་ཅན་པ།) or 'born of this soil and rock' (Tib. *sa rdo skye* ས་རྡོ་སྐྱེ།).

2. Place: This refers to the social adjustment to territory, and also the tangible and intangible cultural markers that demonstrate the distinctiveness of homeland. An important aspect of place is the development of a people's relationship to both natural and cultural environment over time. The visible and invisible impression stamped by a people on their natural environment must demonstrate adjustment to their social territory, and should mark homeland as a special and venerated place. Examples of this in Tibet may include mountain deities, prayer flags, *mani* stones, and stupas.

3. Sense of place: This ingredient emphasises bonding between people and place. It encompasses demonstrations of emotional feeling of attachment, a desire to possess, and compulsion to defend.[174] Sense of place often manifests in terms of culture and economy being tied to the land. Examples of this in Tibet include tsampa, yak milk, barley beer etc.

4. Control of place: This concerns the power to determine (to a reasonable degree) the fate of a particular place. There is considerable space for interpretation of this ingredient. Indeed,

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[172] Michael P. Conzen, "American Homelands: A Dissenting View," in *Homelands in the United States*, ed. Richard L. Nostrand and Lawrence E. Estaville (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 252.
[173] Ibid., 252.
[174] Nostrand and Estaville, "Introduction: The Homeland Concept."

as Conzen writes, it is not, for instance, clear if control over organs of local government, local autonomy or representation in wider political circles is necessary.[175] Nonetheless, control of place relates to the ability to exert some degree of power over one's relationship to place. Control of place tends to emphasise democratic clout and a dense concentration of a self-conscious people with a strong sense of attachment to that place who reside there. Examples of this in Tibet might include Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures, but it may also include possession and jurisdiction over particular aspects of social and cultural affairs, such as 'China's Association of Thangka Painting Artists' (*Zhongguo tangka yishujia xiehui* 中国唐卡艺术家协会) and the Tibet Branch of the China Buddhism Association (*Zhongguo fojiao xiehui Xizang fenhui* 中国佛教协会西藏分会). However, to what extent meaningful control can be exercised across these examples varies very considerably.

5. Time: This describes an enduring connection to place across generations, and often plays an important role in "building up or diluting the sense of homeland."[176] It is closely connected to what Conzen calls indigenity, which denotes ancestral ties, long occupance of and adjustment to a particular region.[177] Ancestral lineage and the enduring social, cultural and political ways in which a people inhabit place over time form a core part of their bond with a particular place. Time is also associated with ancestors, often serving to emphasise a bond stemming from time immemorial. Examples of this in Tibet may include bodily relics of enlightened beings, such as the Buddha, which "signify the ongoing presence and power of the deceased," or

[175] Michael P. Conzen, "Culture Regions, Homelands, and Ethnic Archipelagos in the United States: Methodological Considerations," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 13, no.2 (1993): 22.
[176] Ibid., 25.
[177] Ibid., 22.

architectural moments such as the Potala Palace, which also serves as a reminder of the history of the Dalai Lama's palace.[178] Commemorations of major historical events, such as the Tibetan National Uprising Day are a further illustration of this.

These five core ingredients emphasise the indivisibility of people and place, and highlight the centrality of a people's enduring emotional bond for a particular territory. Homeland thus describes the psychological anchorage territory provides to particular social groups and the ways in which their sense of peoplehood, culture and even economy are deeply rooted in particular places.

In Tibet, there are many ways in which this enduring emotional bond for place manifests. The pervasive self-referential name for Tibetans "people of the land of snow" (Tib. *gangs can pa* གངས་ཅན་པ།) and the ubiquity of snow and landscape as metaphors in Tibetan literature speak to this deep-seated connection to territory. Practices of pilgrimage, worship of sacred mountains, and various other cultural practices all demonstrate the strong sense of territorial bonding as well as a sense of geopiety, "the belief and worship of powers behind nature or the human environment."[179]

Many scholars have examined human-land relations in the context of contemporary Tibet.[180] Smyer Yu, in his studies of representations of

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[178]Clare Harris, "The Potala Palace: Remembering to Forget in Contemporary Tibet," *South Asian Studies*, 29:1 (2013): 65.
[179] Gertjan Dijkink, "When Geopolitics and Religion Fuse: A Historical Perspective," *Geopolitics* 11, no. 2 (2006): 193.
[180] Janet Gyatso, "Down With the Demoness: Reflections on a Feminine Ground in Tibet," *The Tibet Journal* XII (1987), 38-54; Samten Karmay, "Mountain Cults and National Identity in Tibet," in *Resistance and Reform in Tibet*, ed. Robert Barnett and Shirin Akiner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 112-120; Katia Buffetrille, "Reflections on Pilgrimages to Sacred Mountains, Lakes and Caves," in *Pilgrimage in Tibet*, ed. Alex McKay (London: Curzon Press Ltd.,1998), 18-34.

place in Tibetan director Pema Tseden's films, finds that "Buddhism marks both Tibetan natural landscape and built environment as the inner spiritual force of Tibetan culture."[181] In his study of place, memorability and eco-aesthetics in contemporary Tibet, he describes how the Tibetan plateau is experienced as "animated with earthly gods and spirits" and an expression of the Tibetan nation.[182] Similarly, Esler argues for acknowledging the centrality of geopiety in Tibetan human-land relations, which contends that "human beings must respect the abodes of local deities and spirits, by taking care of the mountains, rivers, lakes, trees, and other features of the landscape in which they are believed to dwell."[183] He examines how Tibetans (and some Han converts to Tibetan Buddhism) articulate concerns for environmental protection through these beliefs in the powers of nature.

Aside from these eco-spiritual practices, others have examined how other Tibetan socio-cultural practices are intricately bound up with the land. Yannick, for instance, argues that barley "features prominently in [Tibetans'] economy, language, beliefs, and narratives" and is often represented as an ancestral gift passed down from generation to generation.[184] Harris, in her work on contemporary Tibetan art, shows how the land of Tibet is represented "as a distinctive territory where the ancestors reside and are remembered."[185] Moreover, Smyer Yu argues that Tibet is often characterised as "an emotional embodiment of their personal upbringing, their family and communal ties, and their cultural memory," particularly for those Tibetans who find "their lives split between

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[181] Dan Smyer Yu, "Pema Tseden's Transnational Cinema: Screening a Buddhist Landscape of Tibet," *Contemporary Buddhism* 15, no.1 (2014): 131.
[182] Dan Smyer Yu, *Mindscaping the Landscape of Tibet*, 174.
[183] Joshua Esler, "'Green Tibetans' in China: Tibetan Geopiety and Environmental Protection in a Multilayered Tibetan Landscape," *Asian Ethnicity* 28, no.3 (2016): 331.
[184] Yannick Laurent, "The Tibetans in the Making: Barley Cultivation & Cultural Representations," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 33 (2015): 74.
[185] Clare Harris, "In and Out of Place: Tibetan Artists' Travels in the Contemporary Art World," *Visual Anthropology Review* 28, no. 2 (2012): 160.

urban China and their homeland."[186] Also writing on Tibetans residing in urban areas, Upton notes that the grasslands remains a "locus of cultural desire, a site for the projection of their "fanciful cravings" for lost traditions and imagined modernities."[187]

Tibet as homeland has also received some attention among Chinese scholars, notably in studies of Sinophone Tibetan literature. For example, Gao Yabin 高亚斌, a Chinese scholar who has written widely on modern Sinophone Tibetan literature, has noted that, from the 1950s onwards, the works of leading Sinophone Tibetan writers have "without exception featured this kind of rootedness (*genxing* 根性) in ethnic culture and native soil (*xiangtu* 乡土)."[188] In his examination of Sinophone Tibetan literature, Wang Quan 王泉 notes the presence of "a strong sense of homeland" (*nongyu de jiayuan* 浓郁的家园意识) across various authors' works.[189] Beyond noting its prominence within Tibetan writing, Chinese scholars also attend to the ways in which homeland is represented. Xu Meiheng 徐美恒 has examined how questions of gender become entangled with "homeland consciousness" (*jiayuan yishi* 家园意识) in modern Tibetan poetry.[190] In her analysis of well-known Tibetan writer

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[186] Smyer Yu, *Mindscaping the Landscape of Tibet*, 156.

[187] Janet Upton, "Home on the Grasslands? Tradition, Modernity, and the Negotiation of Identity by Tibetan Intellectuals in the PRC," in *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan*, ed. Melissa J. Brown (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), 100.

[188] Yabin Gao (高亚斌), "Lun Zangzu hanyu shige de xiangtu genxing" 论藏族汉语诗歌的乡土根性 [On the Local Rootedness of Sinophone Tibetan Poetry]. *Wenzhou daxue xuebao – shehui kexue bao* 温州大学学报·社会科学版 [*Journal of Wenzhou University - Social Sciences*] 28, no. 3 (2015): 88.

[189] Quan Wang 王泉, "20 shiji 90 niandai yilai gannan Zangzu sanwen shi zhong de jiayuan jingguan" 20 世纪 90 年代以来甘南藏族散文诗中的家园景观 [The Landscape of Homeland in 20th Century Gannan Tibetan Prose and Poetry since the 1990s], *Alai yanjiu* 阿来研究 [Alai Research], no.2 (2015): 137-143.

[190] Meiheng Xu 徐美恒, "Xingbie wenhua shiyu xia de yuanxing chuancheng: Zangzu dangdai shige de fuqin yu muqin xingxiang"性别文化视域下的原型传承: 藏族当代诗歌的父亲与母亲形象 [Model Inheritance from a Gender Culture

Alai's book *Red Poppies* (*Chen'ai luo ding* 尘埃落定, 1998), Cui Wei 崔喆 explores the protagonist's struggle with his own identity and how this can only be resolved by his return to his "spiritual homeland" (*jingshen jiayuan* 精神家园), which turns out to be pre-'liberation' Tibet.[191] However, a notable difference between Chinese and Western scholarship is the distinct lack of analysis of the broader power relations within which these representations of Tibetan homeland unfold or indeed to which they respond. Modernity is regularly mentioned, but only in very general terms relating to perceived clashes with Tibetan tradition and culture. Moreover, there is no discussion of state-sponsored nomadic resettlement schemes, pollution, environmental degradation, experiences of political, economic and social marginalisation relative to Han Chinese in the region, or the many other issues fuelling grief, anxieties, and resentment among Tibetans.

Representations of Tibetan landscapes are potent with collective and nationalist aspirations, all of which permeate songs, historical texts, classical and contemporary literature, art, and traditional oral narratives and ordinary speech. These representations of Tibetan homeland regularly transcend "immediate tribal and regional boundaries as well as the administrative demarcations established by the Chinese state."[192] Hladíková writes that "landscape is one of the important symbols of its 'otherness', as for the same reason it is one of the important symbols of

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Perspective: Images of Father and Mother in Tibetan Contemporary Poetry], *Xizang Yanjiu* 西藏研究 [*Tibet Research*] 3, no.5 (2017): 124-133.

[191] Wei Cui 崔喆. "Shiyu de mitu – du Alai de 'Chen'ai luo ding'"失语的迷途——读阿来的《尘埃落定》 [The Lost Way of Aphasia: Reading Alai's 'Red Poppies']. *Huabei dianli daxue xuebao – shehui kexue ban* 华北电力大学学报 – 社会科学版 [*Journal of North China Electric Power University – Social Sciences Edition*], 4(2002): 66 – 69. For more on Alai's book, see Nimrod Baranovitch, "Literary Liberation of the Tibetan Past: The Alternative Voice in Alai's Red Poppies," *Modern China* 36, no.2 (2010):170-209.

[192] Lama Jabb, *Oral and Literary Continuities in Modern Tibetan Literature,* 45.

the Tibetan identity."[193] Yeh has examined Lhasa's special place within "the imagined geography of the Tibetan nation", noting the powerful position of the Tibetan capital to Tibetan cultural identity.[194] As such, Tibetan cultural and religious practices, ancestral connections and collective aspirations are all intricately embedded in a notion of homeland. This strong sense of home, belonging, and rootedness that characterise human-land relations thus make homeland a particularly appropriate and useful lens for Tibet.

While homeland works well in terms of its ability to explain human-land relations in Tibet, one major shortcoming of the approach is its lack of attention to questions of power. Homeland theory's neglect of the issue of power is unusual in the sense that key features of homeland theory is its recognition of homeland as an "areal expression of ethnicity"[195] and as "a peripheral part of a larger and more powerful independent state."[196] As such, a context of power asymmetry is recognised as a core feature of homeland, but there is little consideration of how these broader structural issues interact with constructions of homeland. Indeed, as Said noted, social territory is never a God-given entity, but is always constructed, manufactured, invented and reinvented at particular moments in time for particular purposes.[197] As such, homeland theory as it currently stands broadly fails to consider how homeland is embedded within a web of power relations and constructed in order to serve particular purposes at specific points in time, particularly in terms of practices of ethnic boundary-making and identity politics.[198] As such, despite its relatively robust approach to theorizing emotional attachment

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[193] Hladíková, *Self-Representation of Tibet in Chinese and Tibetan Fiction of the 1980s*, 215.
[194] Yeh, *Taming Tibet,* 19.
[195] Nostrand and Estaville, "Introduction: The Homeland Concept," 2.
[196] Jordan, "The Anglo-Texan Homeland," 75.
[197] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual. The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Vintage, 1996), 33.
[198] Frederik Barth, "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Frederik Barth (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1969), 10.

to place, homeland studies has yet to move towards examining how homeland interacts with power relations.

The relationship between human-land relations and power in Tibet is especially important given the state's modernisation drive under the GWDC. Loaded with references to "national unity", "political and social stability" and "economic development", the GWDC is a state place-making project. Fischer,[199] Yeh,[200] and Zenz[201] have identified the various mechanisms of socio-economic exclusion, political marginalization, and consolidation of power that have accompanied the state's drive for development and national cohesion. Various policies are aimed at bringing Tibet into closer proximity to national market structures through a high degree of state intervention,[202] and are closely guided by security and ideological concerns.[203] Studies of urbanisation,[204] market integration,[205] social reorganization of Tibetan pastoral regions,[206]

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[199] Andrew Fischer, "'Population Invasion' Versus Urban Exclusion in the Tibetan Areas of Western China," *Population and Development Review* 34, no.4 (2008): 631-62; "The Great Transformation of Tibet? Rapid Labour Transitions in Times of Rapid Growth"; "The Geopolitics of Politico-Religious Protest in East Tibet," *Cultural Anthropology Hot Spots Forum* (2012); "The Revenge of Fiscal Maoism in China's Tibet"; *The Disempowered Development of Tibet in China.*

[200] Yeh, *Taming Tibet*; Yeh and Mark Henderson, "Interpreting Urbanization in Tibet: Administrative Scales and Discourses of Modernization."

[201] Zenz, *"Tibetanness" Under Threat?*

[202] Goodman, "China's Campaign to 'Open Up the West': National, Provincial and Local Perspectives," 318.

[203] Andrew Fischer, "The Revenge of Fiscal Maoism in China's Tibet," *ISS Working Papers – General Series*, No. 547 (2012): 5.

[204] Tashi Nyima, "The Chinese Development of Tibet: Lhasa in Transformation," *Forum for Development Studies* 35, no. 2 (2008): 257-277; Yeh and Henderson, "Interpreting Urbanization in Tibet"; Fischer, *The Disempowered Development of Tibet in China.*

[205] Tsering Bum, "Guardians of Nature: Tibetan Pastoralists and the Natural World," *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 42 (2016).

[206] Huatse Gyal, "The Politics of Standardising and Subordinating Subjects: the Nomadic Settlement Project in Tibetan Areas of Amdo." *Nomadic Peoples* 19, no. 2 (2015): 241.

resource extraction[207] and education and employment policies[208] all demonstrate the ways in which modernisation across Tibet is a deeply placial practice and entangled with the reproduction of state power. In her work on the material transformation of the TAR, Yeh argues that such projects of development should be seen as part of the on-going efforts to territorialise Tibet within the PRC, and naturalising Tibetans' association with the Chinese state.[209] As a form of nation-building, the GWDC marks a process of reaffirming China's "sovereignty abstraction" through the "territorial concrete."[210] These studies demonstrate the material impact of the state's modernisation drive and the ways in which ideas of place and connection to place are entangled within China's nation-building project more broadly.

At a time when large-scale material transformation through urbanisation, infrastructural development, economic modernisation and commercialisation, and various other related acts of displacement under the GWDC, it is important to consider how this is affecting Tibetan constructions and practices of place. One such example of this can be found in Morcom's work on *dunglen*, a style of Tibetan music that literally translates as 'strumming and singing.' Morcom describes *dunglen* as an important medium through which Tibetans engage landscape as a means of scrutinising particular configurations of power in contemporary

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[207] Lafitte, *Spoiling Tibet.*

[208] Melvyn C. Goldstein, Geoff Childs, and Puchang Wangdui, "Going for Income in Village Tibet: A Longitudinal Analysis of Change and Adaptation, 1997 to 2007," *Asian Survey* 48, no.3 (2008): 513-534; Melvyn C. Goldstein, Geoff Childs, and Puchang Wangdui, "Beijing's "People First" Development Initiative for the Tibet Autonomous Region's Rural Sector - A Case Study from the Shgatse Area*," The China Journal*, 63 (2010): 57-75; Andrew Fischer, "The Great Transformation of Tibet? Rapid Labour Transitions in Times of Rapid Growth*," The Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies* 30, no.1-2 (2011): 63-77.

[209] Yeh, *Taming Tibet*, 5.

[210] Francis Harry Hinsley, *Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 142.

Tibet.[211] Similarly, Smyer Yu notes that the trials and tribulations of modernity are an intensely placial encounter in the work of leading Tibetophone writer Shogdong.[212] For Shakya, invoking their deep rooted emotional connection for Tibet is a powerful way through which Tibetans mobilise and affirm a sense of national unity.[213] Hladíková has also discussed the ways in which Tibetan writers have engaged with the Tibetan landscape as a way of emphasising national and cultural identity.[214] These studies draw attention to the ways in which human-land relations have been represented and how they are used to reflect on and engage with broader questions of structural change and power relations in contemporary Tibet. This highlights the importance of developing a theoretical perspective for analysing such expressions.

While homeland studies has been relatively silent on the subject, the issue of how human-land relations and power converge has received extensive theoretical attention elsewhere. Beginning in the 1980s, a 'New Cultural Geography' movement began to explore landscape as a way of seeing the exercise of domination and oppression in the "inner workings of culture."[215] Paying increasing attention to issues of discourse, power, resistance, transgression and representation, feminist, Marxist and post-structuralist scholars began to explore landscape as a site upon and through which relations of power are produced, maintained, and contested. As Mitchell argues, landscapes represent a social product that is both enacted and "naturalized through the very struggles engaged over

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[211] Anna Morcom, "Landscape, Urbanization, and Capitalist Modernity: Exploring the 'Great Transformation' of Tibet through its Songs," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 47 (2015): 161-189.
[212] Dan Smyer Yu, "Subaltern Placiality in Modern Tibet: Critical Discourses in the Works of Shogdong," *China Information* 27, no.2 (2013): 155-172.
[213] This is a reference to unpublished work by Tsering Shakya (see Morcom, *Unity and Discord: Music and Politics in Contemporary Tibet*, 149-150).
[214] Kamila Hladíková, "The Soul of Tibet: Representations of Landscape in Chinese-medium Literature about Tibet from the 1980s," *Archiv Orientální, Quarterly Journal of African and Asian Sutdies* 78, no.1 (2010): 81.
[215] Tim Cresswell, "New Cultural Geography – An Unfinished Project?" *Cultural Geographers* 17, no.2 (2010): 171.

its form and meaning."[216] This new direction was concerned with locating human-land relations within wider areas of political, economic, social, and cultural power/knowledge structures, and identifying the ways in which these structures manifest themselves. Heavily indebted to Foucault, this approach sought to understand the workings of power/knowledge systems in the constitution of "social-cum-spatial" entities.[217] Probing the geographical implications of Foucault's "power is everywhere" mantra,[218] the production of space and the territorialisation of power have become an important theoretical lens through which geographers understand human-land relations as a site where ideologies are produced, contested and negotiated.

Studies of place represent one approach to human-land relations that is helpful in examining the convergence of homeland and power, most notably in terms of representational and discursive practices. At its most fundamental, place is described as a location of tradition, community and identity, and tends to emphasise locality and tradition.[219] Harvey argues that place also represents a site of oppositional politics where local, regional, national, and/or global power/knowledge struggles are created, negotiated, and resisted.[220] Place is often examined through media forms such as film, literature and music.[221] Rose examines how place becomes

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[216] Don Mitchell, "California: "The Beautiful and the Damned," in *The Cultural Geography Reader*, ed. Timothy Oakes and Patricia L. Price (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), 163.
[217] Jeremy W. Crampton and Stuart Elden. *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).
[218] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality (Vol. 1): An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1978), 121-122.
[219] Tim Oakes, "Place and the Paradox of Modernity," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 87 (1997): 509.
[220] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).
[221] Gillian Rose, "The *Cultural Politics* of *Place*: *Local Representation* and *Oppositional Discourse in Two Films*," *Transactions* of the *Institute* of *British Geographers 19 (1994): 46–60; Oakes* "Place and the Paradox of Modernity"*;* Smyer Yu, *Mindscaping the Landscape of Tibet*; "Subaltern Placiality in Modern Tibet: Critical Discourses in the Works of Shogdong."

a tool for interrogating dominant discourses around class, labour and capitalism through films made in London's East End in the 1970s. Examining the literary work by J.W. von Goethe, Thomas Hardy, and Raymond Williams, Oakes finds that place comes to capture "a sense of ambivalence, contradiction and paradox with which people continue to engage the changes swirling around them."[222] He notes that place is a site where "the contemporary dynamics of socioeconomic transformation and restructuring" play out.[223] Liu and Yang examine the process and effects of writing about place among popular music audiences in online music forums. They note how audiences engage references to place in music to both produce and negotiate questions of identity, nationalism and everyday life experiences.[224] These studies focus on the ways in which place is enacted through texts as a practice that engages existing power relations, but also how the "rapidly expanding and quickening mobility of people combines with the refusal of cultural products and practices to "stay put"."[225] Of particular important for this thesis, they also reflect a "discursive perspective on human-land relations," which, as Di Masso et al. argue, characterise place as "linguistically constructed as individuals, together [to] formulate the everyday meanings of person-in-place relationships."[226] Moreover, these examples also point to the ways in which place engages questions of power, and raise questions as to how homeland might also be deployed as a form of practice to achieve particular goals.

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[222] Oakes, "Place and the Paradox of Modernity," 510.
[223] Ibid., 509.
[224] Chen Liu and Rong Yang, "Consuming Popular Songs Online: Phoenix Legend's Audiences and Douban Music," *Cultural Geographies* 24, no. 2: 295-310.
[225] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no.1 (1992): 9.
[226] Andes Di Masso, John A. Dixon, J. and Kevin Durrheim, "Place Attachment as Discursive Practice," in *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Method and Applications*, ed. Lynne C. Manzo and Patrick Devine-Wright (New York: Routledge, 2014), 75.

It may be tempting to dismiss homeland as an appropriate approach to understanding human-land relations given its lack of theoretical capacity to examine how power plays an important role in shaping interactions between people and place. However, I would argue that homeland can learn and develop from how place has been studied. Moreover, to reduce human-land relations to a question of power alone, which place sometimes risks doing, is also problematic. Many scholars in human-land relations, particularly those coming from Indigenous perspectives, have criticised the lack of theoretical engagement by scholars of theories of place with the ways in which identity and culture are embedded in land.[227] Major differences exist between Indigenous and Western understandings of place in terms of the centrality of "land to Indigenous modes of being, thought and ethics."[228] Jobin describes the importance of Cree "ways of being in the world, ways of interacting with other humans and animals, and ways of being in relationship with the land."[229] Moreover, Todd, in her research with Metis communities in Paulatuuq, Canada, examines how a sense of continuity, memory, knowledge transmission, and ancestry are all intricately bound up with experiences of land.[230] Tibet's

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[227] Jeff Corntassel, "Re-Envisioning Resurgence: Indigenous Pathways to Decolonization and Sustainable Self-Determination," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no.1 (2012), 86-101; Charles R. Hale, "Does Multiculturalism Menace? Governance, Cultural Rights, and the Politics of Identity in Guatemala," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 34 (2002): 485–524; Te Ahukaramu, Charles Royal and Betsan Martin, "Indigenous Ethics of Responsibility in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Harmony with the Earth and Relational Ethics," in *Responsibility and Cultures of the World: Dialogue around a Collective Challenge*, ed. Edith Sizoo (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2010), 47-64.

[228] Glen Coulthard, "Place against Empire: Understanding Indigenous Anti-Colonialism," *Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory, Culture, and Action* 4, no. 2 (2010): 79-83.

[229] Shalene Jobin, "Double Consciousness and Nehiyawak (Cree) Perspectives: Reclaiming Indigenous Women's Knowledge," in *Living on the Land: Indigenous Women's Understanding of Place*, ed. Nathalie Kermoal and Isabel Altamirano-Jimenez (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2016), 53.

[230] Zoe Todd, "'This is the Life': Women's Role in Food Provisioning in Paulatuuq, Northwest Territories," in *Living on the Land: Indigenous Women's*

own relationship with the notion of indigenity remains tenuous for many reasons. As Yeh notes, the term is not widely recognised by audiences within China where it must contend with the much more well-known framework of *minzu*, indigeneity, while for exile Tibetans, indigenity, with its focus on belonging and nativeness, does little in their fight for independence.[231] A family resemblance to the above examples can nonetheless be seen in terms of relationships between people, place, and culture in Tibet. In this sense, homeland, with its focus on the emotional bond a people hold for a particular place, continues to hold a great deal of explanatory value. In order to provide a more robust and holistic approach to human-land relations, homeland theory must also begin to develop a greater theoretical grasp of power.

It should also be noted that homeland studies, while paying significant attention to the question of indigenity in the theoretical sense, often focuses more on settler homelands than those who settlers displace. Studies of Amish,[232] Louisiana-French,[233] and other Old European communities[234] in the United States have tended to dominate the literature, while considerably less attention has been given to Native American and First Nation experiences of homeland within this context. Arreola's work on the Chiricahua Apache homeland in what is today south eastern Arizona marks one prominent example of how homeland theory can also work to examine Indigenous experiences of homeland.[235]

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*Understanding of Place*, ed. Nathalie Kermoal and Isabel Altamirano-Jimenez (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2016), 160-185.

[231] Emily Yeh, "Tibetan Indigeneity: Translations, Resemblances, and Uptake," in *Indigenous Experiences Today*, ed. Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 69-98.

[232] Ary J. Lamme III & Douglas B. McDonald, "The "North Country" Amish Homeland," Journal of Cultural Geography 13, no.2 (2009): 107-118.

[233] Lawrence E. Estaville Jr. "The Louisiana-French Homeland," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 13, no.2 (2009): 31-45.

[234] Steven D. Hoelscher & Robert C. Ostergren, "Old European Homelands in the American Middle West," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 13, no.2 (2009):87-106.

[235] Daniel D. Arreola, "Chiricahua Apache Homeland in the Borderland Southwest," *Geographical Review* 102 (2012): 111-131.

Nonetheless, all of these studies are still limited to the context of North America and homeland research should extend beyond the particularities of one geographic region in order to gain a fuller and more varied understanding.

While it is crucial to acknowledge the unique and particular ways in which different peoples relate to place, non-indigenous scholars should be especially vigilant against romanticising or essentialising indigenous human-land relationships. Naturalising these relations as a timeless phenomenon succeeds only in fixing particular people to their 'proper' place, producing what Appadurai describes as "a very literal spatial incarceration of the native."[236] Indeed, as Gupta and Ferguson note, associations between people and place, while often presented as "solid, commonsensical and agreed-upon" are often "contested, uncertain, and in flux."[237] As such, human-land relations should not be seen as a static or timeless entity. It is thus important to contextualise expressions of homeland within particular moments of political, economic, social, and cultural change.

In order to address these existing points of neglect in homeland theory, my theoretical framework focuses on two key points. Firstly, to understand how and why homeland becomes politicised and deployed to achieve different goals, it is crucial to contextualise homeland within a context of power. As noted above, homeland is generally a peripheral part of a larger state. It must then be considered part of a broader set of power relations, which affect how and why homeland is constructed and represented. Secondly, homeland must be considered beyond its constitutive elements. It must also be understood as something that is politicized, functional and performative. This means taking account of the ways in which homeland is brought into being through practice, i.e.

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[236] Arjun Appadarui, "Putting Hierarchy in its Place," *Cultural Anthropology* 3, no 1. (1988): 37–8.
[237] Gupta Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," 12.

how it is mobilised in different ways at particular moments in time to achieve certain aims. While the definition of homeland and the five core ingredients of which it is made up are both relevant and fitting for thinking about human-land relations in contemporary Tibet, I propose a theoretical approach that explains the ways in which homeland is deeply entangled with broader questions of power, how it is represented, and how it is operationalised to achieve particular goals.

To examine homeland in this way, it is important to first provide a theoretical understanding of power in the context of contemporary Sino-Tibetan relations. By defining the context of power within which homeland operates, I can then begin to theorise homeland as a form of practice.

### 2.3 Modernity, Discourse and Power

While the previous section focused on taking account of the relationship between homeland and power, this section turns its attention to understanding the context within which this relationship unfolds. In this thesis, I focus on representations of Tibetan modernity as a site of power. In order to examine how this has been approached in previous studies, I will begin by considering how modernity is understood, and why power and representation are of central importance. I will also examine how these questions have been explored in the context of China and Tibet, and what this means for how we can understand homeland as a discursive practice.

Modernity can broadly be understood as a set of responses to moments of transition and social change. It is "a way of thinking about the past, present, and future that is crucial for individual identity and state building." [238] Closely linked to the European Enlightenment project, modernity was understood as standing for the triumph of Reason, Progress, and Truth. As the pursuit of objective science and

[238] Vincent Houben and Mona Schrempf, *Figurations of Modernity: Global and Local Representations in Comparative Perspective, (New York: Campus Verlag,* 2008), 12.

metanarratives of morality and rationality, modernity has long been understood as a positivistic and technological stance towards the world that sought a clean break with the 'irrationalities' of religion and superstitions of 'tradition'.[239] However, the notion of modernity as a singular and homogenous program of social change based on Western ideals has been increasingly questioned in favour of a more pluralistic, less Eurocentric approach to understanding how socio-cultural change continuously unfolds across time and place.[240]

Many scholars have focused on modernity as a deeply power-laden process. For Foucault, the modern era was defined by practices of discipline and regulatory controls through biopower, or the set of mechanisms through which "the human body became an object of political strategy, or of a general strategy of power."[241] Chakrabarty also emphasises the "semiotics of domination and subordination" that often defined modernity projects.[242] He calls attention to the preoccupation of modernity with rational/non-rational, secular/religious, and capitalist/feudal dichotomies, and the view of history as "the story of a perpetual struggle between the forces of reason and humanism on one side, and those of emotion and faith on the other."[243] He shows the ways in which this narrative of modernity as a clear-cut transition from the 'traditional' to the 'modern' have been variously used to legitimise violence. Colonial modernity, he notes, has been a story of the hyper-

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[239] Lisa Rofel, "Rethinking Modernity: Space and Factory Discipline in China," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 94.
[240] Shmuel Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, no.1 (2000): 1-29; Dilip P. Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities," in *Alternative Modernities,* ed. Dilip P. Gaonkar (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 1-16; Carol Gluck, "The End of Elsewhere: Writing Modernity Now," *American Historical Review* 116, no.3 (2011): 676-687.
[241] Michel Foucault, *Security*, *Territory*, *Population*. *Lectures at the College De France*, *1977 – 78* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1.
[242] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 10.
[243] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 24.

rational coloniser mobilising reason and 'the Modern' as justification for founding and maintaining state violence over the colonised.[244] Gilroy, writing on transnational culture across the Black diaspora, also focuses on the "systematic and pervasive relations of domination" that characterise modernity.[245] As Rofel argues, the pursuit of 'the Modern' has regularly been used to legitimise a "forced cross-cultural translation of various projects of science and management," a 'civilizing' project carried out under the banner of progress.[246] For these scholars the invocation of 'modernity' must be recognized as a power-laden concept put to service by the state (or other dominant bodies) to justify various projects of violence and control.

Modernity as a form of power can be examined through its related discourses. Discourse can be understood as the way in which different issues are represented and communicated through written, visual, aural and other kinds of texts. Bringing together language and practice, discourse refers to the "regulated ways of speaking about a subject through which objects and practices acquire meanings."[247] From a Foucauldian perspective, discourse concerns the "ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, [to form] subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them."[248] Similarly for Hall, discourse is "about the production of knowledge through language" in such a way that it shapes and influences what we do.[249] In this way, discourse constructs particular objects of

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[244] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Radical Histories and Question of Enlightenment Rationalism: Some Recent Critiques of "Subaltern Studies"," *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no. 14 (1995): 751-759.
[245] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 38.
[246] Lisa Rofel, *Other Modernities. Gendered Yearnings in China after Socialism* (California: University of California, 1999), xii.
[247] Chris Barker, *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies* (London: SAGE, 2004), 54.
[248] Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 105.
[249] Hall, "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power," 291.

knowledge, practices, social identities and relationships, but also bolsters and sustains or even transforms different kinds of social practices. To examine modernity as a set of discourses, then, is to examine the various "signs and images" which construct, sustain, and regulate how modernity is understood and enacted.[250] Discursive representations of modernity thus generate and reify desires, knowledge and ideals about how the world works or ought to work in order to promote particular kinds of social order.

Discourses of modernity are informed and shaped by various political, economic, social, and cultural powers. To examine this process, I engage Houben and Schrempf's work on modernity. They describe modernity as "both a representation of, and a strategy for, social order."[251] Closely connected to questions of power, discourse and norm-setting, modernity then enables "some kinds of knowledge to exist while excluding others ways of seeing."[252] Discursive representations of modernity establish a "regime of truth", or a "system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements" that produces and sustains power.[253] In this sense, they are inherently ideological, shaping and promoting "frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand and 'make sense' of some aspect of social existence."[254] These discursive representations of modernity play a significant role in producing and maintaining consent for dominant groups, enabling particular kinds of policy, governance and interventions. They promote ways of imagining the world that endorse values and ideals that align with and consolidate existing forms of power and authority.

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[250] Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall ed. (Milton Keynes: Sage, 1997), 15.
[251] Vincent Houben and Mona Schrempf, *Figurations of Modernity*, 15.
[252] Barker, *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies,* 177.
[253] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 133
[254] Hall, "The Work of Representation," 18.

In China, the ways in which modernity is imagined today are variously shaped by ideas that begun in the Republican era. In the early twentieth century, particularly following the May Fourth Movement in 1919, discussions about Chinese modernity among political and intellectual elites were informed by competing ideas of radicalism, conservatism, liberalism, social democracy and later Marxism.[255] Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the search for a 'socialist modernity' has been an ongoing project. The Mao era was characterised by the pursuit of an "alternative modernity through revolution," striving to build a new kind of nation that would be defined by neither Western capitalism nor Soviet style socialism.[256] Beginning in the reform era, modernity was exemplified by slogans of working towards a "moderately prosperous society" (*xiaokang shehui* 小康社会) or "harmonious society" (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会). As Anagnost has argued, modernity in post-Mao China is often depicted in linear terms, where the party-state leads "the nation in a conscious progression" towards an objective chronicle.[257] Since 2012, President Xi Jinping's 'Chinese dream' (*Zhongguo meng* 中国梦) has broadly become, as Zheng has noted, the ""mission statement and "political manifesto" for the Party and the country's future."[258] Often described as a broad desire for the "rejuvenation" (*fuxing* 复兴) of the nation, the Chinese state's modernity project today is based on building "a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic,

[255] Edmund S.K. Fung, *Intellectual Foundations of Chinese Modernity: Cultural and Political Thought in the Republican Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[256] Kang Liu, "Maoism: Revolutionary Globalism for the Third World Revisited," *Comparative Literature Studies* 52, no. 1 (2015): 12.
[257] Ann S. Anagnost, "The Politics of Ritual Displacement," in *Asian Visions of Authority and the Modern States of East and Southeast Asia*, ed., Charles F. Keyes, Laurel Kendall and Helen Hardarce (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 230.
[258] Zheng Wang, "The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 19, no.1 (2013): 1.

culturally advanced, harmonious and beautiful."[259] It thus brings together, as Callaghan argues, ideas of political stability, national identity, patriotism and realizing 'the good life' through wealth.[260] Liu contends that the ideal citizen in the Chinese Dream era must practice neoliberal norms of governance that centre on autonomy, self-enterprise and free-choice, but also lingering socialist rationalities that stress loyalty to the authoritarian state, collectivism, and 'hard and plain' living.[261] These discourses of modernity all promote particular norms, values and ideologies that seek to consolidate state power through nation-building, economic growth, and the cultivation of an enterprising and loyal citizenry.

Like other ethnic minority groups in China, representations of Tibet and Tibetans have played a very central role in the state's modernity project. As Gladney has argued, these politics of representation are so often constructed in binary minority/majority terms, and can teach us much about the construction of the majority Han identity.[262] Indeed, Schein's term "internal orientalism" describes the ways in which ethnic minorities and their cultures are portrayed as exotic, primitive objects for the fascination, consumption and identity-making of the civilized and cosmopolitan Han Chinese.[263] Blum has noted that these representations produce and uphold systems of categorization of ethnic groups that are constructed along "a clear-cut hierarchy of values [wherein] anything differing from the pinnacle must be regarded as

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[259] Infographic: Highlights of Xi's Report to 19th CPC National Congress." *Xinhua*, October 18, 2017, accessed June 2, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/18/c_136689568.htm

[260] William A. Callaghan, "Dreaming as a Critical Discourse of National Belonging: China Dream, American Dream and World Dream," *Nations and Nationalism* 23, no.2 (2017): 248-270.

[261] Fengshu Liu, *Urban Youth in China: Modernity, the Internet and the Self* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 29.

[262] Dru C. Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities," 93.

[263] Louise Schein, "Gender and Internal Orientalism in China," 70.

inferior."[264] What follows from this hierarchical system is a civilizing project, which rests upon "the assumption of cultural superiority by the politically and economically powerful centre and the use of that superiority, and the supposed benefits it can confer on the peripheral peoples, as an aspect of hegemonic rule."[265] As such, unless guided towards it by their benevolent elder 'brother',[266] ethnic minorities are represented as outside of modernity, trapped in "the imaginary waiting room of history."[267]

Han Chinese themselves, as will become increasingly apparent in my empirical chapters, are rarely explicitly described in media texts. They do not need to be. While internally diverse and situationally defined,[268] 'Hanness' operates as the default norm of Chinese society.[269] In many ways, it parallels practices of whiteness in Western countries, remaining largely invisible and unmarked, and operating as "the absent centre against which others appear only as deviants, or points of deviation."[270] Unless otherwise noted, actors and institutions are assumed to be Han or Han-dominated. The unmarked Han are constructed as the modern and advanced ethnic group in opposition to the always already backward 'ethnic Other'. These representations sustain a perception of the Han

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[264] Susan D. Blum, *Portraits of "Primitives": Ordering Human Kinds in the Chinese Nation* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 73.
[265] Harrell, *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, 36.
[266] Ibid., 14
[267] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe,* 7.
[268] Agnieszka Joniak-Luthi, *The Han: China's Diverse Majority* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015).
[269] Thomas S. Mullaney, "Critical Han Studies: Introduction and Prolegomenon," in *Critical Han Studies: The History, Representation, and Identity of China's Majority*, ed. Thomas S. Mullaney, James Leibold, Stephan Gros, and Eric Vanden Bussche (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 17.
[270] Sara Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness," *Feminist Theory* 8 (2007): 157.

Chinese as the national vanguard in contemporary China's push towards the elusive ideal of modernity.[271]

Tibet is no exception to these representational practices of domestic Othering. It is regularly portrayed as a site of eternal happiness, spiritual enlightenment and mysteriousness, full of primitive, traditional and non-materialistic people who do little else than dance, sing and pray. Defined by cultural authenticity, timelessness and a disinterest in the material world, Tibet is represented as a Shangrila detached from the socio-historical conditions of modernity.[272] By characterising Tibetans as effectively outside of modernity, these representations serve to justify Han intervention in order to bring about social and economic development.

These representational practices are important for understanding how and why certain kinds of knowledge are produced about Tibet, and how this then enables particular kinds of policies to be designed and implemented. These practices produce and sustain "disciplining" effects that govern what can be said, thought, and done across different social fields.[273] In this way, representations regulate "ways of speaking about a subject through which objects and practices acquire meanings."[274] It is for this reason that we must attend to the specific kinds of representational practices that frame Tibetan modernity in the era of the GWDC. The GWDC is not only a material project; it is also an ideological project. Therefore, building on Yeh's work on how Chinese development projects in the TAR work to consolidate state space and power, this study seeks to examine the ways in which Tibetan modernity is discursively

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[271] Kevin Carrico, *The Great Han: Race, Nationalism, and Tradition in China Today* (California: University of California, 2017), 56.
[272] Hong Zhu and Junxi Qian, "Drifting" in Lhasa: Cultural Encounter, Contested Modernity, and the Negotiation of Tibetanness," 150.
[273] Allan Luke, "Theory and Practice in Critical Discourse Analysis," in *International Encyclopedia of the Sociology of Education,* ed. L. J. Saha (New York: Elsevier, 1997): 52.
[274] Chris Barker, *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies*, 54.

framed and communicated through state media to the majority Han, in order to generate support and consolidate state authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty over Tibet.

Discursive representations of Tibetan modernity can be considered part of a broader system of cultural governance. As Shapiro explains, cultural governance describes the deployment of a set of representational strategies by the state across diverse cultural fields of society in order to manage "the dispositions and meanings of citizen bodies."[275] As a form of social management, this system of representation is chiefly focused on producing and circulating discourses that bolster claims to state sovereignty and restrict those that challenge it in order to make "territorial and national/cultural boundaries coextensive."[276] This involves producing "cues for political subjects to emotionally invest in a specific vision" of nation and identity.[277] Cultural governance thus describes the system of representational practices that inform and guide how Tibetan modernity is framed and communicated through state media texts in order to consolidate state authority, legitimacy and sovereignty.

In order to understand how discursive representations of modernity and cultural governance are enacted, it is necessary to theorise the specific context of power within which they operate. In this case of Sino-Tibetan relations, where a highly centralised form of state power dominates, this requires a superstructural theory of power. For this, I engage Gramsci's concept of hegemony. As a form of ideological work, 'hegemony' denotes a set of power relations between state and civil society that relies on

[275] Michael J. Shapiro, *Methods and Nations—Cultural Governance and the Indigenous Subject* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 31.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Florian Schneider and Yih-Jye Hwang, "The Sichuan Earthquake and the Heavenly Mandate: Legitimizing Chinese Rule Through Disaster Discourse," *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no.88 (2014): 654.

consent and collaboration rather than pure coercion or force.[278] It is, as Williams wrote,

> an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional manifestation, informing with its spirit, all taste, morality, custom, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations.[279]

Hegemony is a subtle practice of power that works through, rather than over, society. It differs from domination, which relies on force alone to achieve control. As Schein writes, hegemony represents a process of power wherein "dominant interests permeate all classes without appearing to be imposed."[280] It becomes a way in which a dominant group, whether consciously or not, "sets the limits – mental and structural – within which subordinate classes 'live' and make sense of their subordination in such a way as to sustain the dominance of those ruling over them."[281] In this way, hegemony explains state power beyond an exclusive focus on force and domination, and explains the ways in which consent of the ruled is acquired, even when it may result in oppression.

In order to generate, normalise and maintain particular ways of understanding the world, the dominant group must demonstrate its claim to "intellectual and moral leadership," but also find an effective way of promoting its ideological claims.[282] This, as Zhang argues, requires "the

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[278] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971).
[279] Gwyn A. Williams, "The Concept of 'Egemonia' in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci: Some Notes on Interpretation," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 21, no. 4 (1960): 587.
[280] Louise Schein, "Gender and Internal Orientalism in China," 13.
[281] Stuart Hall, "Culture, Media, and the "Ideological Effect,"" in *Mass Communication and Society* ed. Michael Gurevitch, James Curran and Janet Woollacott (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), 333.
[282] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks,* 57.

arts of persuasion, a continuous labour of creative ideological intervention." [283] The dominant group must present coherent and convincing ideas in order "to embed the ruling group's beliefs in mass consciousness."[284] As such, hegemony works by conveying "notions of influence, patronage, or leadership" in order to achieve mass consent, support, and collaboration.[285]

It is important to consider the mechanisms through which the state enacts a hegemonic system of cultural governance. In order to understand how these representational practices are produced and circulated, the next section will focus on the role of media, particularly online state media. Only by doing so can we begin to understand the context of power within which homeland is embedded and enacted as a discursive practice of resistance.

### 2.4 Media

Media is pivotal to understanding how dominant discourses are produced. As a system of production, regulation, circulation, and operation of statements and images, media promotes and sustains particular ways of seeing and behaving in the world.[286] It produces and disseminates various forms of social, cultural, political and economic information that shape and influence individuals, culture, social structures, and political policy.[287] In doing so, media represents a powerful site of representation, guiding and framing people's actions and

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[283] Xiaoling Zhang, *The Transformation of Political Communication in China: from Propaganda to Hegemony (Singapore:* World Scientific Publishing Co Pte Ltd, 2011), 19.
[284] Xiaobo Su, "Revolution and Reform: the Role of Ideology and Hegemony in Chinese Politics," *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no.69 (2011): 310.
[285] Daniel Kendie, "How Useful is Gramsci's Theory of Hegemony and Domination to the Study of African States?" *African Social Science Review* 3, no.3 (2006): 90.
[286] Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding in the Television Discourse," *CCCS Stencilled Occasional Papers* 2 (1973), 386.
[287] Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995).

the way they see the world. Given this power to influence, media is one of the most crucial social institutions for ruling elites to "perpetuate their power, wealth, and status [by popularising] their own philosophy, culture and morality."[288] In this way, media carries both a pedagogical and formative function, guiding the masses towards certain forms of ideas and practices. Through constant and attractive casting into the public area, these messages play a key role in socialising people into particular viewpoints and aligning them with status quo ideals.[289] The convergence of media, power, and representation is thus central to the construction of our social environments and interactions in contemporary society. Media is thus an important site for examining discursive representations of modernity as an enactment of hegemony and cultural governance.

State media is a central part of China's political, social, and cultural communications infrastructure, and a site where the state's ideological work is framed and projected to inform public opinion and generate consent. As Shirk writes, alongside the internal security bureaucracies and the People's Liberation Army, media is one of the most important components of the "'control cartel,' the linchpin of Party power."[290] Zhang notes that the media plays a crucial role in how the state continues to dominate by means of political and ideological leadership and manage the socio-political changes taking place across China.[291] She argues that central to understanding the Chinese Party-state's political and ideological power in contemporary China is:

> the importance of the media as an essential component of its "governing capacity" (*zhizheng nengli*) in contemporary China, but also sophisticated strategies to manage the greatly transformed

[288] Carl Boggs, *Gramsci's Marxism* (London: Pluto, 1976), 39.
[289] James Lull, *Media, Communications and Culture: A Global Approach* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 34.
[290] Susan Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), 84.
[291] Zhang, *The Transformation of Political Communication in China: from Propaganda to Hegemony*, 4.

> media for consensus and persuasion, so as to retain its legitimacy as the sole ruling organisation.[292]

In this way, media forms an important site of "political public relations," and is harnessed by the state in order to manage meaning-making and cultural expressions "in ways favourable to the leadership's political agenda."[293] Media thus works to promote legitimacy, or an "acceptance for a political system and its policy outcomes among its subjects."[294] In doing so, it provides a core part of the state's public relations and public opinion management strategy.

The development of online media offers the state increased opportunity to reach the masses and influence public opinion. The Chinese state has become a savvy internet user,[295] making a concerted attempt to expand their presence into online media by launching official Weibo and Wechat accounts in order to engage the public there and cater to new consumption demands.[296] Many scholars have focused on censorship techniques[297] and, more recently, deliberate attempts to manipulate search results and use distracting information as a means of governing

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[292] Ibid., 7.
[293] Florian Schneider and Yih-Jye Hwang, "The Sichuan Earthquake and the Heavenly Mandate: Legitimizing Chinese Rule Through Disaster Discourse," 641-2.
[294] Cited in Schneider and Hwang, "The Sichuan Earthquake and the Heavenly Mandate: Legitimizing Chinese Rule Through Disaster Discourse," 637.
[295] Schlæger and Jiang, "Official Microblogging and Social Management by Local Governments in China," 189–213.
[296] Zhengjia Liu and Dan Berkowitz, "Love Sport, Even When It Breaks Your Heart Again": Ritualizing Consumerism in Sports on Weibo," *International Journal of Sport Communication* 6, no.3 (2013): 258-273.
[297] Lokman Tsui, "The Panopticon as the Antithesis of a Space of Freedom: Control and Regulation of the Internet in China," *China Information* 17, no.2 (2003): 65–82; Rebecca MacKinnon, "Flatter World and Thicker walls? Blogs, Censorship and Civic Discourse in China," *Public Choice* 134, no.1–2 (2008): 31–46; Shaojung Sharon Wang and Junhao Hong, "Discourse behind the Forbidden Realm: Internet Surveillance and its Implications on China's Blogosphere," *Telematics and Informatics* 27, no.1 (2010): 67–78.

online content.[298] However, another important part of the state's online media management strategy involves methods of "digital persuasion and propaganda" in order "to sway public opinion in favour of the party."[299] Indeed, "public opinion channelling" (*yulun yindao* 舆论引导) has become a crucial new mode in managing and guiding online discussion.[300] Less orientated towards "suppressing negative news coverage and more concerned with spinning news in a direction favourable to the leadership," "public opinion channelling" became a particularly prominent part of the state's media policy following the demonstrations across Tibet in March 2008.[301] Similarly, Yang and Tang note that state attempts to guide public opinion towards "identification with the regime" manifests in the state's appropriation of the popular social media catchphrase 'positive energy' (*zheng nengliang* 正能量), which refers to "attitudes or emotions that are aligned with the ideological or value systems of the CCP party-state."[302] Chinese state media is primarily concerned with promoting a sense of social stability and social harmony. It does so by attempting to generate a positive emotional response and projecting particular representations of Chinese modernity to its audiences.

Tibet poses a unique challenge to the Chinese state in terms of social stability, border security, international image, and nation-building because of its history of public calls for independence, the Tibetan government in exile, the international reputation of the Dalai Lama and the idealization of Shangri-la in the western popular imagination. Indeed, as Blum notes, "Tibet is loudly included in all treatments of China's ethnic

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[298] Margaret E. Roberts, *Censored Distraction and Diversion inside China's Great Firewall* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).
[299] Repnikova, "Media Openings and Political Transitions: Glasnost versus YulunJiandu," 147.
[300] David Bandurski, "How Officials Can Spin the Media," *China Media Project*, June 19, 2010, http://chinamediaproject.org/2010/06/19/how-officials-can-spin-the-media/
[301] Ibid
[302] Yang and Tang, "Positive Energy": Hegemonic Intervention and Online Media Discourse in China's Xi Jinping Era," 1-22.

others, lest there be any tendency to consider it a different nationality with its own country." [303] Similarly, Baranovitch has examined how representations of Tibet "have tended to assert control more aggressively than do the representations of other minorities and to be less flattering to the local population."[304] As such, it is important to examine how particular kinds of representations are produced and circulated in Chinese state media in order to aid and consolidate the state's attempts to naturalise Tibet's place within the PRC. Indeed, media represents one of the most important sites where the state has attempted to generate Han Chinese support for its policies in Tibet. [305] By censoring certain topics and producing particular kinds of knowledge about Tibet, state media contributes significantly to a broader project within China of designating the "collection of dreams, images and vocabularies available to anyone" who discursively engages with Tibet.[306] It is in this way that particular kinds of knowledge are generated about Tibet, regulating the ways through which it can be talked about, thought about, and acted on. In addition to material development as a tool for territorializing Tibet, state media representations of Tibetan modernity are another important site of sustaining, reproducing and legitimising Chinese rule in Tibet today.

Despite the power they hold to shape public discourse about Tibet, state media representations of Tibet and Tibetan modernity have received limited attention in the relevant literature. Writing in the 1990s, Kolas argued that Chinese state media promote favourable stories "as proof of the success of the Chinese government," thereby consolidating a discourse of state power, legitimacy and territorial integrity.[307] Focusing on the various strategies adopted by the state to manufacture images

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[303] Blum, *Portraits of 'Primitives',* 128.
[304] Nimrod Baranovitch, "Between Alterity and Identity: New Voices of Minority People in China," *Modern China* 27, no.3 (2001): 386.
[305] Yang, "China's Developmental Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Pitfalls."
[306] Edward Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered", *Cultural Critique Magazine,* no. 1 (1985), 73.
[307] Ashild Kolas, "Chinese Media Discourses on Tibet: the Language of Inequality," *Tibet Journal* XXII, no.3 (1998): 72.

and manipulate the public sphere, Barnett examines the role of emerging technologies in how modernity is "constructed and deployed within the political domain" across Tibet, arguing that new forms of media have played a role in changing "the discursive conditions of rule and of being ruled in Tibet."[308] Both Kolas and Barnett raise important questions about the ways in which media produces and promotes particular representations of Tibetan modernity for different purposes at particular moments in time.

Given the enormous developments that have taken place across China's mediascape since the 1990s in terms of increased internet access, the development of social media, and the newfound capacity to generate knowledge about Tibet to populations across the PRC, these representations of Tibet form an important part of the state's offensive strategy in promoting particular kinds of knowledge about Tibet to Han Chinese audiences in the GWDC era. Yet there is little in-depth attention to the content of state media coverage of Tibet or how this contributes to the maintenance of state power. This necessitates an examination of state media discourses of Tibetan modernity in order to understand how the state constructs and represents a particular kind of Tibetan modernity in order to garner and sustain mass consent for Chinese rule in contemporary Tibet.

This section has examined Chinese state media as a mechanism of power in producing and circulating particular kinds of knowledge about Tibetan modernity under the GWDC. It has also argued for greater academic attention to the ways in which state media mobilises particular kinds of ideas and knowledge about Tibet as a form of cultural

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[308] Robert Barnett, "Authenticity, Secrecy and Public Space: Chen Kuiyuan and Representations of the Panchen Lama Reincarnation Dispute of 1995," in *Tibetan Modernities: Notes from the Field on Cultural and Social Change*. *PIATS 2003: Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies,* ed. Robert Barnett and Ronald Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2003b). 353-407.

governance in order to achieve popular consent, support, and legitimacy for its rule and policies there. Focusing on media also allows me to contextualise and situate homeland within a specific network of power relations. This is crucial in order to understand how homeland is then deployed as a form of discursive practice. The next section will consider how resistance in such a power-laden context has been studied, and how scholars have engaged the question of human-land relations within practices of resistance to date.

### 2.5 Resistance, Identity and Social Media

This section provides an overview of some of the key ideas on resistance and identity, and social media as a platform for contesting dominant discourses. It then considers how resistance has been examined in the case of contemporary Tibet, and the place of human-land relations within this. Finally, it describes why counter-storytelling and strategic essentialism offer important theoretical approaches to understanding resistance in the Tibetan context.

Power and resistance are closely interconnected. Indeed, resistance itself presupposes the very existence of power. In this sense, resistance can be broadly understood as a response to power. Acknowledging the role of pressure and repression, Gramsci's theory of hegemony sees political power not as ideological domination, but as a dynamic, dialogic and contingent process wherein dissent and contestation are never fully nullified.[309] "Counter-tendencies" can appear, resisting and challenging the ideas and norms propagated by dominant powers.[310] These counter-hegemonic forces, exploiting moments of fragility, weakness and uncertainty, engage in practices of "disorganizing consent and organizing

[309] John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution. Volume 2: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
[310] Stuart Hall, "Master's Session." *International Communication Association*. Honolulu, 1995.

dissent."[311] As such, even within hegemonic contexts, resistance is an important dimension that must be considered.

There is much debate about what can and should be considered an act of resistance. For Leblanc,[312] and Hollander and Einwohner,[313] the question of consciousness and intent are crucial dimensions of resistance. Cresswell, however, argues that resistance does not "rest on the intentions of the actors but on the results – on the 'being noticed' of a particular action."[314] Williams takes a much broader approach to resistance and argues for understanding resistance as a spectrum running from covert to overt, micro to macro, and passive to active.[315] For him, resistance occurs to different degrees and in many different forms. This may include highly visible manifestations of resistance such as marches, rallies, street demonstrations, petitions, or even revolutions or wars. It may also refer to more subtle, everyday forms of opposition such as jokes, gossip, songs, folklore, linguistic tricks, satire, and other cultural forms that operate as an everyday critique of power. Such acts may put forward an alternative ideology, enacting what Gramsci called a "war of position", or the battle to win the hearts and minds of the masses and to replace the hegemonic ideology.[316] As such, resistance may not necessarily represent a frontal attack on the state, but instead a competition "over the consciousness of the masses."[317] For Scott, these

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[311] William K. Carroll and Robert S. Ratner, "Master Framing and Cross-Movement Networking in Contemporary Social Movements," *Sociological Quarterly* 37 (1996): 602.
[312] Lauraine Leblanc, *Pretty in Punk: Girls' Gender Resistance in a Boys' Subculture* (London: Rutgers University Press, *1999).*
[313] Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner, "Conceptualizing Resistance," *Sociological Forum* 19, no.4 (2004): 533-544.
[314] Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 23.
[315] Patrick Williams, "The Multidimensionality of Resistance in Youth-Subcultural Studies," *Resistance Studies Magazine* 2, no.1 (2009): 20-33.
[316] Anne Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 195.
[317] Yanqi Tong and Shaohua Lei, "War of Position and Microblogging in China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 22, no.80 (2013): 296.

less overt strategies of resistance are particularly important for marginalised or minoritised groups in power-laden contexts. He writes that "subordinate classes throughout most of history have rarely been afforded the luxury of open, organized, political activity," opting instead for more covert forms of resistance that avoid any direct confrontation with authority.[318] He refers to such tactics as infrapolitics, denoting "an unobtrusive realm of political struggle"[319] or "low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name."[320] In this sense, resistance can be broadly conceptualised as any practice that in any way disrupts the tyranny of an existing power/knowledge system of the dominant group.[321] Resistance may encompass any form of action that defies, challenges or simply questions structures of domination, or attempts to generate "alternative forms of power."[322]

Resistance is also closely related to questions of identity. While identity is a difficult concept to define, it can broadly be considered as a concern for the ways in which a sense of self or a collective emerges and is maintained through "social affinities and differences."[323] Identity can generally be understood as a non-essentialist, contradictory and constantly in-flux process of individual and group construction. It can be based on ideas, beliefs and aspirations across social categories such as class, race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality, (dis)ability, and

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[318] James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), xv-xvi.
[319] James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 183.
[320] Ibid., 194.
[321] Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Decolonial Epistemic Perspective and Pan-African Unity in the 21st Century," in *The African Union Ten Years After: Solving African Problems with Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance*, ed. Mammo Muchie, Phindile Lukhele-Olorunju, and Akpor Oghenerobor (Braamfontein: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2013).
[322] David Courpasson and Steven Vallas, "Resistance Studies: A Critical Introduction," in *The SAGE Handbook of Resistance,* ed. David Courpasson and Steven Vallas (London: Sage, 2016), 8.
[323] Anthony Elliott, "Editor's Introduction," in *Routledge Handbook of Identity Studies*, ed. Anthony Elliott (New York: Routledge, 2011), xiv.

so on.[324] Identity can also be based on a sense of nationalism or ethnonationalism. There are debates as to whether national identity is primordial, representing a natural and timeless entity,[325] or whether it is historically constructed through modern institutions such as education and media.[326] However, the binary and monolithic approach of both tend to obscure the ways in which identity can be an amalgamation of both cultural rituals, symbols, myths and beliefs, and political encounters, institutions and experiences. Indeed, as Lama Jabb notes in the case of contemporary Tibet, identity needs to be understood "both in its dynamic relation to other culturally distinct collectivities and in its perceived unique historical and cultural attributes and lived experiences."[327] In this sense, identity is dialogical, constantly engaging with and constructing itself in relation to or even in opposition to another culturally distinct collectivity.

Identity is often intrinsically political, revolving around a desire for social and political change. Particularly in the case of dominant and subordinated groups, identity can be understood as a competition over meaning and "a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it."[328] Moments of negotiation, struggle and resistance often provide a space for people to articulate "their discontent and agency, develop new identities, and propose alternative relations."[329] As hooks notes, "oppressed people

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[324] Margaret Wetherell, "The Field of Identity Studies," in *The SAGE Handbook of Identities*, ed. Margaret Wetherell and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (London: SAGE Publications, 2010), 3-4.
[325] Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[326] Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (London, Verso, 1998).
[327] Lama Jabb, *Oral and Literary Continuities in Modern Tibetan Literature*, 31.
[328] Paul Chilton and Christina Schaffner, "Introduction: Themes and Principles in the Analysis of Political Discourse," in *Politics as Text and Talk: Analytic Approaches to Political Discourse*, ed. Paul Chilton and Christina Schaffner (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2002), 5.
[329] Caroline Howarth, "Representations, Identity, and Resistance in Communication," in *The Social Psychology of Communication,* ed. Derek

resist by identifying themselves as subjects, by defining their reality, shaping their new identity, naming their history [and] telling their story."[330] As part of the contestation of power relations and a refusal to acquiesce to norms, values and expectations of the dominant group, identities are consolidated and new coalitions potentially established and deployed in the pursuit of recognition and rights. Resistance may also be constructed through "pre-existing and long-standing intra-group identity, based on shared social, cultural and religious practices."[331] Through these various practices of formation, expression and projection, identity forms a "politics of position" within the dialogue of power and resistance.[332] Identity can thus be mobilised to raise self-awareness and assert cultural difference in order to contest and resist existing power relations.

The issue of identity is very much at the heart of contemporary forms of Tibetan resistance. Topgyal argues that identity insecurity or a deep-seated fear for the survival of Tibetan culture under Chinese rule defines and fuels resistance in contemporary Tibet.[333] Similarly, in response to territorial conquest and "assault on the Tibetan self", Shakya has noted the ways in which Tibetans mobilise a "cultural politics of difference" as a form of resistance.[334] As such, a desire to protect and preserve Tibetan culture and identity against the constant and longstanding assail of

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Hook, Bradley Franks and Martin W. Bauer (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 168.

[330] bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), 43.

[331] Joanne Smith Finley, *The Art of Symbolic Resistance: Uyghur Identities and Uyghur–Han Relations in Contemporary Xinjiang* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 4.

[332] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), 226.

[333] Tsering Topgyal, *China and Tibet: The Perils of Insecurity*; "Identity Insecurity and the Tibetan Resistance against China," *Pacific Affairs* 86, no.3 (2013): 515– 538; "Insecurity Dilemma and the Tibetan Uprising in 2008," *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no. 69 (2011): 183–203.

[334] Tsering Shakya, "The Emergence of Modern Tibetan Literature*: gsar rtsom."* (PhD thesis, University of London, 2004), 63.

Chinese policies and practices is key to understanding Tibetan resistance today.

As noted in the previous chapter, Tibetan resistance to various aspects of life under Chinese rule and indeed even Chinese rule itself since the establishment of the PRC has received considerable attention in the relevant literature. Landmark moments of resistance such as the Battle of Chamdo, the Nyemo Revolt, and the 1959 Lhasa Uprising have all focused on Tibetan challenges to land reform and socialist transformation as well as the fight for independence from Chinese rule.[335] More recently, Barnett and Akiner's edited volume focuses more on instances and strategies of resistance in the reform era with reference to language and education policies, religious freedom, and again the national struggle.[336] Yeh analyses the large-scale protests across Tibet in 2006 that centred on the public burning of valuable pelts that had traditionally been worn as a sign of wealth, status and Tibetan identity. The move was seen as an act of allegiance to the Dalai Lama after he called on Tibetans to stop wearing clothing lined with endangered animal skins. Yeh notes that the protests demonstrated "religious and national loyalty, but also concerns about inequality" and commodification wrought by capitalist development under Chinese rule.[337] Also part of the pure Tibetan culture movement, Buffetrille examines the rise of the 'ten virtues' Buddhist morals movement and the vegetarian movement in Tibet as a form of

[335] Melvyn C. Goldstein, *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama* (California: University of California Press, 1997); Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon In The Land Of Snows* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Melvyn C. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 2: The Calm Before the Storm 1951–1955* (California: University of California Press, 2007).
[336] Robert Barnett and Akiner Shirin, eds, *Resistance and Reform in Tibet* (London: Hurst & Co., 1994).
[337] Emily Yeh, "Blazing Pelts and Burning Passions: Nationalism, Cultural Politics and Spectacular Decommodification in Tibet," *Journal of Asian Studies* 72, no. 2 (2013): 319.

"religiously-inspired resistance to Chinese assimilation policies." [338] Powers has examined "large-scale expressions of resistance to the assimilationist program of the PRC" through the 2008 demonstrations and the wave of self-immolations that began in Tibet in February 2009.[339] Barnett[340] and Hillman[341] have also examined some of the key sources of Tibetan grievances and reasons behind the 2008 protests, focusing again on the role of policy-making and implementation, stiffening security measures, and economic and political marginalisation.

Despite the difficulty of researching the topic, self-immolation as a form of protest has received a great deal of attention in the literature. *Cultural Anthropology* and *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* both produced special issues to consider the causes and explanations of self-immolation in Tibet.[342] Some have read self-immolation as protest against localised forms of oppression or specific policies such as the 'Patriotic Education' (*aiguozhuyi jiaoyu* 爱国主义教育) campaign in monasteries as well as broader issues of military and legal power of the state, and threat of cultural assimilation.[343] Tsering Topgyal has examined self-immolation as an act of resistance and counter-securitization against the Chinese

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[338] Katia Buffetrille, "A Controversy over Vegetarianism," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 31 (2015): 119.
[339] John Powers, *The Buddha Party: How the People's Republic of China Works to Define and Control Tibetan Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
[340] Barnett, "The Tibet Protests of Spring 2008."
[341] Hillman, "Interpreting the Post-2008 Wave of Protest and Conflict in Tibet."
[342] Carole McGranahan and Ralph Litzinger, eds, "Self-Immolation as Protest in Tibet." *Hot Spots*: *Cultural Anthropology*, April 9, 2012, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/93-self-immolation-as-protest-in-tibet; Katia Buffetrille and Françoise Robin, "Tibet is Burning — Self-Immolation: Ritual or Political Protest?" *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 25 (2012).
[343] Tsering Shakya, "Self Immolation, the Changing Language of Protest in Tibet," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 25 (2012): 19-40; Robert Barnett, "Political Self-Immolation in Tibet and Chinese Popular Culture," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 25 (2012): 41-64. Andrew Fischer, "The Geopolitics of Politico-Religious Protest in Eastern Tibet," *Hot Spots: Cultural Anthropology*, April 8, 2012, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/100-the-geopolitics-of-politico-religious-protest-in-eastern-tibet

state's securitization of the 2008 uprising as well as the decades-long situation of securitization more generally.[344]

Music, literature and other forms of popular culture are also important means of everyday, more covert forms of resistance in Tibet. Given the limited space for civil rights activism and open political debate in Tibet, popular culture is arguably the main site where Tibetans articulate concerns and dilemmas about social chance and modernisation across Tibet. As Lama Jabb argues, cultural forms such as imaginative writing, including songs and poetry have all become "a form of remembrance, resistance, and living" that counter Chinese colonial narratives of Tibetan history and society.[345] Robin has shown how Tibetan bloggers engage metaphors, similes and other literary devices "to express their angst" about instances of heavy army presence across Tibet in 2008 and self-immolation.[346] Tsering Shakya has written extensively on Tibetan literature and language itself as signifiers of resistance against Chinese rule.[347] Dicky Yangzom has noted the ways in which clothing choice has also become "a strategy of nonviolent resistance" as part of the Lhakar movement, which has been marked every Wednesday by Tibetans in Tibet (and abroad) through making an extra effort to speak Tibetan, buy from Tibetan-owned businesses, and wear traditional Tibetan clothes.[348] These examples illustrate 'low-profile' strategies of resistance in popular culture through which Tibetans discuss a wide range of issues and

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[344] Tsering Topgyal, "The Tibetan Self-Immolations as Counter-Securitization: Towards an Inter-Unit Theory of Securitization," Asian Security, 12, no.3 (2016): 166-187.

[345] Lama Jabb, "*Singing the Nation*: *Modern Tibetan Music and National Identity*," Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines 21 (2011): *23.*

[346] Robin, "Fire, Flames and Ashes. How Tibetan Poets Talk about Self-Immolations without Talking about Them," 123.

[347] Tsering Shakya, "The Emergence of Modern Tibetan Literature*:* gsar rtsom"; "Language, Literature and Representation in Tibet" in *Tales of Tibet: Sky Burials, Prayer Wheels, and Wind Horses*, ed. Herbert J. Batt (London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001); "The Waterfall and Fragrant Flowers: The Development of Tibetan Literature since 1950."

[348] Dicky Yangzom, "Clothing and Social Movements: Tibet and the Politics of Dress," *Social Movement Studies* 15, no.6 (2016): 622-633.

articulate dissent towards instances of Chinese rule, power and oppression.

Social media is another important site of Tibetan resistance, but has received little attention to date. Robin notes online spaces to be lively in literary activity and grassroots activism, and have become "a working tool with which to evaluate how a faction of young Tibetans endowed with cultural capital represent social and ethnic crisis and react to it."[349] Grant has drawn attention to the ways in which social media provide Tibetans an important platform for "changing the 'representational politics' of Tibetan ethnicity."[350] These mark notable examples of how Tibetans are engaging online spaces to discuss questions of social change and identity.

Chinese internet studies offer many important insights into how resistance works in Chinese cyberspace and offer a useful point of reference for thinking about Tibetan resistance online. For example, Yang argues that online spaces transformed the landscape of popular expression in China, enabling netizens to organize, protest, and influence public opinion in unprecedented ways,[351] while Tang and Bhattacharya have examined the ways in which online users have engaged satire as a form of symbolic power to resist political hegemony.[352] Though often dealing with an extra layer of censorship around criticisms of language policies in schools, experiences of ethnic discrimination, environmental degradation and resettlement of nomads, as well as any discussion of the Dalai Lama, Tibetans similarly find a way

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[349] Robin, "Fire, Flames and Ashes. How Tibetan Poets Talk about Self-Immolations without Talking about Them," 123.
[350] Andrew Grant, "Don't Discriminate Against Minority Nationalities': Practicing Tibetan Ethnicity on Social Media," *Asian Ethnicity* 28, no.3 (2016): 1-16.
[351] Guobin Yang, *The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online* (New York: Columbia Press, 2011).
[352] Lijun Tang and Syamantak Bhattacharya, "Power and Resistance: a Case Study of Satire on the Internet," *Sociological Research Online* 16, no.2 (2011): 1-9.

to have these discussions on Chinese online media. Indeed, online spaces provide Tibetans unprecedented opportunities to challenge the dominant imaginaries of Tibetan modernity as promoted in Chinese state media by articulating different narratives to Han audiences. As such, it is important to consider the specific, low-key and non-confrontational strategies of resistance that characterise Tibetan online activities to publicly resist state hegemony without risking open confrontation. Building on the above research on both resistance and online activities, this thesis will contribute to our understanding of Tibetan experiences by examining how Tibetans, largely urban, educated Sinophone Tibetans, are making use of both Mandarin and online media technologies to contest official discourses about Tibetan modernity and engage with the Han public to forge new understandings.

The entanglement of place, identity and resistance is also a significant theme in Tibetan resistance that has received some scholarly attention. Shakya notes that, invoking their deep rooted emotional connection for Tibet is a powerful way through which Tibetans mobilise and affirm national unity.[353] Warner for instance has examined how the lyrical and visual symbolism of music videos in contemporary Tibet call Tibetans to a collective civil disobedience.[354] He notes the centrality of the place of Tibet, as a homeland likened to a "warm, embracing mother."[355] Similarly, Lama Jabb has explored how Tibetan resistance to assimilationist policies of the Chinese state in modern Tibetan music and poetry regularly invokes an" idealized home."[356] He notes the ways in which popular songs represent an "embryonic public space within which Tibetans are expressing their common concerns and collective identity

[353] This is a reference to unpublished work by Tsering Shakya (see Anna Morcom, *Unity and Discord: Music and Politics in Contemporary Tibet* (London: Tibet Information Network, 2004), 149-150).
[354] Cameron David Warner, "Hope and Sorrow: Uncivil Religion, Tibetan Music Videos, and YouTube," *Ethnos* 78, no.4 (2013): 543-568.
[355] Ibid., 551.
[356] Lama Jabb, *Oral and Literary Continuities in Modern Tibetan Literature*, 48.

under difficult political circumstances."[357] Smyer Yu examines how trials and tribulations of modernity play out through representations of place in the writings of leading Tibetophone writer Shogdong.[358] Similarly, Morcom's work on *dunglen* (a popular genre of Tibetan mandolin music) demonstrates the ways in which this medium engages identity and landscape as a means of scrutinizing particular configurations of power in contemporary Tibet.[359] These examples draw attention to the overlap of resistance, identity and homeland across popular media platforms in contemporary Tibet.

To examine practices of resistance it is important to foreground the cultural struggles waged by minority groups as they work to variously represent themselves in hegemonic contexts. As minority discourse theory argues, this involves a recognition of marginal groups' often antagonistic relationship to dominant cultures, acknowledgement of the pathos of hegemony and its continued damage inflicted on marginal groups, as well as a commitment to challenging institutional forgetting of cultural practices.[360] However, while resistance is part and parcel of everyday Tibet, it should also be noted that Tibetans are not a homogenous population uniformly defined by their resistance to the Chinese state. The multiplicity and complexity of Tibetan communities cannot be simplified to one singular subject position. Moreover, Tibetans are of course not immune to Chinese state power. As any population living under intense practices of power through media, education and so on, Tibetans may also uncritically internalise, and reproduce official ideas about how the world is and ought to be. Some expressions of identity may be linked to the demands of "post socialist multiculturalism" in which

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[357] Lama Jabb, "*Singing* the *Nation*: *Modern Tibetan Music and National Identity*," 1.
[358] Smyer Yu, "Subaltern Placiality in Modern Tibet: Critical Discourses in the Works of Shogdong."
[359] Morcom, "Landscape, Urbanization, and Capitalist Modernity: Exploring the 'Great Transformation' of Tibet through its Songs."
[360] Abdul Jan Mohamed and David Lloyd, "Introduction: Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse," *Cultural Critique* 6 (1987): 5-12.

the state exploits fetishistic imaginaries of the 'ethnic Other' in the name of development, tourism, international image management, and a national search for the 'authentic'.[361] Indeed, Spivak famously noted that the consciousness of the subaltern is not their own, but that of their oppressor.[362] Furthermore, Morcom has advised caution in ascribing the label of resistance to any and all expressions as Tibetan identity. She notes that, given the state's selective celebration of those aspects of Tibetan identity that attract tourists, generate profit, and contribute to economic development, assessments of identity of resistance must be carefully grounded within a critical examination of the particular context.[363] As such, while recognising the often deep antagonisms that underscore minority-majority relationships and foregrounding the voices of minority groups, it is vital to appropriately contextualise these to ensure accurate analysis of moments of resistance and related practices of homeland.

In the case of Tibet, given the sensitivity and risks associated with Tibetan resistance to state hegemony and the power of state censorship, this can be difficult to study. While very public instances of resistance such as protests or even self-immolation represent some particularly notable examples of Tibetan resistance, more subtle and covert practices offer important insight into everyday strategies of resistance under state hegemony. Written in Mandarin Chinese and posted across public platforms aimed at reaching beyond Tibetan audiences, these counter discourses are visible and meant to be visible. At the same time, however, they may still manage to "avoid any direct, symbolic

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[361] Ralph Litzinger, "Theorizing Postsocialism: Reflections on the Politics of Marginality in Contemporary China," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no.1 (2002): 49.
[362] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1988), 282.
[363] Morcom, "The Political Potency of Tibetan Identity in Pop Music and Dunglen," 127.

confrontation with authority." [364] In this thesis, I focus on two such strategies of infrapolitical resistance in the context of Tibetan online counter-hegemonic practices: counter storytelling and strategic essentialism.

Counter storytelling concerns discourses 'from below' that contest official or popular discourses of marginalised peoples. As Solórzano and Yosso describe, it is "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society)."[365] Stemming from a perspective of Critical Race Theory, they argue that this method offers minoritised peoples a powerful tool for "exposing, analysing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege."[366] In doing so, counter storytelling challenges dominant discourses and strengthens "traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance."[367] As Smith notes, this act of "telling our stories from the past, reclaiming the past, giving testimony to the injustices of the past" all form part of the struggle for justice.[368] Counter-storytelling thus works to reveal the gaps and deficits in dominant discourses, and challenge accepted truths.[369] They are also cultural tools that allow subordinated persons, "to interpret events in opposition to the dominant narratives."[370]

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[364] James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, xv-xvi.
[365] Daniel G. Solórzano and Tara J. Yosso, "Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Story Telling as an Analytical Framework for Education," *Qualitative Inquiry* 8 no.1 (2002): 32.
[366] Ibid., 32.
[367] Ibid.
[368] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 34.
[369] Kevin Hylton, *'Race' and Sport: Critical Race Theory* (London: Routledge, 2009), 55.
[370] Margaret E. Montoya, "Celebrating Racialized Legal Narratives," in *Crossroads, Directions and A New Critical Race Theory,*" ed. Francisco Valdes, Jerome McCristal Culp and Angela P. Harris (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 245.

Montoya argues that counter storytelling acts as a form of discursive subversion and identity formation.[371] She describes the ways in which discursive subversion is enacted through stories told "from the perspective of those at the bottom of power relations" and how these then work to "displace conventional wisdom and disrupt official histories."[372] Identity formation relates to the ways in which cultural, social and political boundaries and distinctions are constructed and maintained in relation to asymmetrical apparatuses of representation and power relations.[373] In this sense, identity is constructed within practices of counter-storytelling. As an articulation or assertion of difference and a demand for recognition of such, identity formation can thus also function as a form of resistance to the hegemony of official discourse. Discursive subversion and identity formation thus form a core part of counter storytelling's potential to challenge and counter such discourses and their attempt to promote certain ways of understanding the world.

Counter-storytelling thus represents a form of counter-hegemonic practice that resists and challenges dominant discourses. As such, it aligns closely with Gramsci's 'war of position' as it attempts to challenge and even transform prevailing mainstream norms and values from below. Counter storytelling is a particularly useful strategy for Tibetans in Chinese online spaces as, despite its power in providing a challenge to the singular and hegemonic discourses of the state, it often takes the form of a less direct and more subtle form of resistance that evades both censorship and direct confrontation with the authorities.

Strategic essentialism offers a further instance of counter-hegemonic practice. Also operating as a form of discursive subversion and identity formation, strategic essentialism involves "a strategic use of positivist

[371] Ibid., 245
[372] Ibid., 244
[373] David N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 153.

essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest."[374] As a form of self-essentialisation within a context of oppression, it describes the process through which marginalised groups may provisionally accept and advantageously deploy essentialist foundations for identity categories as a "strategy for collective representation in order to pursue chosen political ends."[375] This involves a "simplification of group identity" to authentic, homogenous and stable collective subjectivity, reifying a cultural identity in order to assert difference from the majority to achieve "recognition and the redistribution of authority and resources."[376] In this way strategic essentialism can allow marginalised groups to pragmatically adapt and advance existing and prevailing mainstream discourses about themselves in order to articulate, assert, and project an identity as an attempt to safeguard cultural and political interests. For example, the African continent may be internally very political, economic, social and culturally diverse, but African musicians may claim an "African" identity, rather than a national identity, as a way to make their presence known on the world stage.[377] In this way, strategic essentialism holds transgressive potential in its ability to promote an oppositional identity politics and place differentiation in order to create "space for internal processes of unification, decolonisation and cultural reclamation" while also rupturing the uniformity of the nation-state.[378] As such, like counter-storytelling, strategic essentialism also provides opportunity for discursive subversion as well as identity formation.

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[374] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Subaltern Studies. Deconstructing Historiography," in *The Spivak Reader*, ed. Donna Landry & Gerald MacLean (London: Routledge 1985), 214.
[375] Raksha Pande, "Strategic Essentialism," in *International Encyclopedia of Geography: People, the Earth, Environment and Technology*, ed. Douglas Richardson, Noel Castree, Michael F. Goodchild, Audrey Kobayashi, Weidong Liu and Richard A. Marston (London: John Wiley and Sons, 2017), 6817.
[376] Te Kawehau Hoskins, "A Fine Risk: Ethics in Kaupapa Māori Politics," *New Zealand Journal of Education Studies* 47, no. 2 (2012): 85.
[377] J. Macgregor Wise, *Cultural Globalisation: A User's Guide* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 14.
[378] Hoskins, "A Fine Risk: Ethics in Kaupapa Māori Politics," 86.

Counter-storytelling and strategic essentialism form the primary strategies of resistance to state media representations of Tibetan modernity and are a key site where homeland is situated and operationalised. In the next section, I describe how to theorise homeland as a discursive practice within these moments of resistance.

### 2.6 Theoretical Framework

So far in this chapter, I have described the situational logics of Chinese state power in contemporary Tibet, and the ways in which these are enacted through representations of Tibetan modernity. I have also explained the potential for resistance in this context with particular reference to counter storytelling and strategic resistance. I will now describe my theoretical framework on how homeland becomes a discursive practice within this network of power relations.

To think about homeland as something that can be mobilised to effect change, I use Practice Theory. This is a theoretical approach that examines the dynamic relationship between structures and human action. For Bourdieu, practice refers to the ways in which people move through the world guided by their "capacity for invention and improvisation."[379] It marks the "constant struggle to construct a life out of the cultural resources one's social experience offers, in the face of formidable social constraints." [380] Schatzki refers to practice as an "organized, open-ended, spatial-temporal" nexus of human activities.[381] Ortner's work sees any form of human practice as embedded within a power-laden context defined by "asymmetry, inequality, domination and

[379] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 13.
[380] Mark A. Peterson, "'But it is My Habit to Read the *Times'*: Metculture and Practice in the Reading of Indian Newspapers," in *Theorising Media and Practice*, ed. Birgit Brauchler and John Postill (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 140.
[381] Theodore R. Schatzki, "Peripheral Vision: the Sites of Organizations," *Organization Studies* 26, no.3 (2005): 471.

the like."[382] Indeed, as Barnes writes, “talk of practices is talk of powers.”[383] In this sense, practice is a set of behavioural responses to a particular situation, a way of understanding how humans navigate structures of power.

Language is a site of power and practice. Indeed, as this thesis has discussed already, language and practice converge in discourse to produce certain forms of knowledge about the world. It may communicate meaning through texts, whether verbal, written or visual, in order to produce a set of effects within a context of power. In doing so, discourse forms “a mode of action.”[384] By producing and circulating particular ways of seeing and understanding the world, it represents a form of practice. This may be performative, which is to say, by constantly reinscribing its own constructedness, it produces a form of social action through reconfigurating reality.[385] This reality is enacted or practiced through language or texts. Texts may seek to safeguard existing power relations, or to challenge and resist them. In doing so, discourse represents a textual practice that enables different kinds of knowledge and modes of meaning-making, and generates limits to what can be said, thought, and enacted.

The question then is how we might bring together language, practice and homeland. Taking a discursive psychology approach, Di Masso et al. describe the ways in which human-environment relations are linguistically constructed. They call for further consideration of how and when place is brought into being through discourse, as well as the ways in which such an approach opens “up new ways of looking at the nature

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[382] Sherry Ortner, *High Religion: A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1989), 12.
[383] Barry Barnes, “Practice as Collective Action,” in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Theodore R. Schatzki, K. Knorr-Cetina and Eike von Savigny (New York: Routledge, 2001), 28.
[384] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 93.
[385] Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Consitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 520.

and functions of place attachment."[386] In this sense, emotional connections to land are constructed through everyday linguistic practices and may be deployed to produce, reproduce or even contest associated person-place relations.[387] This approach offers a way of appreciating attachment to place, while also encouraging us to think about how such attachments might then be operationalised to achieve particular goals.

Drawing from Di Masso et al.'s work on place and applying it to Nostrand and Estaville's criteria of homeland, I argue that homeland is a form of discursive practice. Situated within various ideological struggles as described above, I claim that homeland represents a form of action navigating a web of power relations through texts and producing a set of effects in order to pursue particular goals. Engaging each of its core ingredients of *sense of place, place, people, control of place,* and *time*, homeland is operationalised through discourse to generate knowledge and meaning. This theoretical framework will examine how homeland is deployed within Tibetan discourses of resistance as a cultural resource with which to resist the dominant imaginaries of Tibetan modernity promoted by the state. In doing so, it will demonstrate the ways in which homeland becomes a discursive practice in the Tibetan cultural struggle 'from below' to shape public ideas and impressions of Tibetan modernity among the Han public.

### 2.7 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the four core areas of research relating to this thesis: human-land relations; modernity, discourse and power; media; and resistance and identity. I argued that homeland offers a suitable approach for understanding human-land relations in contemporary Tibet because of its explicit focus on a people's strong sense of emotional attachment to a territory, but that greater engagement with questions of power is needed. Across the following two sections, I

[386] Di Masso et al., "Place Attachment as Discursive Practice*,"* 81.
[387] Ibid 82.

argued that modernity is a power-laden construct and that media representations offer one important site where these power relations are enacted. By shifting attention from the material dimensions of modernity to the hegemony of official media, this thesis seeks to examine the online politics of representation that help sustain and reproduce Chinese state power over Tibet. The next section then looked at studies of resistance, how resistance has been considered in the case of Tibet, and how and why questions of identity and homeland are relevant. The final section then sets out a new theoretical framework for understanding homeland as a form of discursive practice, or a form of action formed and enacted within a web of power relations in order to effect change.

# 3. Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological approach I take for this research. Seeking to examine the online politics of representation between Chinese state media and Tibetans surrounding Tibetan modernity, this thesis requires a qualitative approach rooted in describing and interpreting power relations in texts produced within a particular social and political context. Such an approach must be able to take account of how power is produced through texts, and how this is then challenged and even transformed through counter discourses.

I begin by describing why Critical Discourse Analysis provides the most effective methodological approach for my study and its compatibility with Chinese-language texts. I then move on to detailing my specific data collection and selection strategies. I also explain why Mandarin makes a necessary medium for this study, and describe some of the demographic specificities of the Tibetans who produce the texts that I analyse. Finally, I discuss researcher reflexivity and the impact of my identity and personal values on the analysis.

## 3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Like other forms of discourse analysis, CDA is interested in the social practices and ideological assumptions that inform verbal and written practices of language.[388] What makes CDA distinct is its particular emphasis on language as a practice of power. As Wodak notes, CDA is interested in "institutional, political, gender and media discourses (in the broadest sense) which testify to more or less overt relations of struggle and conflict."[389] Aiming to "make visible the interconnectedness of

[388] Paul Chilton, *Analysing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge*, 2004), 16.*

[389] Ruth Wodak, "What CDA is About? A Summary of its History, Important Concepts and its Development," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: SAGE, 2001), 2.

things"[390] and demystify systems of power and ideology, CDA examines "opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language."[391] It draws attention to the power and ideological effects of discursive practices and their capacity to "produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, different genders, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people."[392] In this sense, it focuses on "the ways in which language mediates ideology in a variety of social institutions."[393] Indeed, while social institutions may make claims to neutrality, objectivity and transparency in how they present information to the public, CDA challenges this by drawing attention to the ways in which power, struggle and conflict are enacted and reproduced in texts they produce. In doing so, CDA works to achieve its primary goal, which is to critique and change society.

CDA plays "an advocatory role for groups who suffer from social discrimination."[394] In line with my theoretical framework as articulated above, CDA thus recognises marginal groups' antagonistic relationship to dominant cultures and the continued damage inflicted on marginal groups by hegemonic rule. CDA research takes "an attitude of opposition and dissent against those who abuse text and talk in order to establish,

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[390] Ibid., 2.
[391] Ruth Wodak, "Critical Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis," in *Handbook of Pragmatics*, ed. Jef Verschueren, Jan Ola Ostman and Jan Blommaert (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1995), 204.
[392] Ruth Wodak and Norman Fairclough, "Critical Discourse Analysis," in *Discourse as Social Interaction,* ed. Teun A. van Dijk (London: SAGE, 1997), 258.
[393] Wodak, "What CDA is About? A Summary of its History, Important Concepts and its Development," 2.
[394] Michael Meyer, "Between Theory, Method, and Politics: Positioning of the Approaches to CDA," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: SAGE, 2001), 15.

confirm or legitimate their abuse of power."[395] Both scholarly and social responsibility are understood as crucial elements to CDA research, as is the relevance of the work conducted to benefiting the marginalised group in question. While positionality is generally little discussed in CDA, it is still nonetheless important that researchers be aware and vigilant against imposing or projecting personal biases onto texts. My own strategies for dealing with this issue will be discussed later in this chapter with respect to data collection and selection.

CDA should also consider the relationship between discourse intentionality and social consequence. Whether, for example, the use of passive sentences is a deliberate or unconscious act by the producer of a text can often be difficult to determine. Individuals are not always intentional agents, often responding "more of less subconsciously to 'events'".[396] While someone may not have intended their words to be interpreted as racist and/or sexist, they may nonetheless have the effect of reinforcing racist and/or sexist discourse. In such instances, van Dijk argues, intentionally is largely irrelevant and that what counts should be the consequences of such utterances.[397] For this study, we should be careful not to conflate the discourses at work in these texts with the original intentions of the journalist, writer, blogger etc.

Because of its focus on the relationship between language, power and ideology in texts, CDA is a very suitable approach for this study. CDA identifies the ways in which certain views and ideas are projected to influence public opinion, as well as how other elements are obscured. It attends to the ways in which power is enacted through text.[398] CDA's

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[395] Teun A. van Dijk, "Multidisciplinary CDA: a Plea for Diversity," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: SAGE, 2001), 96.
[396] Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 207.
[397] Teun A van Dijk, "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis," *Discourse and Society* 4, no.2 (1993): 275.
[398] Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*.

ability to analyse the interconnections between language and social practice will also provide me the tools to detect how representations of Tibetan modernity connect with broader state goals, such as territorial integrity, economic development, and national unity. Moreover, seeking to focus on homeland as a discursive practice, CDA gives me the methodological grounding to examine how homeland is situated and enacted by Tibetans in response to state media representations of Tibetan modernity. Aligning closely with the core components and purpose of my theoretical framework, CDA thus provides a particularly fitting methodological approach for this thesis.

### 3.2.1 Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach

There are a number of different approaches to CDA. For example, van Dijk's Sociocognitive Discourse Analysis focuses on interaction between cognition, discourse and society to understand prejudice and power abuse.[399] Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach emphasises bringing together textual and contextual analysis with reference to historical knowledge to examine systems of power.[400] These examples demonstrate the ways in which these approaches to CDA are orientated towards examining different relationships between language and power.

For the purposes of my study, I use Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA). DRA is concerned with questions of social conflict and how this plays out discursively. Using close textual analysis to reveal and critique ideological workings in texts, DRA "tries to detect its linguistic manifestations in discourses, in specific elements of dominance, difference and resistance."[401] In doing so, it examines the workings of

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[399] Teun A. van Dijk, "Critical Discourse Analysis: A Sociocognitive Approach," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: SAGE, 2001), 62-87.
[400] Ruth Wodak, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: Sage, 2001), 63-95.
[401] Meyer, "Between Theory, Method, and Politics," 27.

"orders of discourse", which denotes the "particular social ordering of relationships between different ways of making meaning."[402]

DRA is particularly focused on the dialectical relationship between semiosis (meaning-making) and social processes (i.e. social structures, practices and events). It seeks to examine the interplay between semiosis and social processes as it occurs across different institutions and organizations, and how this manifests in discourse. For example, looking at the concepts of 'knowledge economy' and 'knowledge society', Fairclough uses CDA to explain how knowledges are generated and circulated as discourses, how they become operationalised in economies and societies, and then tested, challenged and resisted. This, he notes, is precisely the dialectics of discourse.[403] In this sense, DRA CDA is closely based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, which seeks to examine both the internal relations within language as a system network and the function that language serves.[404] This demonstrates the dynamic relationships between semiosis and social processes, and how they interact across particular times and places to pursue particular ends.

DRA is interested in how social actors "pursue their strategies semiotically in texts" and how these work to uphold or challenge the orders of discourse.[405] Within these orders of discourse, Fairclough also seeks to examine how certain discourses become recontextualised, or appropriated and incorporated into other discourses. This may even be considered a "colonisation" of one discourse by another.[406] DRA is thus

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[402] Norman Fairclough, "The Dialectics of Discourse," *Textus* 2, no. XIV (2001): 231-242.
[403] Norman Fairclough, *Language and* Power (London: Routledge, 2001), 3.
[404] Zhuanglin Hu, *A Course of Linguistics* (Peking: Peking University Press, 1988), 307.
[405] Norman Fairclough, "A Dialectical-Relational Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis in Social Research," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: SAGE, 2001), 165.
[406] Norman Fairclough, "Critical Discourse Analysis," in *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, ed. James Paul Gee and Michael Handford (London: Routledge, 2009), 12.

interested in the ways in which mechanisms of meaning-making shape and are shaped by broader questions of power, ideology, and resistance, and how these come to bear on social practices, identity and material conditions.

DRA CDA is the most suitable approach for this research as it aligns most closely with the core aims of this thesis. It attends to discourses of dominance and resistance, and the ways in which the two interact. This will allow me to analyse the relationship between state and Tibetan discourses, and how the two shape and are shaped by each other. By focusing on the dialectical qualities of discourses about Tibetan modernity, DRA CDA will help me identify how hegemony is produced and maintained as well as how it is challenged, disrupted and even resisted. Its explicit focus on the interaction and interplay between discourses of dominance and resistance align with the core components of my theoretical framework and also equip me with the methodological tools to address my core research questions.

In practice, DRA involves three key steps: description, interpretation and explanation.[407] Description begins by establishing the context, that is, where the data comes from, the political and social context within which it was produced, and what wider debates it engages. This also takes into consideration how texts are framed, i.e. the lay-out, accompanying imagery, and other issues that may influence how it is received.

Next, the data is prepared for analysis. I use Nvivo, a comprehensive qualitative data analysis software design to organise and analyse texts. I begin by uploading and reading through all texts, and then develop a preliminary set of codes for repeating themes. From this process, I then identify, revise and finalise my coding categories in accordance with findings and begin the actual coding practice on all texts. As well as

[407] Fairclough, “A Dialectical-Relational Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis in Social Research”; Norman Fairclough, “Critical and Descriptive Goals in Discourse Analysis,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 9 (1985): 739–763.

identifying key and overlapping strands of discourse, I also examine the overall structures of the text, such as the headings, introductions and conclusion, to consider how the general argument of the text is constructed. I then consider intertextuality in the texts, or the ways in which the texts reference and draw from other knowledge sources to make their arguments.

The next step is to analyse the linguistic features of the texts and interpret the kinds of discourses they produce. Following DRA CDA, I concentrate on agents, time and tense, modality, and syntax as the primary categories of linguistic features for analysis. Agent refers to the person, people or institution that carry out a specific action, and may be indexed through active verbs, pronouns and subject. Time and tense refer to when an action or event took place, and manifests through verbs, references to past, present and future, or even timelessness. Modality relates to expressions of mood, conviction or intention, and occurs through use of words such as “should”, “ought”, “must” or “modern” and “old-fashioned”. It may, for example, include “authoritative categorical assertions of truisms,” such as “the modern world is swept by change.”[408] Syntax refers to how sentences and phrases within sentences relate (or don’t) to each other. It includes how sentences and paragraphs are structured though words such as “and”, “even”, “but”, “however”, “nonetheless” and so on. All of these linguistic features work to establish a persuasive account of how a particular issue ought to be understood. In doing so, techniques of semiosis and social processes interact to produce discourse.

Finally, having described and interpreted the data, the final step is to explain it. This involves bringing all results together to examine what kinds of knowledge these discourses produce about the world and who this serves to benefit. It centres on examining how discourses interact within different socio-cultural practices across situational, institutional

[408] Fairclough, “Critical Discourse Analysis.”

and societal contexts, and how competing discourses position themselves in multiple ways, particularly in terms of their relations to power and resistance.

### 3.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and Chinese Texts

Although CDA developed out of the particular circumstances of British Cultural Studies in the 1970s, it has since then been taken up by scholars around the world as an approach to understanding relationships between discourse, and political, economic, social, and cultural developments in a wide array of different social domains. As this study analyses Mandarin-medium texts, it is important to consider the implications of using CDA in different socio-linguistic contexts.

CDA began to take hold in China in the 1990s after it was introduced by Chen Zhongzhu 陈中竺, a professor at Peking University. Since then, it has become a very popular and widely used methodological approach to understanding discourse, power and ideology in China.[409] At the same time, some are critical of "the cultural overgeneralization of the discipline of CDA" and the tendency to overlook socio-cultural peculiarities, particularly those of non-Western contexts.[410] Shi, an advocate of Chinese Discourse Studies (CNDS), argues that research must aim to be "locally grounded and globally minded, historically conscious and contemporarily helpful, and above all culturally inclusive and pluralistic."[411] Context is thus crucial in understanding how discourses work and significant attention must be given to the historical and immediate conditions of power relations within which discourse emerge. Shi also notes that attention must be given to Chinese-specific forms of communication, such as double words, proverbs, and couples.

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[409] Jun Chen and Lei Wang, "A Review of Critical Discourse Analysis Studies in China," *Linguistics and Literature Studies* 4, no. 6 (2016): 422.
[410] Xu Shi, *Chinese Discourse Studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, *2014),* 5-7.
[411] Ibid., 51.

It is also important to acknowledge that Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, on which CDA is based, is not only popular among Chinese linguists and Chinese discourse analysists more generally[412] but was in fact heavily influenced by Chinese linguistics to begin with. Systemic Functional Grammar was inherited from Professor Wang Li 王力 and Luo Changpei 罗常培, as Halliday himself has acknowledged.[413] Huang notes that Hallidayan linguistics' intrinsic alignment with the Chinese view of linguistics explains the popularity and utility of both CDA and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar in China today.[414] As such, while recognizing Shi's comments on the importance of attending to both context and the linguistic particularities of Chinese, I maintain that DRA CDA is both a suitable and compatible approach to studying Chinese-language texts.

### 3.3 Data Collection and Selection

This thesis focuses on discourses produced through online media. As I have argued, media plays a key role in socialising people into particular viewpoints and aligning them with status quo ideals and is thus an important site for examining the production, circulation, and contestation of hegemony. As such, to analyse the discursive representations of Tibetan modernity in state media and among Tibetans in Chinese online spaces, this thesis focuses on two core sources of data: Chinese state media and Tibetan online discussion.

#### 3.3.1 Chinese State Media

For state media, I primarily use texts from China's two major state media outlets: *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日报) and *Xinhua* 新华, but also supplement with other influential official online media outlets such as

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[412] Guowen Huang, "Hallidayan Linguistics in China," *World Englishes* 21, no. 2 (2002): 281-290.
[413] Michael Halliday, "Systemic Background," in *Systemic Perspectives on Discourse*, ed. James Benson and William S. Greaves (Norwood: Ablex Publications, 1985): 1-15.
[414] Huang, "Hallidayan Linguistics in China."

*China Daily* (*Zhongguo ribao wang* 中国日报网), *CCTV* (*Zhongguo zhongyang dianshi tai* 中国中央电视台) and *China News* (*Zhongguo xinwen wang* 中国新闻网).[415] As Zhang has noted, state media plays a crucial role in "communicating a country's effort to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas, culture, national goals and current policies."[416] Often described as the "mouthpiece" (*houshe* 喉舌) of the party, these news sources are also understood to reflect viewpoints and attitudes of the country's top leadership.[417] They are also used to "guide public opinion" and conduct positive propaganda for Party ideology and policy.[418] Pieces published in these national papers are also regularly republished in regional papers, such as *Tibet Daily* (*Xizang ribao* 西藏日报), *Qinghai Daily* (*Qinghai ribao* 青海日报), and *China Tibet News* (*Zhongguo Xizang wang* 中国西藏网). Moreover, independent commercial news portals such as Sina (*Xinlang* 新浪) and Tencent (*Tengxun* 腾讯) also very regularly reproduce content from these state-run news organizations, further expanding their potential audience base.[419] In this sense, focusing on state media provides significant insights into official standpoints and strategies to influence Chinese public opinion about contemporary Tibet.

The next step is to describe my strategy for data collection. I needed to determine the most prominent topics of state media news coverage

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[415] Non-official newspapers such as *Huanqiu shibao* 环球时报 (Global Times), an influential and nationalistic tabloid that is affiliated by the *People's Daily*, are not included for analysis as they do not necessarily represent official Party line.

[416] Xiaoling Zhang, "How Ready is China for a China-style World Order? China's State Media Discourse Under Construction," *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism* Studies 34, no.3 (2013): 80.

[417] Guoguang Wu, "Command Communication: The Politics of Editorial Formulation in the People's Daily," *The China Quarterly* no.137 (1994): 194–211.

[418] Dai, "Guiding Public Opinion," 78–81.

[419] Ashley Esarey and Xiao Qiang, "Digital Communication and Political Change in China," *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011): 299.

relating to Tibet in the era of the GWDC. This was achieved in two main ways. Firstly, since 2014 I have used Baidu News (*Baidu xinwen* 百度新闻)[420] at least twice weekly to find the latest state media stories about Tibet. This has allowed me to develop a good understanding of the general themes that shape official reportage on the topic of Tibetan modernity. Based on my observations, I would broadly categorise these as: large-scale construction projects, Tibetan entrepreneurship, and historical progress. This preliminary analysis also mirrors findings from the limited work that has been done to date in this area. Kolas, for example, identified 'construction' and 'consumption' as major themes in Chinese media imagery in Tibet during the 1990s,[421] while Nyima has discussed official discourses of development with reference to urbanisation and economic growth.[422] Powers notes the central position of history in contemporary rhetoric about Tibet,[423] while Kolas has similarly described the politicisation of Tibetan history in Chinese media discourse.[424] Existing literature thus broadly reflects my initial observations.

In order to triangulate these findings in a more systematic and rigorous manner, I also undertook a corpus analysis of thousands of state media news articles using China National Knowledge Infrastructure's (CNKI) "China Core Newspapers Full-text Database" (*Zhongguo zhongyao baozhi quanwen sh ju ku* 中国重要报纸全文数据库). Covering over 150 national titles and 450 provincial titles, CNKI's database is updated continuously and covers almost all of China's major official news

[420] Baidu is the leading search engine in China. Baidu News allows users to search for the latest news stories on any given topic.
[421] Kolas, "Chinese Media Discourses on Tibet: the Language of Inequality."
[422] Tashi Nyima, "Development Discourses on the Tibetan Plateau: Urbanization and Expropriation of Farmland in Dartsedo," *The Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies* 30, no. 1 (2011): 79-90.
[423] John Powers, *History as Propaganda*.
[424] Kolas, "Chinese Media Discourses on Tibet: the Language of Inequality," 69.

outlets.[425] It can be searched for a maximum of any 10 terms at one time in open or closed timeframes from the year 2000 onwards and through any combination of news outlets. This is especially useful for this study, since the GWDC also began in 2000. It can also perform a basic corpus analysis by generating key words based on the overall search results. In this way, it provides a broad, systematic, and efficient overview of core themes of any particular topic across official Chinese newspapers.

For my corpus analysis, I first began by searching terms such as "Tibetan" (*Zangzu* 藏族) and "Tibetan area" (*Zangqu* 藏区) in combination with "Great Western Development" *(xibu dakaifa* 西部大开发) and "modernity" (*xiandaixing* 现代性). These proved too specific and yielded only a few dozen results. Requiring a broader sets of terms that would still be specific enough to speak to the question of Tibetan modernity in the era of the GWDC, I then searched "Tibetan" (*Zangzu* 藏族) and "Tibetan area" (*Zangqu* 藏区), combining them with terms such as "development" (*fazhan* 发展) and "modern" (*xiandai* 现代). To ensure that results were of the necessary relevance, I also applied the following criteria through the CNKI search function:

1. Results should contain at least one of the search words in the article title and one in the body of the text to demonstrate level of relevancy.
2. Results should be in Mandarin, demonstrating that they are primarily orientated towards a Chinese readership.

[425] The CNKI newspaper database is almost entirely comprised of official and party papers, while evening papers and metro papers are very few. For more see: Daniela Stockmann, "Information Overload? Collecting, Managing, and Analyzing Chinese Media Content," in *Contemporary Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods, and Field Strategies*, ed. Allen Carlson, Mary E. Gallagher, Kenneth Lieberthal and Melanie Manion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 112.

3. Results should be limited to the timeframe of January 2000 to December 2017.

This was much more successful, returning a total of 17,698 articles. This established a corpus, or a "universe of possible texts."[426] I then used CNKI's own keyword-generating function to analyse the most prominent reoccurring themes. Among the largest keyword results were: Tibet's peaceful liberation (*Xizang heping jiefang* 西藏和平解放), breakthrough development (*kuayueshi fazhan* 跨越式发展), ethnic policy (*minzu diqu* 民族地区), the fatherland united (*zuguo tongyi* 祖国统一), Dalai Lama clique (*Dalai jituan* 达赖集团), economic development (*jingji fazhan* 经济发展), material culture heritage (*wuzhi wenhua yichan* 物质文化遗产), snowy plateau (*xueyu gaoyuan* 雪域高原), and the National Partner Assistance Programme (*duikou zhiyuan* 对口支援).[427] After organizing these keywords into coherent groups, I found that they were broadly in line with my own long-term observations as well as those of existing literature. However, I slightly modified my original topics of analysis to accommodate for these results. As such, I will focus on the three topics of material development, economic development and cultural commercialisation, and historical progress.

Alongside triangulating my initial observations, CNKI also alerted me to the particular distribution of state media articles over the past 18 years. For example, in 2000, CNKI only lists 39 pieces with the word 'Tibetan', which then grew to 366 in 2006 and 530 in 2010. The vast majority of search results were heavily concentrated in the period in and after 2008.

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[426] Stefan Titscher, Michael Meyer, Ruth Wodak, and Eva Vetter, *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis* (London: SAGE, 2000), 36.

[427] First developed in the 1950s, the 'National Partner Assistance Programme', or 'Pairing Aid Programme', is a development strategy where "economic leading provinces and cities help economically backward areas." It is generally used to facilitate economic development in minority-inhabited border areas, grand infrastructure construction projects, and disaster relief and recovery. See: Rongxing Guo, *China's Regional Development and Tibet* (New York: Springer, 2016), 21-22.

This reflects two major developments. Firstly, with the enormous popularisation of online media in China over the past decade, the significant jump in online state media news articles about Tibet demonstrates a conscious strategy on the part of the state to take advantage of the scope, scale, and speed of digital media in order "to promote a stronger online presence."[428] Secondly, the search results show the increasing prominence of Tibet in national news following the various major public demonstrations and dozens of self-immolations since 2008. This reflects a major public relations effort to consolidate official discourse about Tibet in order to strengthen and legitimise Chinese rule. As such, while this study will draw from texts produced since 2000, I will mainly focus on news pieces produced from 2008 onwards.

For each empirical chapter, I developed a set of search terms to generate a focused corpus to examine each specific topic, which is described in detail in each empirical chapter. I then established a corpus for each topic. In order to generate a sample for analysis, I used a random number generator to select 30 texts from my corpus. This also helps to minimize the problem of 'cherry-picking' texts based on personal biases. While DRA CDA provides little detail on sample size, in order to maximise consistency and rigour, I chose the figure of 30 as a representative population on the basis of Castro et al.'s recommendations for between 20 and 40 data units for "conducting in-depth qualitative analyses."[429] I noted a general consensus on this population sample size among other scholars doing qualitative research.[430] The results were then uploaded to Nvivo and coded for reoccurring discursive themes.

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[428] Colin Sparks, Haiyan Wang, Yu Huang, Yanhua Zhao, Nan Lu and Dan Wang, "The Impact of Digital Media on Newspapers: Comparing Responses in China and the United States," *Global Media and China* 1, no.3 (2016): 202.
[429] Felipe González Castro, Joshua G. Kellison, Stephen J. Boyd, and Albert Kopak, "A Methodology for Conducting Integrative Mixed Methods Research and Data Analyses," *Journal of Mixed-Methods Research* 4 (2010): 344.
[430] Michael Lewis-Beck, Alan E. Bryman, and Tim Futing Liao, eds, *The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods* (London: Sage, 2004);

The empirical data collected from online state media outlets is primarily in the form of written text. Chapter Six, however, is distinct in its incorporation of visual images for analysis. This variation is due to the fact that state media discourses of historical progress in Tibet makes extensive use of photography from the pre-'liberation' period. While it is not unusual to come across images on material transformation and economic development, their presence is not nearly as pervasive as it is for discourses of historical progress. As such, greater attention is given to the analysis of images here. This involves supplementing CDA with Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA), which is described in greater detail in Chapter Six.

### 3.3.2 Tibetan Texts

Having completed the first stage of data collection, I then began the process for establishing a corpus of Tibetan texts. Since 2014, I have spent considerable time identifying and observing Tibetan online activities across a number of different online platforms in order to establish which were the most active and most orientated towards communicating to non-Tibetan audiences. A number of Tibetan friends also gave me suggestions as to important social media accounts and online opinion leaders to follow. On this basis, this study will focus primarily on Tibetcul, one of the most popular and longest running Tibetan websites in China. Tibetcul is a Chinese-language Tibetan-run and Tibet-focused website that caters to a wide range of interests, including poetry, literature, current events and religious issues. It also offers a space to blog and a forum for discussion. According to its "About Us" section, Tibetcul.com is currently "one of the world's largest Chinese-language Tibetan culture websites" (*quan shijie fanwei nei zui da de Xizang wenhua de zhongwen menhu wangzhan zhiyi* 全世界范围内最大

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Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (London: Sage, 2002); Margarete Sandelowski, "Sample Size in Qualitative Research," *Research in Nursing and Health* 18 (1995): 179–183.

的西藏文化的中文门户网站之一).[431] The website was established in 2004 by two Tibetan brothers, Wangchuk Tseten (Wangxiu Caidan 旺秀才丹) and Tsewang Norbu (Caiwang Naoru 才旺瑙乳), and the head office is located in Lanzhou city, Gansu province. The site boasts over 65,000,000 visits to date, receives over 400,000 hits per month, and has over 120,000 registered users among which 30,000 are claimed to be active. Most of their members and visitors are from Tibetan areas across the PRC, while others log on from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and elsewhere. The site has proven very successful in terms of "finding a balance between encouraging Tibetan expression whilst toeing the official line."[432] While Tibetcul remains an important hub of online Tibetan activity, more and more Tibetans have turned to Weibo and Wechat in recent years. Indeed, Tibetcul itself has also started a Wechat account to reach new audiences. As such, I also supplement texts from Tibetcul with materials from leading Tibetan-run accounts on other popular social media platforms.

Tibetcul is particularly useful for this study because of its explicit intention to promote greater cultural exchange, dialogue and "enhance each nationality's understanding and comprehension of each other" (*zengjin ge minzu bici liaojie* 增进各民族彼此了解) as a way of "boosting harmony, goodwill and peace" (*cujin hexie, hemu, heping* 促进和谐、和睦、和平).[433] Wangchuk Tseten has noted Tibetcul's "most important mission" (*zui zhongyao de shiming* 最重要的使命) to be "advancing communication and exchange among nationalities" (*tuidong minzu jian*

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[431] "Guanyu women" 关于我们 [About Us]. Tibetcul, Last modified: June 9, 2016. http://www.tibetcul.com/about/

[432] "China, Tibet: The End of TibetCul.com?" *Global Voices*, March 19, 2011, https://globalvoices.org/2011/03/19/china-tibet-the-end-of-tibetcul-com/

[433] "Wangxiu Caidan: Cujin zanghan wenhua xinxi jiaoliu shi wo zui da de xinyuan" 旺秀才丹：促进藏汉文化信息交流是我最大的心愿 [Wangxiu Caidan: Advancing Tibetan-Han Cultural Exchange is My Greatest Wish]. *People's Daily*, November 4, 2016, accessed July 3, 2018, http://people.tibetcul.com/mrzf/201611/40645.html

*de goutong he jiaoliu* 推动民族间的沟通和交流). Indeed, this aim is echoed widely among Sinophone Tibetans in China. Dissident Tibetan thinker Woeser has also argued for the necessity of providing new perspectives in "understanding Tibet" (*renzhi Xizang* 认知西藏)."[434] In 2014, along with her (Han) husband Wang Lixiong, Woeser established *Minjian zang shi* 民间藏事), which they translate into English as "People on Tibet" and "Unofficial Affairs about Tibet". This website provides a space for "the conversations between Tibetans and Han Chinese at the level of civil society."[435] The same can be said of many major Tibetan Wechat accounts. Qumi 趣觅,[436] a popular public account on Wechat, describes itself as a place "to understand a different side of Tibet" (*liaojie zangdi de butong shijiao* 了解藏地的不同视角) while Snow Lion Culture Media (*Xueshi wenhua chuanmei* 雪狮文化传媒)[437] another leading Sinophone Tibetan platform, claims to "allow better understanding" (*geng qingxi de liaojie* 更清晰的了解) of Tibetan people, culture and areas. Indeed, as various texts described throughout this thesis will demonstrate, Tibetans, particularly Sinophone Tibetans, are making a deliberate effort to use Mandarin online as a way of reaching broader audiences in China to promote understanding and exchange about Tibet.

I searched through these online Tibetan spaces for discussions relating to the three core topics of material transformation, economic development and cultural commercialisation, and historical progress. Deciding on keywords that would allow me to identify relevant posts was

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[434] "Weise dai youren" 唯色致友人 [Woeser to Friends]. *Minjian zang shi* 民间藏事 [People on Tibet / Unofficial Affairs], Last modified: June 9, 2016. http://tibet.woeser.com/?page_id=1295

[435] Kwai-Cheung Lo, "The Struggle between Subaltern Nationalisms and the Nation-State in the Digital Age: China and its Ethnic Minorities," in Routledge Handbook of New Media in Asia, ed. Larissa Hjorth and Olivia Khoo (London: Routledge, 2016), 360.

[436] Qumi 趣觅, *Wechat,* Wechat ID: qumi-spring.

[437] Xueshi wenhua chuanmei 雪狮文化传媒 [Snow Lion Culture Media], *Wechat,* Wechat ID: xueshi1376

less straightforward than in the case of state media where the language used is considerably more regimented and standardised. Searching for combinations of terms such as ‘economy’, ‘development’, ‘culture’, ‘environment’, ‘modernization’, and ‘peaceful liberation’ nonetheless yielded a significant amount of relevant posts. To ensure that I was also including related texts on these topics that did not use these key words, I drew on my five years’ worth of experience of following online Tibetan discussions. This gave me a strong awareness of how certain terms are used to address these different topics as well as figures who regularly critically engage these issues in their posts. For example, in the case of material development, I knew that ‘pesticides’, ‘pollution’ and ‘cement’ are often used in discussions about the environmental impact of modernization. I had also learned that words such as ‘money’, ‘cheat’ and ‘the city’ were common in Tibetan writing on economic development and cultural commercialisation, and that the case of the Tibetan mastiff represented a point of major discussion about these issues. Similarly, I was aware that words such as ‘ancestors’ and ‘old photos’ were commonly used to contrast and compare Tibet before and after ‘liberation’, and knew that Luorong Zeren Lingka’s photo essays on the topic were extremely popular among Tibetans online.

Each core topic was searched through Tibetcul using a sub-set of related terms, which is described in greater detail in each empirical chapter. Tibetcul offers a search function that makes it easy to find texts containing keywords across its 14 years of content. Similarly, I used the search function on both Weibo and Wechat, as well as Baidu to locate other relevant discussion on popular platforms such as Tianya 天涯 and Sina Blog (*Xinlang boke* 新浪博客).

My selection criteria required that the text be relevant to the specific topic being analysed and that they represent an instance of resistance to state media discourses. This was determined on the basis of content, tone, and the kind of language used to discuss the topic. For example, in the

case of material transformation, I selected texts that focused on environmental deterioration and loss of culture under urbanisation, contrasting with state media's emphasis on the positives of mega-projects and state efforts in environmental protection. Similarly in the case of economic development and cultural commercialisation, I used texts that explored issues of cultural loss and identity anxieties, differing from the positive appraisals of cultural preservation and Tibetan agency, as promoted in state media. For discourses of resistance relating to state media stories of oppression in pre-'liberation' Tibet and the positive gains under the leadership of the CCP, I chose texts that emphasised the positive elements of pre-'liberation' Tibet or simply questions the way in which the state represented 'Old Tibet'. It should be noted that, due to pervasive censorship and the risks associated with challenging the state perspective on Tibet, some texts can be quite covert in terms their counter storytelling. To deal with this, I drew upon my familiarity with online Tibetan discourses, key figures and kinds of views they typically express in their work, familiar patterns of coded references, as well as broader work on Sinophone Tibetan and Tibetan literature. Bringing all of this together allowed me to be confident in selecting and analysing instances of resistance in Tibetan texts.

After a corpus was established, texts were then selected on the basis of a combination of their popularity metrics, such as views, likes, shares and comments. This helps identify texts that received the most attention and discussion, which boost their visibility and publicity, and promote them to a larger audience across the different social media platforms. Engaging comments was also useful in broadly determining how much support these texts attracted from other Tibetans and how important they considered such texts to be in countering representations to dominant discourses. Finally, as in the case of state media texts, I uploaded each set of texts to NVivo, read through each, and developed a broad set of codes for repeating themes. These were then analysed using DRA CDA.

It is important to consider how this particular approach to data selection shapes this study. There are important reasons why I use top-ranking topics in Chinese state media to lead the selection of online Tibetan texts, rather than using online Tibetan texts to lead the choice of Chinese state media texts. This thesis focuses on the ways in which Tibetans attempt to challenge and counter state media representations of Tibetan modernity. Because of this, I centre state media accounts as I am interested in how Tibetans respond to these. On the basis of my observations over the course of the past five years, it would make little sense to examine how state media counters Tibetan online discourses. Indeed, given the immense power imbalance between state media and Tibetan posts in terms of audience reach and discursive power, it is rare for state media to respond to Tibetan points of online discussion. In contrast, it is far more likely for Tibetans to respond to and attempt to counter state media texts about Tibet.[438] For this reason, in order to examine social conflict in the case of online representations of Tibetan modernity between state media and Tibetans, it makes greater sense to centre state media discourses and then analyse how Tibetans attempt to counter them.

It is also worth emphasising that Tibetan online activities are of course no less diverse and multifaceted as any other demographic group in contemporary China. Tibetans should also not be seen as a homogenous population uniformly defined by their resistance to the Chinese state. However, Tibetan resistance to various policies as well as the very nature of Chinese rule are part and parcel of contemporary Tibet, and an important element of online activities. As a study of social conflict, this thesis does not address questions of conformity, hybridity, or internalisation or reproduction of dominant official discourses by

[438] My observations over the last five years suggest that topics introduced by state media pieces often broadly define the parameters of topics about Tibet that can be discussed online, while those that receive less official attention appear to be viewed with more suspicion and prone to greater censorship, but further research is required to determine to what extent this is the case.

Tibetans, nor do I focus on intra-Tibetan debates concerning the polemics of Tibetan modernity.[439] The promotion and preservation of Tibetan language, bilingual education policy, and various aspects of Buddhist practice are all also very important topics of discussion among Tibetans in online spaces. This thesis, however, is not an examination of the full terrain of the Tibetan online discussions or even their discussions of Tibetan modernity. It focuses on one particular aspect of Tibetan online activities where Tibetans challenge state media representations of Tibetan modernity in order to promote new understandings to Han audiences.

### 3.4 User Identity and Demographics

There were a number of ways that I tried to ensure that the texts I identify as produced by Tibetans were indeed that. In the majority of cases, this was easily done. For example, Baimanazhen and Tsering Woeser are both very well-known writers, and maintain very active blogs and social media accounts online. Essays and poems published on Tibetcul also tend to come from relatively well-known figures, including authors, poets, singers, artists, film-makers, professors, social entrepreneurs and others with a public profile. Many Tibetan students and teachers at universities across Tibet and China also frequently post here. Most posts on Tibetcul also end with a short biography of the writer, which tends to include details of their ethnicity. In general, I have found Tibetcul to be a very close-knit online community where users are quite familiar with each other. The same can be said, to some degree, of the Sinophone Tibetan communities on Weibo and Wechat users. I also relied on users that I

[439] These issues has received attention elsewhere. See: Lauran R. Hartley, "Inventing Modernity" in *Amdo Tibetans in Transition: Society and Culture in the Post-Mao Era*, ed. Toni Huber (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 1-26; Lauran R. Hartley, "Contextually Speaking: Tibetan Literary Discourse and Social Change in the People's Republic of China (1980–2000)" (PhD thesis, Indiana University, 2003); Holly Gayley, "Controversy over Buddhist Ethical Reform: A Secular Critique of Clerical Authority in the Tibetan Blogosphere," *The Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies* 36, no.1 (2016): 22-43; Zenz, *"Tibetanness" Under Threat?*; Smyer Yu, "Subaltern Placiality in Modern Tibet: Critical Discourses in the Works of Shogdong."

have followed for the last number of years who tended to be well-known figures or commentators who have consistently posted on Tibet-related issues for years, rather than making one-off posts. Some even had verified status on their social media platforms, which further strengthens the likelihood that the producers are who they say they are.

In terms of demographics, most users provide some brief details on their Tibetcul profiles about their location, gender, age, education level, and occupation. For those who are well-known, this information can generally be verified through further searching online. The majority appear to be in the age range of 18-45 and have some third level education. From their profiles, they are largely based in cities such as Xining, Chengdu, Lhasa and Lanzhou, as well as a few who are based in urban centres across interior China such as Beijing and Shanghai. While men generally tended to dominate online discussion, I found that women were also well represented in Sinophone Tibetan discussions.

Focusing on the online activities of Sinophone Tibetans requires particular attention to the issues of geographic location and language abilities. For example, a common theme among Sinophone Tibetan writers is their experience of growing up on the grasslands, moving away to towns and cities, and their returns back to Tibet. Schiaffini has notes that this particular demographic often have limited experience of Tibetan life in the countryside because of schooling in metropolitan areas or boarding schools in interior China, leading to a "hybrid identity" and feelings of being neither completely Tibetan nor completely Han Chinese.[440] Living away from the grasslands can sometimes create an "ambiguity of allegiance," "sense of betrayal generated by this fracturing,"

[440] Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani, "The 'Condor' Flies over Tibet: Zhaxi Dawa and the Significance of Tibetan Magical Realism," in *Modern Tibetan Literature and Social Change,* ed. Lauran R. Hartley and Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 218.

and “a dislocated relationship of the self towards Tibet, the land of their dreams.”[441]

For some Sinophone Tibetans, the inability to write in Tibetan can be a source of anxiety and “troubled identity.”[442] Language itself is deeply embroiled in questions of power, resistance and identity under the increasing dominance of Mandarin Chinese as the language of education, employment opportunities and media. As Shakya writes, Tibetan language is an inseparable part of Tibetan identity, and “has the power to preserve and reinvent Tibet.”[443] Speaking and writing in Tibetan language has in this sense itself become an act of resistance against the “encroachment of Chinese language and culture.”[444] However, because of the uneven provision of Tibetan language education and other assimilationist policies that have undermined the practicality of the Tibetan language, Tibet has become a diglossic society, “where the ‘other’ language (Chinese) reigns as the official means of communication.” [445] Dhondup has written on the ways in which Sinophone Tibetan writers navigate the “pain, inferiority complexes and anxieties” [446] and even “ambiguity of allegiance” to Tibet [447] they experience as Tibetans writing and expressing themselves in Chinese

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[441] Yangdon Dhondup, “Caught between Margins: Culture, Identity and the Invention of a Literary Space in Tibet” (PhD thesis, University of London, 2004), 169

[442] Ibid.

[443] Tsering Shakya, “The Development of Modern Tibetan Literature in the People’s Republic of China in the 1980s,” in *Modern Tibetan Literature and Social Change,* ed. Lauran R. Hartley and Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 83.

[444] Jermay J. Reynolds, “Language Variation and Change in an Amdo Tibetan Village: Gender, Education and Resistance (PhD thesis, Georgetown University, 2012), 138.

[445] Lara Maconi, “One Nation, Two Discourses: Tibetan New Era Literature and the Language Debate,” in *Modern Tibetan Literature and Social Change,* ed. Lauran R. Hartley and Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 173.

[446] Yangdon Dhondup, “Caught between Margins: Culture, Identity and the Invention of a Literary Space in Tibet,” 221.

[447] Ibid., 33.

rather than Tibet. Indeed as Maconi notes, the 'Tibetanness' of Sinophone Tibetan writers is again often questioned.[448]

The issue of language also important because it often determines different kinds of Tibetan discourse. Hladíková notes that Tibetophone writing is "orientated inside the Tibetan community, whereas the Sinophone is orientated outwards, towards the Han Chinese majority."[449] Focusing on issues of self-expression and selfhood, Dhondup argues that writing in Mandarin Chinese also influences the subject matter, detail and style of their writing. She also notes the ways in which Sinophone Tibetan writers are uniquely placed "to interrogate or challenge the Chinese discourse on Tibet."[450] However, the ways in which Sinophone Tibetans make use of this access to a mainly Han Chinese audience as a way of challenging or even changing mainstream Chinese discourses is much less explored, as are the particular discourses they engage to do so. As such, this thesis will build on this existing work by focusing on the ways in which Sinophone Tibetan discourse attempts to challenge popular misconceptions about Tibet and guide public opinion. In doing so, it will bring new insights into the understudied demographic of young, urban Sinophone Tibetans living in various cities across China and Tibet, and the ways in which they engage online media.

### 3.5 Researcher Reflexivity

While random sampling helps to minimize personal bias to some extent, my role as researcher and my own analytical frame must also be interrogated. The literature on critical discourse analysis, however, rarely discusses reflexivity in an explicit way.[451] This is unfortunate since

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[448] Maconi, "One Nation, Two Discourses: Tibetan New Era Literature and the Language Debate," 192.
[449] Hladíková, *Self-Representation of Tibet in Chinese and Tibetan Fiction of the 1980s*, 49.
[450] Yangdon Dhondup, "Caught between Margins: Culture, Identity and the Invention of a Literary Space in Tibet," 158.
[451] Jan Zienkowski, "Reflexivity in the Transdisciplinary Field of Critical Discourse Studies," *Palgrave Communications* 3 (2017): 1-12.

discourse is not something that can be studied objectively through standardized methods. Instead, as Ruiz notes, it is the analyst "who reads the texts, selects the relevant elements and establishes the pertinent relations or significances."[452] CDA's commitment to critiquing power and lack of attention to researcher positionality can be counter-productive, and may have the adverse effect of encouraging complacency among researchers and deflecting attention away from the ways in which we ourselves contribute to oppressive discourses. [453] For these reasons, it is important for me to reflect on the experiences and ideologies that inform my role as researcher.

In the Republic of Ireland, where I grew up, the historic experience of British colonialism is a topic we spend a lot of time on during our primary and secondary education, but it also continues to be a lived reality for those who reside in the northeast of our island.[454] While very much removed from the immediate terror, violence and suffering of 'the Troubles', the scenes of bombings and bloodshed on our island that regularly filled television screens were another important part of my childhood that I remember well. While much has changed since then, these experiences continue to impact the way in which I look at

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[452] Jorge Ruiz Ruiz, "Sociological Discourse Analysis: Methods and Logic," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 10, no.2 (2009): Art. 26.

[453] Trevor Warburton, "Turning the Lens: Reflexivity in Research & Teaching with Critical Discourse Analysis," *Critical Questions in Education* 7, no.3 (2016): 261.

[454] It is important to note the differences between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. As McClintock notes, "Ireland may, at a pinch, be "post-colonial," but for the inhabitants of British-occupied Northern Ireland, not to mention the Palestinian inhabitants of the Israeli Occupied Territories and the West Bank, there may be nothing "post" about colonialism at all." Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Post-Colonialism," *Social Text*, no 31/32 (1992): 87. It is also crucial to recognise that Ireland has had a mixed relationship with imperialism, playing an active role in the maintenance of the British Empire, complicating our place within postcolonial studies. For more, see Hiram Morgan, "An Unwelcome Heritage: Ireland's Role in British Empire-Building," *History of European Ideas* 19, no. 4-6 (1994): 619-625.

occupation and colonisation, whether it is in Ireland, Palestine, Kashmir, or Tibet.

When I was 19, I moved to China and stayed there for six years. While I became increasingly aware of ethnic relations while living in Guizhou and Guangxi provinces, it was the responses of Han friends to the 2008 Tibetan unrest and 2009 riots in Urumqi that were especially formative. I often found it difficult to understand reactions from Han (and sometimes non-Han Chinese) friends who felt there was no legitimate reason for Tibetan and Uyghur frustrations and that they were just ungrateful, brainwashed by the West and/or terrorists. Learning more about why people spoke about Tibetans and Uyghurs in those terms and what shaped their views has certainly been another driving force for this research.

I often talk with Irish and Tibetan friends about some of the commonalities between Tibet and Ireland, both past and present. While parallels may be drawn between instances of occupation and colonisation, it is also important to be critical of how they play out under different conditions. Place, time, gender, class, race, and many other factors further situate our understandings and experiences of such practices. However, as Harraway notes, acknowledgement of these "partial, locatable, critical knowledges" can also be useful in terms of "sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology."[455] In this way, the acknowledgement and translation of different struggles against colonisation and imperialism can become an important practice in building global alliances and developing new ways of understanding our world.

As a white person, racial positionality in research of this kind is also very important to consider. As Kleisath argues in the case of Tibet, white

[455] Donna Harraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no.3 (1988): 584.

scholars must "acknowledge and discuss the profound impact that their own racial and ethnic identities have on the collection and analysis of data," and consider how our research contributes to "the empire-building aspects of globalisation."[456] Indeed, as Tuhiwai Smith writes, the practice of scientific research itself "is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices," especially when it involves collecting, analysing and "writing up" data about indigenous peoples.[457] For Said, formal scholarly pursuits of knowledge play a defining role in the production and perpetuation of 'the Other', noting that western scholarly institutions can promote Orientalism by making "statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it."[458] Lopez has explored how Tibetans, Tibetophiles, and Tibetologists have variously produced and reproduced a view of Tibetans as "a happy peaceful people devoted to the practice of Buddhism, whose remote and ecologically enlightened land, ruled by a god-king, was invaded by the forces of evil," and how these orientalist fantasies hinder greater understanding of Tibet.[459] Anand has examined how these "Western exoticized representations of Tibet and Tibetans" also impact Tibetan cultural and political identity.[460] As such, it is of critical importance for all scholars working on Tibet to reflect on the effects of whiteness, Orientalism and how these shape academic representations. In this thesis, I try to be mindful and critical of my own positionality and the ways in which this shape my analysis, and the impact of my work on how Tibet and Tibetans are understood.

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[456] C. Michelle Kleisath, "Start Saying "White," Stop Saying "Western": Transforming the Dominant Vocabulary of Tibet Studies," *Journal of the Association of Black Anthropologists* 21, no. 1 (2013): 19.
[457] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 2.
[458] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 11.
[459] Donald S. Lopez Jr. *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the* West (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 11- 13. For more on Orientalism in the field of Tibetan Studies, see Peter H. Hansen, "Why is There No Subaltern Studies for Tibet?" *The Tibet Journal* 28, no. 4 (2003): 7-22.
[460] Dibyesh Anand, *Geopolitical Exotica: Tibet in Western Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xiii.

### 3.6 Summary

In this chapter, I described my methodological approach for this research, which centres on Fairclough's DRA to CDA. With its focus on social conflict, power and resistance, I argue that DRA CDA offers the necessary methodological tools for analysing how power is reproduced in state media representations of Tibetan modernity and also how Tibetans mobilise homeland as a discursive practice to contest official discourses. I have also shown its compatibility with Chinese-language texts, and described my data collection and selection strategies for Chinese state media and Tibetan social media texts. I then explained my focus on Chinese-language texts and described some of the demographic details of the Sinophone Tibetans who produce such texts in online spaces. Finally, I discussed my own positionality in relation to this research and the ways in which my own identity and personal values impact my analysis.

# 4. “In The Shadow of the Monster”: Discourses of Material Transformation

## 4.1 Introduction

The GWDC has led to major material transformation across Tibet. Widespread infrastructural development, urbanisation, inward migration, the resettlement of nomads, and the extraction of natural resources all feature prominently in state media and have been celebrated as examples of the Chinese state successfully guiding Tibet to modernisation. While the implementation of such large-scale state-led projects of material transformation in Tibet is not new, the scale, scope, and speed of these projects in recent years is unprecedented. This has been a source of great concern and various anxieties among Tibetans online, many of whom express fears about how these projects are impacting the environment and cultural practices across Tibet. How does the state media discursively mobilise such projects of material transformation to represent Tibetan modernity? In what ways do Tibetans resist and challenge these representations in online spaces, and what is the place and function of homeland within these discourses?

This chapter examines the online politics of representation surrounding the material transformations of the Tibetan landscape in the era of the GWDC. Using CDA, I argue that state media represents Tibetan modernity as a site of engineering wonders, a high level of environmental protection and happiness, all of which are framed as achievements by the Chinese state. I examine how this produces discourses of national pride, glory and integration, and how it forms part of a broader practice of cultural governance that aims to reinforce state legitimacy, authority and sovereignty over Tibet. I then examine how Tibetans counter these discourses, with a particular focus on the online work of two of Tibet’s most well-known and critically acclaimed Sinophone writers, Tsering Woeser (Weise 唯色) and Baima Nazhen 白玛娜珍. I demonstrate the ways in which Tibetans contest official representations of modernity by

emphasising environmental degradation, conflict with spiritual practices, and related questions of cultural erosion resulting from urbanisation, resource extraction, and other forms of material transformation. Focusing on the homeland ingredients of *place* and *sense of place*, I argue that homeland features as an important discursive practice within Tibetan resistance strategies by laying unique claim to Tibet through a series of historical, cultural, and spiritual attachments. In doing so, homeland is deployed to articulate a distinctly Tibetan territory and challenge the secular and development-driven discourses of state media.

In terms of structure, I begin by detailing my methodological approach for collecting and analysing data for this chapter. Following this, I describe some of the material transformations that have taken place across Tibet since its incorporation into the PRC, with particular reference to the GWDC. I note the relationship of this to state practices of power, and describe how this has impacted both the Tibetan landscape and the people who live there. I then identify and analyse some of the key discourses of material transformation in state media and the kind of modernity they construct and communicate. Following this, I introduce the work of Tsering Woeser and Baima Nazhen. I discuss how their online posts present counter discourses to state media representations, supplementing this with broader online Tibetan expression. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the most prominent discourses in both state and Tibetan texts, how they characterise Tibetan modernity, and how discourses of homeland are positioned within this dialogue.

### 4.2 Methodology

I first established a corpus of texts from state media relating to the topic of material transformation of the Tibetan landscape by trying different combinations of terms such as 'urbanisation' (*chengshihua* 城市化), 'construction' (*jianshe* 建设), 'project' (*gongcheng* 工程), and 'development' (*fazhan* 发展) with 'Tibetan' (*Zangzu* 藏族) or 'Tibetan areas' (*Zangqu* 藏区; *Zangdi* 藏地). I found that using the specific

combination of terms ‘Tibetan’, ‘project’ and ‘construction’ broadly provided the most relevant results for this chapter and generated a suitable corpus. In total, the corpus was made up of 1,959 news pieces for the period between January 1st 2000 and December 31st 2017. It is particularly concentrated in the 2006-2015 period. This broadly mirrors the trend for the master corpus described in Chapter Three. However, state media output does begin to increase a little earlier than is the case in the other two empirical chapters. This can be explained by the high-profile completion of the Golmud to Lhasa railway line in 2006, which received massive media coverage and is thus heavily represented in the corpus.

For texts authored by Tibetans, I searched Tibetcul and other Tibetan online hubs for combinations of the same set of terms. I noted prominent Tibetan writers Tsering Woeser and Baima Nazhen to be particularly vocal and influential on these issues, and also broadly representative of the ways in which Tibetans contest state media discourses of material transformation. As such, their online posts made up a large part of my corpus for Tibetan-produced texts. I then supplemented their texts with other popular or widely shared materials from Tibetcul on the same topic. Texts from Weibo and Wechat were also collected by searching the same set of terms through their respective search functions. As explained in the previous chapter, related terms such as ‘pollution’ (*wuran* 污染), ‘concrete’ (*shuini* 水泥) and ‘pesticides’ (*nongyao* 农药) were also used to field posts that engaged with the topic of material transformation in less standardised terms. This amounted to 186 texts, from which I chose 30 texts for my analysis.

### 4.3 The New Face of Tibet: Nature, Infrastructure, and the State

Tibet has been the object of material transformation since its ‘incorporation’ into the PRC in the 1950s. Much like the rest of China during the Mao era, the socialist transformation of Tibet was often guided by “an excessively optimistic belief in the power of science to master

nature." [461] This included the establishment of state farms and communes, land reclamation through draining wetlands, cutting down forests, and the construction of various mega projects, most notably the Qinghai-Tibet railway.[462]

While deeply concerned with feeding the growing population and extracting resources to power industrialisation and economic growth, the modernist project to conquer the natural environment was also intricately linked to the newly-formed state's demonstration of political power and control.[463] Such projects work to maximise the visibility of the state in the landscape and thus play an important role in "the construction, consolidation and reproduction of power." [464] Displacement marks an important part of this process, which may take place through the relocation of existing inhabitants through land grabs, inward migration, material development, and urbanisation, or through socio-political marginalisation and culturally dislocating people from "traditional ways of living on land, and practising place."[465] Examples of this might include policies that promote or demand transformation of domestic economies, agricultural cultivation practices, those that restrict religious, linguistic or cultural activities, or any other action that disrupts how a people relate and engage with a particular place. Material transformation of the landscape is thus a way in which the state reaffirms the "sovereignty abstraction" through "territorial concrete."[466] This symbolic manifestation of power is thus fundamentally a place-making process, which works to

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[461] Peter Ho, "Mao's War against Nature? The Environmental Impact of the Grain-First Campaign in China," *The China Journal* 50 (2003): 37.
[462] Yeh, *Taming Tibet*, 6-7.
[463] Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 3.
[464] Anne-Marie Broudehoux, "Images of Power: Architectures of the Integrated Spectacle at the Beijing Olympics," *Journal of Architectural Education* 63 (2010): 52.
[465] McGaw et al, "Indigenous Place-Making in the City: Dispossessions, Occupations and Implications for Cultural Architecture," 297.
[466] Hinsley, *Sovereignty*, 142.

establish, maintain and reproduce state boundaries, jurisdiction, and authority.

In the case of Tibet, a region whose allegiance and place within the PRC continues to be questioned and challenged, the conquest of nature and transformation of the natural landscape has long represented one strategy of domesticating Tibet within the PRC. Under the GWDC, Tibet has experienced unprecedented levels of material transformation in the name of promoting economic development and greater integration with interior China. In 2000, just after the GWDC was announced, work began on extending the Qinghai-Tibet railway line from Golmud to Lhasa. The line was finally completed in 2006. Hailed as an "engineering miracle" achieved by overcoming extreme environmental challenges of frozen soils and high altitudes,[467] the project is variously celebrated as a symbol of "national pride"[468] and "the integration of Tibet with the interior of China."[469] The then president Hu Jintao declared the new line as having "tremendously important significance toward boosting the unity of nationalities and strengthening the motherland's border defences."[470] As part of the 13th Five Year Plan (2016-2020) and in tandem with the GWDC, work has now commenced on the Sichuan-Tibet Railway.[471] Alongside the large-scale investment into railway lines, China has also

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[467] "The Qinghai-Tibet Railway: An Engineering Miracle." *China Today*, November, 2002, accessed June 10, 2018, http://www.china.org.cn/english/China/51139.htm

[468] "Qinghai-Tibet Railway Boosts Pride and Economies." *People's Daily*, June 23, 2006, accessed June 10, 2017, http://en.people.cn/200606/23/eng20060623_276704.html

[469] "Qinghai-Tibet Railway Not Just a Big Deal for Chinese." *People's Daily*, June 2, 2006, accessed June 10, 2017, http://en.people.cn/200607/02/eng20060702_279263.html

[470] "The Qinghai-Tibet Railway: China's New Instrument for Assimilation." *The Jamestown Foundation*, May 9, 2007, accessed June 10, 2017, https://jamestown.org/program/the-qinghai-tibet-railway-chinas-new-instrument-for-assimilation-2/

[471] "China to Build World's Most Challenging Railway." *Xinhua*, July 5, 2017, accessed June 18, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-07/05/c_136419316.htm

made further commitments to promoting the development of infrastructure across Tibet by building more roads and airports with ambitious plans to ensure all townships and administrative villages are connected by at least one road by 2020.[472]

The rapid expansion of transport infrastructure provides crucial access for investigation, evaluation and exploration of natural resources to help power economic development across China. The construction of a series of hydroelectric dams and reservoirs across Tibet have reportedly caused thousands of forced evictions of Tibetans from their home, destroyed revered monasteries and sacred mountains, caused disruption of water flows and raised other environmental concerns across the plateau.[473] Recent years have also seen 'rampant' mining for ore, copper and gold across the Tibetan plateau, resulting in water pollution, deforestation and land grabs.[474] This has led to the further displacement of thousands of Tibetan pastoralists and nomads.[475] This often takes place under the guise of state-sponsored resettlement schemes that encourage and even force Tibetan nomads to move to urban areas, generally in the name of protecting the local environment and alleviating poverty.[476] This process of 'Ecological Migration' (*shengtai yimin* 生态移民) also ties in with wider goals of urbanisation and industrialisation, as articulated in the state's 11th Five Year Plan (2006-2010). This aims to

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[472] "Highways to Reach All Townships in Tibet by 2020." *Xinhua*, March 5, 2018, accessed March 7, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/05/c_137015967.htm

[473] Richard Finney, "Concerns Arise Over China's Dam Building Drive in Tibet." *Radio Free Asia*, April 17, 2013, accessed June 10, 2017, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/concerns-04172013125938.html

[474] Navin Singh Khadka, "Tibetans Displaced Within Region 'Amid Rampant Mining'." *BBC*, December 13, 2013, accessed June 10, 2017, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-25359391.

[475] Human Rights Watch. *"They Say We Should Be Grateful": Mass Rehousing and Relocation Programs in Tibetan Areas of China.* New York. 2013.

[476] Robert Barnett, "Beyond the Collaborator-Martyr Model," in *Contemporary Tibet: Politics, Development, and Society in a Disputed Region*, ed. Barry Sautman and June Teufel Dreyer (London, M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 48.

construct a 'New Socialist Countryside' (*shehuizhuyi xin nongcun* 社会主义新农村) to promote "advanced production, improved livelihood, a civilized social atmosphere, clean and tidy villages and democratic administration."[477]

A further example of state-led material transformation can be noted in the case of Qinghai's Yushu 玉树 (or Amdo's Yul shul ཡུལ་ཤུལ།), a town that was left devastated after a huge earthquake struck in 2010. In the course of its reconstruction, local government planners have "reimagined Yushu as a tourist attraction for Chinese seeking to experience the fetishized mystique of Tibetan culture," full of boutique hotels, karaoke bars, and museums, as well as government buildings.[478] In Lhasa, shopping malls, streets named after cities in interior China and even the opening of a KFC have caused further concern about the changing face of Tibet. In June 2016, local authorities ordered a mass demolition of residential cabins at Larung Gar, one of the world's largest Tibetan Buddhist learning centres, in the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture town of Ganzi, Sichuan Province (Dkar mazes དཀར་མཛེས།). Officials maintained that this was to deal with a large number of unregistered nuns and monks, for safety reasons and also to better accommodate tourists.[479]

This section has described some of the major ways in which the state has sought to transform the Tibetan landscape under the GWDC, and how these changes have broadly impacted the landscape and the living

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[477] "Abstract of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan Outline (draft)." *People's Daily*, March 8, 2006, accessed June 10, 2017, http://en.people.cn/200603/08/print20060308_248953.html

[478] Andrew Jacobs, "Four Years After Quake, Some See a Resurrected Chinese City, Others Dashed Dreams." *The New York Times*, May 22, 2014, accessed June 10, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/22/world/asia/4-years-after-quake-some-see-a-resurrected-chinese-city-others-dashed-dreams.html

[479] Heying Chen, "Buddhist School Renovated." *Global Times*, July 26, 2016, accessed June 10, 2017, http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/996484.shtml

environment of Tibetans across Tibet. In the next section, I will examine how material transformation is discursively constructed and communicated across state media coverage of Tibet.

### 4.4 State Media Discourses of Material Transformation

State media plays a crucial role in framing and communicating urbanisation, infrastructural development, industrialisation, resource extraction and other forms of material change across the Tibetan landscape to audiences across the PRC. In this section, I examine discourses about Tibetan modernity as promoted through online state media coverage of material transformation in Tibet and how they contribute to a broader project of cultural governance and state hegemony.

#### 4.4.1 "Constructing a Miracle of History": Mega-Projects as Spectacle, Struggle, and National Pride

Mega projects are a reoccurring feature of state media coverage of material transformation in Tibet. 'Mega projects' refer to large-scale physical developments, such as railways, highways, airports, and bridges. They are, as Gellert and Lynch argue, "projects which transform landscapes rapidly, intentionally and profoundly in very visible ways, and require coordinated applications of capital and state power."[480] Under the GWDC, a large number of mega projects have been constructed across Tibet and this has been a topic of significant coverage in state media.

State media news articles about mega-projects are replete with descriptions of triumphal feats of engineering, often ones that break world records. This is chiefly demonstrated through re-occurring references to levels of historic achievement, world firsts, and other superlative adjectives such as 'highest' and 'longest'. Discourses of this kind are particularly notable in the case of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway line, for

[480] Paul K. Gellert, and Barbara D. Lynch, "Mega-projects as Displacements," *International Social Sciences Journal* 175 (2003): 15-16.

which some state media outlets such as CCTV even host a special section on their website dedicated entirely to covering everything about the railway line.[481] A 2008 *People's Daily* piece describes how:

> 青藏铁路的建成通车和安全，是中国铁路建设史上的伟大壮举，也是世界铁路建设史上的一大奇迹，标志着我国高原铁路技术创造了世界一流水平
>
> The provision of transportation and safety through the establishment of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway is a great feat in the history of China's railway construction and also a major miracle in the global history of railway construction. It marks our country's Qinghai-Tibet railway creating a level of world-class technology
>
> 其中格尔木至拉萨段全长 1142 公里，位于海拔 4000 米以上的地段 960 公里，是世界上海拔最高、线路最长的高原冻土铁路[。。。] 在世界铁路史上前所未有。
>
> Among them, the Golmud to Lhasa phase, measuring 1142 kilometres and of which 960 kilometres is situated 4000 meters above sea level, is the world's highest above sea level, longest railway line on high plateau frozen soil… it is unprecedented in world railway history.[482]

Nouns such as "feat" and "miracle", magnified by the intensifying adjectives "great" and "major", repeatedly reference the railway's

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[481] "Qingzang tielu quanxian tongche – qinli 'tianlu'" 青藏铁路全线通车—亲历"天路 [Whole Line of Qinghai-Tibet Railway Now Open – Experience 'The Heavenly Road'], *CCTV*, Last modified August 09, 2006, http://www.cctv.com/special/C16030/01/index.shtml

[482] Zhongxi Qi 齐中熙 and Chenggu Liang 梁成谷, "Qingzang tielu: Zaofu qingzang ge zu renmin de shiji gongcheng" 青藏铁路：造福青藏各族人民的世纪工程 [Qinghai-Tibet Railway: The Century Project Bringing Benefit to the People of Qinghai-Tibet]. *China Tibet News*, November 13, 2008, accessed June 11, 2017, http://www.tibet.cn/jiaotong_pd/jtpd_jtyaowen/200811/t20081113_438203.htm

exceptional standing within world history, characterising the Qinghai-Tibet railway as a national spectacle worthy of praise and awe. The vast scale and enormity of the project is further reinforced through frequent reference to measurement figures, bolstering overall authority and factuality of the piece.[483]

Discourses of this kind are variously reflected in other state media pieces. Titles alone often serve to emphasise the grandeur, global standing, and pioneering nature of the railway project:

> 青藏铁路"世界之最"
> Qinghai-Tibet Railway 'The World's Best'[484]
>
> 建筑史上的奇迹 青藏铁路创九项世界之最
> Constructing a Miracle of History – Qinghai-Tibet Railway Creates Nine of World Bests[485]

Ideas of struggle and spectacle are closely linked across these discourses. As one 2006 *People's Daily* piece writes:

> 历经长达五年的艰苦奋战，十万筑路大军在"世界第三极"青藏高原挑战生命极限，挥洒万丈豪情，攻克多年冻土，保护生态环境，创造出一个个雪域奇迹。
> Enduring five years of hard work, thousands of army troops on the "World's Third Pole" Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, filled with passion and

[483] Tom Crook and Glen O'Hara, eds, *The 'Torrent of Numbers': Statistics and the Public Sphere in Britain, c. 1800-2000* (London: Routledge, 2011).
[484] "Qingzang tielu 'shijie zhi zui'" 青藏铁路"世界之最" [Qinghai Railway "The World's Best]. *People's Daily*, June 19, 2006, accessed June 12, 2017, http://env.people.com.cn/GB/41895/4501073.html
[485] Weiguo Chen (陈卫国"Jianzhu shishang de qiji qingzang tielu chuang jiu xiang shijie zhi zui" 建筑史上的奇迹 青藏铁路创九项世界之最 [Constructing a Miracle of History – Qinghai-Tibet Railway Created Nine of World Bests]. *China Tibet News*, June 24, 2016, accessed June 11, 2017, http://www.tibet.cn/special/b/tlsn/qzsn/1466993000669.shtml

> determination, challenged the very limits of human existence as they broke through the ancient frozen earth, and protected the ecology and environment, all to create each and every wonder of the Land of Snows.[486]

The language of "enduring", "hard work", "challenged the limits of human existence" and "broke through" all accentuate the sense of hardship, effort, and even bravery invested in overcoming harsh conditions to complete the project. State media heavily invoke references to dedication, perseverance, and technological skill to establish a sense of heroism. These texts are steeped in "polarizing, adversarial language," which often pits "people against the natural environment in a fierce struggle."[487] Through the various sacrifices of the army, invoking the presence of the state, the piece celebrates success, triumph, and power over the challenges of the Tibetan landscape.[488]

The discourses of spectacle, struggle, and triumph are often intertwined with expressions of national pride and glory. State media news titles alone attest to this:

> 青藏铁路是世界的奇迹和中国的骄傲
>
> Qinghai-Tibet Railway is the World's Miracle and China's Pride.[489]
>
> 青藏铁路强力释放我国"聚宝盆"资源潜能

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[486] "Qingzang tielu 'shijie zhi zui'" 青藏铁路"世界之最" [Qinghai Railway "The World's Best]. *People's Daily*, June 19, 2006, accessed June 12, 2017, http://env.people.com.cn/GB/41895/4501073.html

[487] Shapiro, *Mao's War against Nature,* 3.

[488] Many parallels can be drawn between this and the Han 'pioneers' sent to Xinjiang during the 1950s. See Thomas Cliff, *Oil and Water: Being Han in Xinjiang* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2016).

[489] Yu Wu (吴宇), Ga Ma (尕玛) and La Ba (拉巴), "Qingzang tielu shi shijie de qiji he zhongguo de jiao'ao" 青藏铁路是世界的奇迹和中国的骄傲 [Qinghai-Tibet Railway is the World's Miracle and China's Pride]. *People's Daily*, October 10, 2005, accessed June 12, 2017, http://xz.people.com.cn/GB/139204/159900/160093/9584845.html

Qinghai-Tibet Railway Firmly Releases Our Country's 'Treasure Bowl' of Resource Potential[490]

美国舆论高度关注中国青藏铁路通车壮举

American Public Pays Close Attention to the Magnificent Feat of China's Qinghai-Tibet Railway Opening [491]

The use of the possessive pronoun "our" and the repetitive use of the possessive noun "China's" both foster a collective sense of achievement and affirm Tibet as part of a unified single nation-state. In this sense, these linguistic features contribute to a sense of a shared national identity and national path to modernisation, within which Tibet is firmly positioned. They also express ownership, firmly embedding Tibet within the narrative of the Chinese nation and marking a prominent discursive strategy of territorialisation.

These examples all relate to the Qinghai-Tibet railway project, but are also highly representative of broader state media discourses concerning material transformation in Tibet. News stories about highways and airports follow a very similar line, also producing discourses of spectacle, struggle and national glory. For example, in 2015 *Xinhua* described a Tibetan energy plant as "the country's highest solar power station above sea level" (*guonei haibo zuiguo bomo taiyangneng dianzhan* 国内海拔最

[490] Xiaofei Luo (骆晓飞) and Jun Wang (王军), "Qingzang tielu qiangli shifang woguo 'jubaopen' ziyuan qianneng" 青藏铁路强力释放我国"聚宝盆"资源潜能 [Qinghai-Tibet Railway Firmly Releases Our Country's 'Treasure Bowl' of Resource Potential]. *Xinhua*, June 24, 2016, accessed June 13, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2016-06/24/c_1119102962.htm

[491] "Meiguo yulun gaodu guanzhu zhongguo qingzang tielu tongche zhangju" 美国舆论高度关注中国青藏铁路通车壮举 [American Public Pays Close Attention to the Magnificent Feat of China's Qinghai-Tibet Railway Opening. *People's Daily*, July 2, 2006, accessed July 13, 2017, http://finance.people.com.cn/GB/4551415.html

高薄膜太阳能电站),[492] while in 2012 *China Daily* reported that the national grid's "highest tower" (*zuigao tieta* 最高铁塔) for internet transmission had been erected in Yushu.[493] Again, the use of superlatives and possessive pronouns emphasise national achievement and ownership of Tibet. More recently, with major investments being made in building airports across Tibet in the name of promoting tourism and economic growth,[494] state media has reported on a number of new airports being built despite "the many technical difficulties" (*duo jishu nanti* 多技术难题)[495] and other engineering challenges arising from the environmental conditions. Once again, these texts emphasise a discourse of struggle, hardship, and, ultimately, national triumph through modern science.

Discourses of spectacle and struggle promote a sense of national pride and unity. This attempts to reinforce public approval and consent for the GWDC and Chinese rule over Tibet by promoting a shared sense of achievement in overcoming adversity and a common destiny in the national march towards modernisation. Coupled with reoccurring uses of 'our country', the effect is that Tibet is discursively territorialised and naturalised as part of the PRC.

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[492] "Guonei haiba zuigao bomo taiyangneng dianzhan" 国内海拔最高薄膜太阳能电站 [The Country's Highest Above Sea-level Thin-Film Solar Power Station Is Successfully Generating Electricity in Ali, Tibet]. *Xinhua*, July 10, 2015, accessed June 13, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/energy/2015-07/10/c_1115876316_2.htm

[493] "Guojia dianwang Yushu lianwang gongcheng zuigao tieta chenggong zuli" 国家电网玉树联网工程最高铁塔成功组立 [National Grid's Yushu Network Project Successfully Erects Highest Internet Transmission Tower]. *Xinhua*, April 4, 2018, accessed June 13, 2017, http://www.qh.xinhuanet.com/qhpower/2013-04/08/c_115309326.htm

[494] "Tibet to Build Three More Airports." *Xinhua*, June 9, 2018, accessed June 10, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/09/c_137240626.htm

[495] "Xizang haiba zuigao jichang jiang tong gao dengji gonglu" 西藏海拔最高机场将通高等级公路 [Tibet's Highest Altitude Airport Will Lead to High Level Highways]. *Xinhua*, March 12, 2018, accessed April 10, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2018-03/12/c_1122525805.htm

### 4.4.2 "The Path to Happiness": Environmental Protection, Civilisation, and Integration

Since the reform era, a concern for environmental protection has become a prominent discourse across state media.[496] This is particularly notable in reportage on Tibet, well known for being "the place nearest to the sky and furthest away from pollution," as one recent Chinese government report described.[497] Bolstering this sense of official concern and commitment to environmental protection further, CCTV currently hosts a full special webpage completely dedicated to covering environmental issues in Tibet.[498] State media coverage of material transformation in Tibet is highly concerned with promoting discourses of commitment to environmental protection and projecting the state as a responsible 'green' actor.

Alongside a discourse of triumphalism in conquering the challenges of the Tibetan landscape, state media makes a very distinct effort to emphasise their concurrent commitment to environmental and ecological conservation. This discourse of harmony between material development and safeguarding the environment was most famously captured in an image that appeared across Chinese state media in February 2008, which featured dozens of *chiru*, an endangered species of antelope found mainly in Tibet, running alongside a train speeding across the Tibetan plateau (Fig. 3). While the photograph was later shown to be doctored, it

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[496] Judith Shapiro, "Environmental Degradation in China under Mao and Today: A Comparative Reflection," *Global Environment* 9, no. 2 (2016): 440-457.

[497] "Tibet's Environment Well Preserved through Sustainable Development." *CCTV,* March 31, 2009, accessed June 13, 2017, http://www.cctv.com/english/20090331/106186.shtml

[498] "[Xin shidai xingfu meili xin bianjiang] zoujin Xizang" 新时代·幸福美丽新边疆】走进西藏 [New Era: Happy and Beautiful New Frontiers] Walking into Tibet]. *CCTV,* Last modified May 20, 2018, http://news.cctv.com/special/jujiao/2018/918/index.shtml

had been published widely in state media as a celebration of "the harmony among the Tibetan antelope, the train, men and nature."[499]

*Fig. 3: Doctored image of chiru running alongside a train*[500]

The image is emblematic of an official and pervasive discourse of harmony between nature and material transformation under the GWDC. State media heavily emphasise infrastructural development, urbanisation, construction, and other forms of material transformation as co-existing with Tibet's environment and ecology. This draws interdiscursively upon the notion of 'ecological civilisation' (*shengtai wenming* 生态文明), which has circulated in official discourse since 2007. This discourse promotes "the management of the relationship between humans and nature in a comprehensive, scientific and systemic manner." [501] This is reflected in one *Xinhua* piece in 2015, which describes how:

> 一方面要在保护当地生态环境的前提下，把区域的集现代公路、铁路与航空为一体的综合交通运输体系建设作为经济发展的重中

[499] Jane Spencer and Juliet Ye, "China Eats Crow Over Faked Photo of Rare Antelope." *The Wall Street Journal,* February 22, 2008, accessed June 13, 2017, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB120363429707884255?mod=yhoofront.
[500] Ibid
[501] "Green is Gold. The Strategy and Actions of China's Ecological Civilization," *United Nations Environment Programme (*UNEP)*,* May 26, 2016, accessed August 15, 2018, https://www.unep.org/greeneconomy/sites/unep.org.greeneconomy/files/publications/greenisgold_en_20160519.pdf.

之重，加大电力等能源基础设施建设；另一方面加快推进西藏生态安全屏障等生态保护与建设工程建设，不断完善生态补偿机制，强化生态环境保护执法，走出一条生产发展、生活富裕、生态良好的可持续发展道路

On one hand, as a premise for protecting the local ecological environment, we must take the construction of an integrated and comprehensive modern road, rail and air transport system as the highest priority, and strengthen the construction of power infrastructure such as electricity. On the other hand, we must intensify and advance Tibet's ecological safety controls and other forms of ecological protection and engineering, continuously perfecting the mechanisms of environmental compensation, strengthening ecological environmental protection laws and embarking on a path of sustainable development in the development of production, affluent living, and good ecology.[502]

Across the text, a clear effort is made to promote an understanding of the possibility of harmonious co-existence between material development and environmental protection. The use of cross-sentence semantic connecters, "on one hand" / "on the other hand", serve to emphasise a critical and considered perspective of both priorities. Each related clause uses the modal verb "must" to emphasise necessity and duty, presenting arguments of infrastructural development and environmental protection as both highly important. The lavish use of active verbs such as "protect", "strengthen", "intensify", "advance" and "perfecting", coupled with intensifying adjectives such as "continuously", construct the state as a committed, responsible and pro-active agent with a modern, scientific approach to environmental issues in Tibet.

[502] "Lüse xiaokang zhi lu: Yingde jingji, bu shu huanjing" 绿色小康之路：赢得经济，不输环境 [Green Moderately Prosperous Society: Win the Economy without Losing the Environment]. *Xinhua*, September 1, 2015, accessed June 13, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-09/01/c_128186398.htm

References to Tibetans in these pieces are notably absent, reinforcing the official characterisation of Tibetans as both passive and even "innately incompatible with environmental sustainability."[503] Displacing any notion of Tibetans as relevant actors in the protection of the Tibetan plateau, the state is identified as the most suitable agent for achieving a harmony between the two priorities of development and environmental protection. While Yeh explores this as an instance of "ecological nationalism",[504] a process through which the state positions itself as the guardian of the environment in order to legitimatize anc consolidate its own power, we could go further and approach this as an instance of "sustainable colonialism". Focusing on the specific power dynamics at play between the centre and periphery, "sustainable colonialism" describes the ways in which state and corporate actors use discourses of ecological protection and sustainability to make claims about providing "an essential public service while misdirecting attention away from acts of colonialism" and covering up the resource extraction this so often entails.[505] In this way, the Chinese state's discursive performance of concern for Tibet's environment and ecology can be seen not simply as a consolidation of power through nature, but also as of obscuring the terms of its colonial presence in Tibet.

These pieces reaffirm a paternalistic vision of the Han-dominated state protecting the Tibetan environment while also guiding Tibetans to modernity through material transformation. This discourse can be further seen in daily stories of new roads, highways, airports, and railway lines that regularly appear on *Xinhua*, *People's Daily* and other major online state media news platforms. Relevant titles include:

> 经济、交通大发展让西藏迈入"汽车时代"

[503] Emily T. Yeh, "From Wasteland to Wetland? Nature and Nation in China's Tibet," *Environmental History* 14, no.1 (2009): 105.
[504] Ibid., 104.
[505] Sean Parson and Emily Ray, "Sustainable Colonization: Tar Sands as Resource Colonialism," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 29, no. 3 (2018): 68.

Large-scale Development of Economy and Transportation Allows Tibet to Stride into the 'Motor Era'"[506]

白皮书：综合交通运输体系基本形成 西藏现代化发展水平提高

White Paper: Comprehensive Transportation System Basically Established: Tibetan Modernisation and Development Levels Improve[507]

造福青藏人民的幸福之路

The Path to Happiness Bringing Benefits the Tibetan People[508]

Verbs such as "allows", "improves" and "bringing benefit" all position Tibet and Tibetans as passive recipients of the state's generosity and goodwill. This is further emphasised through the characterisation of Tibet as simply needing to "stride into" modernity, rather than being active participants in its making or indeed troubled by any aspects of rapid modernisation. The pieces, depicting material transformation in wholly positive terms, focus on the dynamism, development and "happiness" brought to Tibet through improved infrastructure. As one *People's Daily* piece from 2001

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[506] Hengtao Wang 王恒涛, Wang Jun 王军 and Suolang Deji 索朗德吉, "Jingji, jiaotong da fazhan rang Xizang mai ru 'qiche shidai'" 经济、交通大发展让西藏迈入"汽车时代" [Largescale Development of Economy and Transportation Allows Tibet to Enter the 'Motor Era']. *Xinhua*, January 14, 2014, accessed June 13, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2014-01/14/c_118966976.htm

[507] "Baipishu: Zonghe jiaotong yunshu tixi jiben xingcheng xiandaihua fazhan shuiping tigao" 白皮书：综合交通运输体系基本形成 西藏现代化发展水平提高 [White Paper: Comprehensive Transportation System Improves Tibet's Modernization and Development Levels]. *Xinhua*, September 6, 2015, accessed June 14, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-09/06/c_1116469799.htm

[508] "Zaofu qingzang renmin de xingfu zhi" 造福青藏人民的幸福之路 [The Path to Happiness Benefiting the Tibetan People]. *People's Daily*, June 30, 2001, accessed June 13, 2018, http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/252/5506/5509/20010630/500552.html

demonstrates, material transformation is closely associated with the state's 'civilizing mission':

> 过去的青藏公路打破了西藏长期的封闭状态；今天青藏铁路的修建，将把西藏带入现代文明，实现跨越式发展
>
> In the past the Qinghai-Tibet Highway put an end to the long-term isolation of Tibet; today, the building of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway will bring Tibet into modern civilisation and enable it to leapfrog ahead in its development.[509]

The urbanisation of Tibet is described in similarly positive terms. A *Xinhua* piece reporting on a white paper issued in 2013 describes how:

> 城镇化使西藏各族人民更多分享现代文明发展带来的成果
>
> Urbanisation makes all ethnic groups of Tibet better able to share the fruits brought about by the development of modern civilisation[510]

Again, Tibet and Tibetans are positioned as passive participants, rather than as engaged actors in reaching "modern civilisation". Their relegation to the role of recipients by way of state gifts of infrastructural development and urbanisation reaffirms the state's role as the active and generous bestower of progress and happiness to Tibet. Moreover, the verb "leapfrog" denotes the speed, scale and problem-free nature of these transformations.

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[509] Yulong Wu 巫奕龙, "Qingzang tielu dui Xizang yiweizhe shenme" 青藏铁路对西藏意味着什么 [What Does the Qinghai-Tibet Railway Mean for Tibet?]. *People's Daily,* March 9, 2001, accessed June 13, 2018, http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/19/20010309/413160.html

[510] "Baipishu: Chengzhenhua shi Xizang renmin geng duo fenxiang xiandai wenmind chengguo" 白皮书：城镇化使西藏人民更多分享现代文明成果 [White Paper: Urbanization Makes All Ethnic Groups of Tibet Better Able to Share the Fruits brought about by the Development of Modern Civilization]. *Xinhua*, October 22, 2013, accessed June 13, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/2013-10/22/c_117816411.htm

Material transformation is also celebrated in state media as the deepening integration of Tibet into the Chinese nation. For example, a 2001 *People's Daily* piece writes:

> 藏民族是一个善于汲取和融合外来先进文化的民族，青藏铁路的建设将西藏首次纳入全国四通八达的铁路网，有力地促进西藏同全国其他地区的经济文化交流
>
> The Tibetan people are a people who are adept at absorbing and integrating into outside advanced cultures. The establishment of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway will be the first time that Tibet will be brought into the national network that extends to all four corners of the country, having the power to further its economic and cultural relations with all other regions across the country.[511]

Verb such as "absorbing" and "integrating", as well as references to bringing Tibet "into the national network" and enhancing Tibet's "economic and cultural relations with all other regions across the country" all work to naturalise and normalise Tibet's place within the PRC. Furthering place-making and territorial goals, the text stresses the role of transport infrastructure in aligning and assimilating Tibet into China's nation-building project as an unquestioned good.

These discourses of material transformation reinforce state legitimacy through stressing state competency in achieving economic growth while also attending responsibly to environmental concerns. By rendering Tibetans as largely invisible or irrelevant in these efforts, they further affirm the power asymmetry between the Han-dominated state and Tibetans who are positioned as passive recipients of state development. Re-occurring references to integration serve to territorialise Tibet within the national imaginary, naturalising its place within the PRC. In this way,

[511] Yulong Wu 巫奕龙, "Qingzang tielu dai Xizang yiweizhe shenme" 青藏铁路对西藏意味着什么 [What Does the Qinghai-Tibet Railway Mean for Tibet?].

these discourses form part of a cultural governance strategy by promoting a particular understanding about Tibetan modernity in order to consolidate state authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty.

### 4.5 Tibetan Discourses

This section describes how Tibetans produce online discourses to resist state media representations of material transformation. I focus on the work of Baima Nazhen and Tsering Woeser, two of the most prominent voices in online discussions of material transformation across Tibet. I also supplement their posts with wider discussions from Tibetans across online spaces in China. I will begin with a brief introduction to the two main writers before moving on to identify and describe chief discourses across their online writings on this topic.

#### 4.5.1 The Writers

Tsering Woeser (ཚེ་རིང་ཝོ་ཟེར་; Ciren Weise 次仁唯色) is a well-known Sinophone Tibetan writer, poet and essayist. Now based in Beijing, Woeser is an outspoken critic of the Chinese state's activities in Tibet. She is a prolific blogger and social media commentator. While most of her work is now very heavily censored in China, her essays and posts on Weibo and Wechat continue to be very influential among Tibetans, attracting thousands of views and shares before they are eventually deleted by censors. All of her essays to date are available on her own blog site, Invisible Tibet (*Kanbujian de Xizang* 看不见的西藏)[512] and many are translated into English on High Peaks Pure Earth.[513]

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[512] Woeser's blog, Invisible Tibet (*Kanbujian de Xizang* 看不见的西藏), has been running since 2005. After repeated attacks by hackers, she moved her blog on to an overseas server in 2007. It is currently blocked in China. Her blog can be found at: http://woeser.middle-way.net/.

[513] High Peaks Pure Earth is a website that monitors social media use by Tibetans in Tibet and the PRC and translates blog posts, poetry and music lyrics from Tibetan into English. It is run by Dechen Pemba, a UK-born Tibetan who has lived in Beijing. This website can be accessed at: https://highpeakspureearth.com/

Baima Nazhen 白玛娜珍, while much less well-known outside of China, is one of the leading Sinophone Tibetan writers in China today. Her first novel, *Red Dust of Lhasa* (*Lasa de hong chen* 拉萨红尘),[514] was published in 2002, while her collection of short stories, *Moonlight of Tibet* (*Xizang de yueguang* 西藏的月光), came out in 2013.[515] Both explore the everyday lives of Tibetans across contemporary Tibet and China from an array of different perspectives. Excerpts and essays from her work are regularly shared and circulated online, particularly on Tibetcul.com, Wechat and Weibo, and often attract commentary from Tibetans and Han Chinese alike. As a nationally-recognised and critically-acclaimed writer, Nazhen also holds a number of prestigious positions across national writing associations in China.[516]

### 4.5.2 "The Rich Grasslands Have Become a Painful Memory": Destruction, Pollution, and Environmental Degradation

While the state works hard to emphasise their commitment to ensuring harmony between environmental protection and material transformation, Tibetan online discourses express various anxieties, concerns and critiques about the environmental impact of new transport infrastructure, construction, renovation projects, the aesthetic impact of tourism, and so on.

The changing aesthetics of Tibet is a common theme across Baima Nazhen's writing. In "Monster of the Village" (*Cunzhuang li de mogui* 村庄里的魔鬼), an essay she wrote in 2012 and published online in 2013, Nazhen describes how:

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[514] Baima Nazhen 白玛娜珍, *Lasa de hong chen* 拉萨红尘 [Red Dust of Lhasa] (Beijing: Tibet Renmin Chubanshe, 2002).

[515] Baima Nazhen 白玛娜珍, *Xizang de yueguang* 西藏的月光 [Moonlight of Tibet] (Chongqing: Chongqing Chubanshe, 2013).

[516] "Baima Nazhen (1967-) 白玛娜珍 (1967-) [Baima Nazhen (1967- )], *China Writer*, Last modified January 14, 2011, http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/zxhy/member/140.shtml

> 我的四周，不知什么时候起，坚定而缓慢地崛起了高楼，在村庄的土地上已经投下了鬼魅般的阴影
>
> All around me, I don't know when it began, slowly but steadily high-rise buildings sprang up, casting along the village's land the shadow of the monster[517]

Raising similar themes in "Work Without Song" (*Meiyou gesheng de laozuo* 没有歌声的劳作), she notes:

> 当塑料大棚一夜间长满了娘热乡的田野，村庄里载歌载舞的农耕情景从此不见了。城市文明，像潮水般涌来。
>
> Overnight plastic tents covered the fields of Niangre, and from then on festive song and dance of farming life were never seen again. Urban culture gushes in just like a tide.[518]

Nazhen characterises the aesthetic changes taking place across Niangre village as sudden and all-consuming. This is evoked through temporal phrases such as "sprang up", "overnight" and "gushes in", all indicating an abrupt and unexpected intrusion. Similarly, "like a tide", "all around me", and "covered" draw attention to the scale and overwhelmingness of change, contrasting with state media's descriptions of a smooth and easy transformation through the language of "stride into" and "leapfrog" as described in the previous section. Moreover, Nazhen's use of the term "monster" to refer to the force behind the changing face of the village,

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[517] Baima Nazhen 白玛娜珍, "Cunzhuang li de mogui" 村庄里的魔鬼 [The Monster in the Village], *Tibetcul*, March 3, 2013, Last modified March 23, 2012, http://wx.tibetcul.com/zuopin/sw/201303/31402_3.html

[518] "[Dujia lianzai] Baima nazhen sanwen ji 'Xizang' de yueguang' zhi 'lasa de huolu' [独家连载]
白玛娜珍散文集《西藏的月光》之《拉萨的活路》 [Exclusive Series] Essay Collection of Baima Nazhen "Moonlight of Tibet's "Lhasa's Means of Subsistence," *Tibetcul*, March 11, 2013, Last modified March 11, 2013, http://wx.tibetcul.com/zuopin/sw/201303/31402_4.html

alongside the “shadow” it casts over the village land, signalling a sinister, foreboding power engulfing the village land and eroding attached cultural practices.

The changing aesthetics of village life, particularly in relation to building construction, are widely echoed across various Tibetan texts. In a poem posted to Tibetcul in September 2013, well-known Gannan writer Zhaxi Cairang 扎西才让[519] writes:

> 一幢幢水泥铸就的高楼，逐渐占据绿草和大地
>
> Pillar after pillar of cement-cast high rise buildings gradually occupy the green grass and vast lands

Through “pillar after pillar”, Zhaxi’s text characterises urbanisation as a relentless and all-consuming process. As in Nazhen’s use of “plastic”, Zhaxi references the materiality of urbanisation through descriptions of “concrete-cast buildings” expanding across the landscape. As Lama Jabb notes, this experience of traversing the “great concrete plain” has become a ubiquitous point of reference among young Tibetan writers struggling to negotiate their existence under widespread urbanisation and industrialisation across Tibet while also critiquing China’s hegemonic development drive.[520] The visual descriptions of concrete in Zhaxi’s writing further invoke disruption through a sharp contrast with the “green grass” of the plateau while the verb “occupy” clearly signals power imbalance, domination and subjugation.

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[519] Gangjie Suomudong 刚杰·索木东, “Zhaxi Cairang: Xiang baozi yiyang lüeguo caoyuan” 扎西才让：像豹子一样掠过草原 [Zhaxi Cairang: Like a Leopard Grazing the Grasslands], *Tibetcul,* September 13, 2013, Last modified June 10, 2015, http://wx.tibetcul.com/zhuanti/pl/201309/32267.html

[520] Lama Jabb, *Oral and Literary Continuities in Modern Tibetan Literature,* 137.

In his 2016 blog “My Rivers, My Home” (*Wode heliu wode jia* 我的河流我的家)[521] Jiabo Buchu 甲波布初 similarly laments the disappearance of the grassland under the “plunder” (*silüe* 肆掠) of development:

> 急剧恶化的环境
> 我们周围葱茏的树木
> 丰润的草地
> 变成痛苦的记忆
> In this rapidly deteriorating environment
> The lush trees that surrounded us
> The rich grasslands
> Have become a painful memory

“Deterioration” denotes a clear sense of decay and degeneration of the environment, while the use of the adverb “rapidly” emphasise just how quickly these changes are taking place. The adjectives “lush” and “rich” denote a lavish natural landscape where tress once “surrounded us”. These are then characterised as only “painful memories”, indicating their disappearance and loss from the landscape.

Like Zhaxi and Jiabo Buchu, Nazhen also makes explicit reference to the issue of environmental degradation resulting from rapid material transformation in both rural and urban Tibet. In “Monster of the Village”, Nazhen describes the transformations in Niangre once local government announced plans to turn it into a “Tibet Culture and Nature Village for Tourists” (*Xizang lüyou wenhua ziran cun* 西藏旅游文化自然村). From that point onwards, the village changed from a pastoral hamlet where “the ample days were like mellow sweet yoghurt” (*fengfu de rizi xiang chunmei de suannai* 丰满的日子像醇美的酸奶) to a place where:

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[521] Jiaobo Buchu (甲波布初), “Wode heliu wode jia” 我的河流我的家 [My Rivers, My Home], *Tibetcul Blog*, July 30, 2016, http://blog.tibetcul.com/home.php?mod=space&uid=333432&do=blog&id=306114

> 乡间的小路上，灌煤气的甘肃口音，卖老鼠药的河南人长长地吆呼，拖运建材的卡车的响声和机械的挖掘、切割声不绝于耳。在现代化的发展和建设中，恬静的乡村就要消失了
>
> Upon the small village roads, the Gansu accents filling gas, the long yells of Henan people selling rat poison, the constant noise of the hauling and dragging of construction materials by the trucks and the digging of machines, the constant noise of metal being cut asails the ear. Under the development and construction of modernisation, the tranquillity of the countryside is about to disappear.[522]

The text emphasises the impact of the construction drive on the village. Reference to “gas”, “trucks”, “metal” and “machine” alongside the various descriptions of noises of construction, all index the visual and aural impact of material transformation as it unfolds on what had previously been described as the quiet, peaceful and scenic Niangre village. The temporal juxtaposition of the village before and during the modernisation drive is further reinforced through verbs such as “hauling”, “dragging”, and “digging”, all heightening the sense of intense development. These stand in contrast with the description of Niangre village as a place of “tranquility” before the various projects of material transformation began. This amplifies the scale of change, disruption, and the sense of overwhelming-ness. The detail of “Gansu accents” and “Henan people” within her description of the project of modernisation also denotes an insider/outsider aspect, and is an explicit reference to Han in-migration.[523] In this way, the text emphasises material transformation as an external force imposed upon the village.

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[522] Baima Nazhen, “Cunzhuang li de mogui” 村庄里的魔鬼 [The Monster in the Village].

[523] For more on Han migration to Tibetan areas as part of the GWDC, see: Emily Yeh and Elizabeth Wharton, “Going West and Going Out: Discourses, Migrants, and Models in Chinese Development,” *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 57, no. 3 (2016): 286-315.

Driving away from the village, Nazhen describes seeing a river flowing in the distance. She notes that:

> 那湍流声好像我心底的哀泣，像村庄破败的血液
>
> The sounds of the babbling is like the wailing of my heart, like the life blood of the destroyed village

Nazhen's use of the adjective "destroyed", denoting ruin, devastation and wreckage, describes the impact of rapid construction on the village. This is further emphasised by her depiction of the "life blood" of the village, signifying a perceived spirit and essence of the village appearing to flow out and away. Her use of similes to liken the flowing river and reference to "my heart" draw attention to her close emotional connection with the land, while "life blood" and "wailing" conjure a sense of injury and suffering.

Nazhen's description of material transformation in negative terms resonates closely with the work of Tsering Woeser. In her blog post "Lhasa in the Month of February" (*Eryue de Lasa* 二月的拉萨) in March 2010, Woeser describes how:

> 在拉萨河谷的周围，过去有"八瓣莲花"之称的群山，如今被开矿的机器挖得支离破碎 […] 被弄脏的水却污染了农民的田地，甚至使得牲畜倒毙，农民们患上怪病
>
> Around the Lhasa river valley, there were once mountains known as 'Eight Lotus Petals'. Today this has been dug up and broken down by mining machines and destroyed […] Contaminated water polluted the farming lands, even leading livestock to nasty deaths and the farmers to suffer strange illnesses.[524]

[524] Tsering Woeser, "Eryue de Lasa" 二月的拉萨 [Lhasa in the Month of February], *Invisible Tibet*, March 4, 2010, http://woeser.middle-way.net/2010/03/blog-post_04.html

Woeser's account of the demolition of the mountains echoes many themes in Nazhen's essays. Her use of active verbs such as "dug up", "broken down", and "destroyed" denote the impact of resource extraction upon the landscape around Lhasa. Her juxtaposition of temporal phrases "there were once" and "today" draw attention to the scale of change that has taken place. She references the mountains' nickname as "Eight Lotus Petals," emphasising the mountains as more than a geographical feature and showcasing local regimes of cultural value, spiritual significance, and place-based knowledge. She uses the adjectives "contaminated" and "polluted" to further stress the impact of mining on the locality. Moreover, reference to the deaths and illness are syntactically linked to the mining pollution through the connecting verb "leading". The adjective use of "nasty" and "strange" add further detail to the deaths and illnesses, compounding the sense of degree and impact that pollution has had.

Pollution was again highlighted as a serious result of rapid development in an open letter posted to Tibetcul in 2011.[525] The online post, written by monks and lay people at Kumbum Monastery, was addressed to the provincial, municipal and county-level officials, and the State Council, and described the "agonizing disaster" (*cantong de zainan* 惨痛的灾难) that mining practices around the sacred Kumbum Monastery had inflicted on the local environment. The piece described in detail the surroundings of the monastery before moving onto the impact of mining:

[525] The original post was later deleted, but reposted in full to Woeser's blog: "Shenshan bei wa, shuiyan bei wu, renmin qian zhongdu – laizi taer si seng zhong ji xinzhong de huyu shu" 神山被挖，水源被污，人民铅中毒——来自塔尔寺僧众及信众的呼吁书 [A Sacred Mountain Dug, a Water Source Polluted, the People Poisoned – A Letter of Appeal from the Monks and Believers of Ta'er Monastery], *Invisible Tibet*, July 17, 2011, http://woeser.middle-way.net/2011/07/blog-post_9981.html

水美山美地美人美的人间美景，神山神水滋养着当地各族人民。而且拉莫日是拉莫护法神的道场在信徒心中非常神圣

A beautiful place in the human world with beautiful waters, beautiful mountains, beautiful land, and beautiful people, where the holy mountains and holy waters nourish people of all nationalities. Moreover, Lhamo Mountain is the place of enlightenment of the protector deity Lhamo, and occupies a very sacred place in the heart of believers

塔尔寺周围引进的高耗能企业，开矿取石，破坏神山体系，地理风貌，历史环境景观受到影响；高污染企业，排放毒气灰尘，蓝天秀水不在空气浑浊质量差

The energy-intensive mining operations attracted to the area around Kumbum Monastery excavate ore, destroy sacred mountains, adversely affect the historical environment and scenery; these high-polluting enterprises emit toxic gases and dust, and blue skies and clear waters are no longer visible through the mass of muddy air.

The repetition of the adjectives “beautiful” and “holy” emphasise both the natural and religious value attributed by locals and pilgrims to the area. They are mobilised to represent a deep-seated cultural and spiritual attachment to the land. Indeed, they often draw from and contribute to broader ‘Green Tibetan’ discourses produced by the Tibetan government in exile, their western supporters, and transnational conservation activists, which tend to emphasise “Tibetans living in harmony with their natural environment through indigenous and religious wisdom.”[526] This is further invoked through reference to local deities and significant religious events that are tied to the mountain. These cultural and spiritual

[526] Emily Woodhouse, Martin A. Mills, Philip J. K. McGowan, and E.J. Milner-Gulland, “Religious Relationships with the Environment in a Tibetan Rural Community: Interactions and Contrasts with Popular Notions of Indigenous Environmentalism,” *Human Ecology* 43, no. 2 (2015): 295.

connections are characterised as displaced by the industrialisation of the area, compounding the sense of harm and destruction. The adjectives "sacred" and "historical", as well as imagery of "blue skies and clear waters" are used to further amplify the scale and significant impact of pollution and destruction in the area. The text lists the activities of local industries, directly linking them to the destruction of "a very sacred place," while using intensifying adjectives such as "high" and "adversely" to stress severity.

In contrast to discourses of harmony between environmental and developmental concerns in state media, Tibetans represent Tibet as overwhelmed by material transformation. Throughout these texts, material transformation is described in terms of destruction, pollution and environmental degradation, while also deeply entangled with concerns for cultural and spiritual bonds with the landscape.

### 4.5.3 "The Potala Palace is not Tian'anmen": Cultural Erosion and Assimilation

Alongside the discourse of pollution and destruction, online Tibetan responses to state discourses of material transformation also focus on the cultural impact of material development. Barley is a particularly prominent reference within these discussions. Jangbu, one of Tibet's most well-known writers, has described Tibetans themselves as "grains of barley."[527] Indeed, barley, used in various religious ceremonies and festivals, possesses enormous socio-cultural value for Tibetan people.[528] It is rich in territorial meanings, operating as an object and symbol that recalls collective memories and experiences of rootedness to place.

Baima Nazhen has made repeated references to barley in the context of material transformation across Tibet, noting in a 2009 essay that:

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[527] Heather Stoddard, "Introduction," in *The Nine-Eyed Agate: Poems and Stories* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2000), xxv.
[528] Yannick, "The Tibetans in the Making Barley Cultivation and Cultural Representations."

> 青稞意味着一切：家园，大地，尊严和幸福的生活
>
> Barley means everything: homeland, earth, dignity and happy life."[529]

In "Work without Song," she writes:

> 汉地菜农们在土地里施入大量农药、化肥后，还能马上种出芬芳的青稞吗?
>
> After Han vegetable farmers have used large amounts of pesticide and fertilizer on the lands, will it be possible to immediately grow the fragrant smelling barley?[530]

Similarly, in "Monsters in the Village," Nazhen laments that:

> 意味着世世代代养育藏族人的青稞将被外来的陌生的农作物代替
>
> the barley cultivated by generations and generations of Tibetans will in the future be replaced by crops from outside[531]

The phrase "generations and generations of Tibetans" locates barley within a wider historical frame of tradition and culture and demonstrates an ancestral connection across time. Indeed, as Yannick has noted, among some Tibetan communities, the preservation of barley is seen as "respect for their ancestors as these resources were preserved by their ancestors from generation to generation and thus should not be

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[529] "[Dujia lianzai] Baima nazhen changpian xiaoshuo 'fuhuo de dumu'" [独家连载] 白玛娜珍长篇小说《复活的度母》 [[Exclusive Series] Baima Nazhen's Novel 'Resurrection of Tama'], *Tibetcul,* September 25, 2009, http://wx.tibetcul.com/zuopin/xs/201509/35830_20.html

[530] "[Dujia lianzai] Baima nazhen sanwen ji 'xizang' de yueguang' zhi 'lasa de huolu' [独家连载] 白玛娜珍散文集《西藏的月光》之《拉萨的活路》 [Exclusive Series] Essay Collection of Baima Nazhen "Moonlight of Tibet's "Lhasa's Means of Subsistence."

[531] Baima Nazhen, "Cunzhuang li de mogui" 村庄里的魔鬼 [The Monster in the Village].

discarded."[532] Indeed, as Nazhen notes, barley is also a source of "dignity", clearly signifying its significance in terms of Tibetan cultural integrity and pride. In this sense, the significance of barley being "replaced by crops from outside" cannot be understated. This sense of external threat and a compulsion to defend is further invoked through reference to "Han vegetable farmers" using pesticides on the land, jeopardizing future cultivation of "fragrant smelling barley" and symbolizing the displacement of Tibetans themselves from the land.

Prominent Tibetan writer Yangjin describes barley cultivation in similar terms:

> 青稞是藏民族的主食，青稞酒是藏民族的饮品，缺一不可。如今，[。。。] 雅砻河谷的耕地却在逐年减少，那里曾经被誉为西藏第二大粮仓，城市化的蚕食使它的命运在逐渐走向没落
>
> Barley is the staple food of Tibetans and barley beer is the drink of Tibetans. We cannot do without it. Today […] Yalong Valley's arable land is dwindling. There, the fate of this place once hailed as Tibet's second largest granary is looking increasingly dark as it is swallowed up by urbanisation."[533]

The phrase "we cannot do without it" again highlights the cultural significance of barley and its centrality to notions of Tibetan identity. The verbal phrases "is dwindling", "is swallowed up" and "looking increasingly dark" establish a sense of deterioration, while urbanisation is directly identified as the agent of this process through the preposition "by". Material transformation is thus discursively constructed as a source and agent not just of destruction of the landscape, but also as a force in bringing about the decline of the Tibetan people themselves.

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[532] Yannick, "The Tibetans in the Making Barley Cultivation and Cultural Representations," 75.

[533] Yangjin 央金, "Yangjin: bei shijian yaguo de meitian" 央金：被时间轧过的麦田 [Yangjin: The Barley Fields Crushed by Time], *Tibetcul*, June 10, 2015, Last modified June 5, 2016, http://wx.tibetcul.com/xrxz/xs/201506/34958.html

Though an especially potent symbol of Tibet, cultural anxieties extend much further than just barley. In a poem that circulated on WeChat in June 2015, but was later deleted, the author writes of his fear of the traditional Tibetan nomadic tents fading away under the weight of urbanisation:

> 而此时的黑帐篷
> 却消逝在高楼大厦的背影里
> And yet the black tents now
> Disappear behind the high-rise buildings[534]

The poem dramatically positions the "high-rise buildings" as eclipsing the traditional nomadic black tents from view. Similarly marking a connection between urbanization and the erasure of Tibetan culture, Zhaxi Cairang 扎西才让 writes:

> 当一个个繁华热闹的城镇，雨后春笋般宣告着工业时代的胜利，我们注定，将要成为失去故乡的一代。
> when one after another bustling towns spring up like bamboo shoots after a spring rain, announcing the victories of the industrial age, we are destined to become the generation who loses our homeland.[535]

Urbanisation and cultural erosion are again linked through the final clause in which the author describes how Tibetans will "lose our homeland" as

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[534] Naxize Dan (丹·那西泽), "Dai wo gui xiang hai neng kanjian hei zhangpeng ma?" 待我归乡 还能看见黑帐篷吗？ [When I Return Home, Will I Still Be Able to See the Black Tent?], *Wechat*, June 15, 2016, http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/zilb3DOC1lL9v5Wf0TihFg

[535] Gangjie Suomudong 刚杰·索木东, "Zhaxi Cairang: Xiang baozi yiyang lüeguo caoyuan" 扎西才让：像豹子一样掠过草原 [Zhaxi Cairang: Like a Leopard Grazing the Grasslands], *Tibetcul,* September 13, 2013, http://wx.tibetcul.com/zhuanti/pl/201309/32267.html

the “bustling towns” expand. The use of the Chinese idiom “spring up like bamboo shoots after a spring rain” emphasizes the rapid pace of construction and transformation. The collective sense of loss is intensified through the possessive pronouns “we” and “our”, while reference to “generations” again illuminates the sense of cultural erosion, ancestral dislocation, and displacement of Tibetans from their homeland under increased pressure of urbanisation across the plateau over time.

The cultural impact of urbanisation in Lhasa is a topic that also receives significant attention among Tibetans online. This is not surprising given Lhasa’s culturally significant status as the home of the Potala Palace and “the heart of the imagined Tibetan nation.” [536] Woeser has been particularly vocal about the material transformation of Lhasa in recent years and has written numerous blogs on the topic. In 2013, she posted an essay on Weibo calling for immediate efforts to “save Lhasa” (*jiujiu Lasa* 救救拉萨) from further demolition and destruction.[537] The essay was read over 500,000 times before getting deleted and even received a full rebuttal from the *People’s Daily*, which responded that there was no “great demolition or great reconstruction”(*dachaidajian* 大拆大建) of Lhasa’s Old City, as Woeser had suggested.[538] Woeser responded with a further essay, which listed a number of examples of the “ceaseless surgery” (*wuxiuwuzhi de zhengrong* 无休无止的整容) Lhasa has undergone in recent years, most notably the Potala Place:

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[536] Clare Harris, “The Potala Palace: Remembering to Forget in Contemporary Tibet,” 65.

[537] Tsering Woeser, “Women de Lasa kuai bei huile! Jiu jiu Lasa ba!!” 我们的拉萨快被毁了！救救拉萨吧！！ [Our Lhasa Will Soon Be Destroyed! Let’s Save Lhasa!!], *Invisible Tibet*, May 7, 2013, http://woeser.middle-way.net/2013/05/blog-post_7.html

[538] Junjie Han (韩俊杰), “Lasa lao cheng ‘da chai da jian’ bu shi (qiuzheng tanxun xuanhua beihou de zhenxiang) (拉萨老城“大拆大建”不实（求证·探寻喧哗背后的真相 [Lhasa’s Old Town’s ‘Great Demolition and Great Reconstruction’ Is Not True" (Seeking Fact and Finding Truth behind the Clamour). *People’s Daily,* May 13, 2013, accessed June 13, 2017, http://society.people.com.cn/n/2013/0513/c1008-21453836.html

> 布达拉宫并非天安门；然而把布达拉宫变成天安门，再强行塞给布达拉宫一个有着纪念碑、升旗台、地下人行通道的天安门广场，既透露了把宗教意义的布达拉宫改造成具有殖民意义的政治场所的用心
>
> The Potala Palace is not Tian'anmen; but they have made it into Tian'anmen, forcing upon it a Tian'anmen Square with a monument, a flag pedestal and underground walkways; this reveals that their intention is to transform the religiously significant Potala Palace into a political entity of strong colonial features[539]

The text describes the Potala Palace, the most powerful cultural symbol of Tibet, as the target of political transformation. Declaring it to have become another Tian'anmen, an embodiment of the political power of the Chinese state, the text dramatically highlights China's cultural and political assimilation of Tibet. Alongside this discursive play of symbolic geography, the text engages the verb "forced" and the adjectival descriptor "colonial" to further stress the presence and weight of power at work in the transformation of Lhasa.

While other texts emphasise the ways in which material transformation is leading to cultural erosion, Woeser's writings are unique in also taking explicit aim at the ways in which it is being used to expand state power. In another essay written in 2012, Woeser describes the significance of changing street names to reflect various places in China. Writing on "Beijing Road", "Xinhua Road", and "Jiangsu Road", she notes that:

[539] Tsering Woeser, "Jiu Lasa lao cheng zhuangkuang, wo zai tuite shang dui 'renmin ribao' de huifu" ( 就拉萨老城状况，我在推特上对《人民日报》的回复 [Regarding the Situation of Lhasa's Old City, My Response on Twitter to the 'People's Daily'], *Invisible Tibet*, May 18, 2013, accessed June 14, 2017, http://woeser.middle-way.net/2013/05/blog-post_18.html

> 拉萨已经陷入一大堆与自己的历史、传统和文化完全无关的新名词之中 […] 一个个中国各地的名字，为的是把图伯特完全地“中国化”，让图伯特逐渐地消失在“中国”的符号之中，说到底，这完全是一种殖民行为
>
> Lhasa is submerged under a pile of new names that have absolutely nothing to do with its history, tradition, or culture […] Each and every name from different parts of China is an attempt to completely Sinify Tibet, to make Tibet gradually disappear within the signs of ‘China’. In the end, this is totally an act of colonialism.[540]

Woeser uses the language of excess and the sheer overwhelmingness of material transformation on the landscape. “Submerged”, just as Nazhen noted that urban culture was “gushing in”, invokes a sense of Tibet being saturated and inundated by the imposition of new place names. Their lack of connection to the city are emphasised in the phrase “absolutely nothing to do with,” magnifying their otherness and externality to Tibetan history, tradition and culture. Again explicitly referencing the inherent power dynamics that underpin the place naming process,[541] Woeser described this as “an act of colonialism” and an attempt to “Sinify Tibet,” heightened in both cases by the adverbial intensifiers “completely” and “totally”. Indeed, for Woeser, material transformation is much more than simply an act of cultural erosion; it is also deeply invested in state mechanisms of control and place-making.

The texts thus characterise the rise of buildings, rapid urbanisation, changing cultural practices and changing urban aesthetics as a threat to

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[540] Tsering Woeser, “Cong Lasa de Xin mianmao shuo qi” 从拉萨的新面貌说起 [The New Face of Lhasa], *Invisible Tibet*, July 15, 2012, http://woeser.middle-way.net/2012/07/blog-post_15.html

[541] Reuben Rose-Redwood and Derek Alderman, “Critical Interventions in Political Toponymy,” *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 10, no.1 (2011): 3.

cultural coherency and connections to place, leading to fears of cultural erosion and assimilation.

### 4.6 Discussion

This section examines the overarching discourses analysed above and how they contribute to practices of power and resistance in Tibet. I begin by discussing how material transformation is constructed in state media, how it is used to project a particular kind of Tibetan modernity, and how this forms part of a cultural governance strategy to consolidate state power. I then examine how Tibetans challenge this through strategies of counter-storytelling and strategic essentialism. Paying particular attention to place and sense of place, I will show how homeland is central to this process and how it is mobilised to contest state discourses of Tibetan modernity.

State media discourses surrounding material transformation are heavily imbued with a concern for bolstering state authority, legitimacy and sovereignty. This is firstly enacted through discourses of spectacle and integration, which celebrate state power through references to national struggle, achievements and glory in the construction of large-scale infrastructural projects across Tibet. Alongside conquering the landscape of Tibet through various mega-projects, these discourses repeatedly attempt to naturalise and normalise Tibet's place within the PRC through references to increased integration with interior China. Moreover, serving to counteract widespread criticism of environmental degradation as part of rapid material development, discourse of harmony between developmental and environmental concerns reinforce state power by focusing on the state as a responsible, competent and committed actor in safeguarding environmental protection and thereby conveying "notions such as influence, patronage, or leadership."[542] This can also be seen as an evolving top-down discourse of "sustainable colonialism", through

[542] Daniel Kendie, "How Useful is Gramsci's Theory of Hegemony and Domination to the Study of African States?" 90.

which the Chinese state emphasises its necessary and positive role in environmental protection and sustainability in Tibet, while also obfuscating the colonial power relations and resource extraction so central to Tibetan modernity.[543] In this way, these discourses on the importance of safeguarding Tibet's environment bolsters the image of the state as a responsible 'green' actor, justify Chinese intervention, while also obscuring the colonial terms of their presence. These discourses converge to produce a political ecology that reinforces China's authority over Tibet and Tibet's place within the PRC.

The repeated commitment to material spectacles and environmental protection are also discursively represented as a 'gift' to Tibetans, reifying the asymmetric relations between Tibetans and the state. As Yeh has noted, the very reception of the gift of development "becomes an act of recognition by Tibetans of the Chinese state as their state and of PRC territory as a space within which they are bound, that is, a process of state territorialisation."[544] My analysis shows how this process is discursively reinforced through state media's detailed descriptions of state altruism and generosity in "bringing modernisation" to Tibet and locating it within a discourse of "our country". The discursive construction of Tibetans as always at the receiving end of the state's gift-giving also characterises Tibetans as passive, dependent, and in need of state guidance. Further to this process, by invisibilising Tibetan agency, the state is then centered as the protector of Tibet's environment. Reaffirming the Han-dominated state as the rightful and legitimate guardian of the Tibetan plateau, this reinforces the "semiotics of domination and subordination" that underscores Han-Tibetan relations.[545] Further mapping the state's claims to geographical territory and authority, these discourses entrench Tibet within China's national imaginary and "secure

[543] Parson and Ray, "Sustainable Colonization: Tar Sands as Resource Colonialism," 69.
[544] Yeh, *Taming Tibet,* 17.
[545] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 10.

the unstable edges of state territorial sovereignty over Tibet"[546] while also alienating Tibetans from active involvement in its governance. These discursive representations of Tibetan modernity as a site of infrastructural spectacles and environmental vibrancy are an ideological practice that attempt to generate consent and support for material transformation in Tibet through an appeal to nationalist desires. A system of cultural governance is thus operationalised through these texts in order to uphold and reproduce a particular set of knowledge about Tibetan modernity in the name of territorial integrity, national security, and social stability.

Tibetans counter state discourses of material transformation and its related representation of Tibetan modernity in a number of key ways. Firstly, far from celebrating state mega-projects as a form of national pride, Tibetan texts describe material transformation primarily in terms of widespread pollution and environmental degradation. Depicted as overwhelming rural and urban Tibet, such projects are described in terms of "destruction" and "wreckage" of the natural landscape. Invoking the materiality of plastic and concrete as symbols of external forces of change, these texts repeatedly portray material transformation as a process of cultural and spiritual displacement and assimilation. Discursively constructed in terms of ancestral connections and rootedness to place, barley functions as a symbol of territorial connection. Alongside black tents and other cultural practices, its decline serves to emphasise the impact of urbanisation, rampant construction, inward migration, and changing agricultural practices.

Standing in stark contrast to the celebratory tone of state media, these texts operate as acts of counter-storytelling, serving to "interpret events in opposition to the dominant narratives."[547] Notable in the case of reference to sacred sites, these texts centre stories of displacement of traditional ways of living on land, as well as understandings of

[546] Yeh, "From Wasteland to Wetland? Nature and Nation in China's Tibet," 130.
[547] Montoya, "Celebrating Racialized Legal Narratives," 245.

peoplehood, memories, and meanings.[548] By focusing on spiritual connections to land through reference to sacred sites, Tibetans use local religious ideals and knowledge to resist and counter the secular state ideology.[549] This could be read as promoting a kind of "indigenous nationalism" that props up existing stereotypes about Tibetans as being "so 'close to nature' that they risk being collapsed into nature itself."[550] However, it can also be seen as an instance of strategic essentialism, or a "strategy for collective representation in order to pursue chosen political ends."[551] Through emphasising cultural and spiritual connections to land, these discourses represent an important act of demarcating difference and even incompatibility with state visions of Tibetan modernity. Rather than reading this as simply an essentialising expression of Tibetanness as quintessentially spiritual subjects, it may instead be seen as part of a necessary strategy, within a tightly regulated public discourse, in the cultural struggle over how Tibetan landscapes "should be named, protected and developed."[552] As such, these texts constitute a notable discursive act of resistance that challenge the hegemony of state media reportage and its related representations of Tibetan modernity by re-centring Tibetan perspectives of homeland in discussions about material transformation in Tibet.

An important part of Tibetan counter-stories is the place of homeland. Both *place* and *sense of place*, two foundational ingredients of homeland's make-up, are particularly prominent in Tibetan discussions of material transformation and are worth examining in depth.

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[548] McGaw et al, "Indigenous Place-Making in the City: Dispossessions, Occupations and Implications for Cultural Architecture," 297.
[549] Woodhouse et al, "Religious Relationships with the Environment in a Tibetan Rural Community: Interactions and Contrasts with Popular Notions of Indigenous Environmentalism."
[550] Yeh, "From Wasteland to Wetland? Nature and Nation in China's Tibet," 105.
[551] Pande, "Strategic Essentialism," 6817.
[552] Litzinger, "The Mobilization of 'Nature': Perspectives from Northwest Yunnan," 492.

*Place* refers to the connection to homeland through tangible and intangible cultural markers that demonstrate an adjustment to social territory over time. *Sense of place* refers to the emotional feeling of attachment of a people for a particular place and manifests itself in terms of culture and economy being tied to the land, or through an imprinting of a distinct cultural and material culture system onto the land. It encompasses demonstrations of attachment, desire to possess, and compulsion to defend.[553] Both *place* and *sense of place* can be seen in Tibetans' use of barley as a potent symbol of cultural heritage and ancestral connection, drawing attention to longstanding tradition and cultural ties to the land. Similarly, black tents, street signs and the Potala Palace also further demonstrate a strong sense of connection and attachment to a particular social territory. Using these enduring symbolic landmarks to emphasise both relationship to land and place, and the cultural impact of material transformation, Tibetans decentre the spectacle and achievement of state mega-projects and other forms of large-scale development. Similarly, references to sacred and holy sites construct a land "animated with a pantheon of gods and supernatural beings." [554] This spiritual connection to place, while potentially essentialising in many ways, works to displace secular state ideology in material transformation and reasserts a Tibetan identity based on a distinct kind of human-land relations. Also serving to emphasise a distinct social territory, Tibetans mobilise homeland to resist state place-making practices and assimilation. In doing so, they reject the state media discourses of integration and critique the impact of material transformation on the Tibetan environment and culture. As such, through place and sense of place, Tibetans represent Tibetan modernity as highly power-laden terrain within which the Han-dominated state's program of material transformation is heavily implicated in the erosion of cultural and material culture systems binding Tibetans to the land.

[553] Nostrand and Estaville, Jr., "Introduction: The Homeland Concept."
[554] Dan Smyer Yu, *Mindscaping the Landscape of Tibet*, 7.

Through *place* and *sense of place*, homeland is an important tool of resistance to state media accounts of material transformation in Tibet. Tibetan modernity is represented as a terrain swamped by externally-imposed processes of construction, urbanisation and other forms of material transformation. Enacting what Montoya describes as "discursive subversion," Tibetans variously displace and disrupt official discourses by drawing attention to the negative impact on their homeland.[555] Through centring place and sense of place, Tibetans enact a 'war of position' against the single-story of material transformation as it appears in state media, attempting to present an alternative perspective to guide public opinion and to replace the hegemonic official accounts. In doing so, they mobilise homeland as a way of challenging accepted truths promoted in state media and deploy online discourses that expose the negative environmental and cultural impact of rapid material transformation across the plateau.

By centring their cultural and spiritual connections to homeland, they also affirm ethnic boundaries and distinctions from the Han-dominated state through discourses of we/us/our and they/them/their. This assertion of a collective identity, often through self-essentialising claims, is a further function of homeland as a counter story to material transformation, and acts as a resistance to state attempts to integrate Tibet into the Chinese nation. In this sense, homeland is deployed as a discursive practice of resistance, disrupting state media discourses of material transformation as spectacle, harmony and happiness, and promoting Tibetan counter-stories that decentre state place-making practices.

### 4.7 Summary

This chapter examined the online politics of representation surrounding material development in contemporary Tibet. I found that state media represent Tibetan modernity as a site of engineering wonders, environmental protection, and Tibetan happiness. In doing so, it

[555] Montoya, "Celebrating Racialized Legal Narratives," 244.

promotes a discourse of national pride and integration, and focuses on the Chinese state's role in bringing 'modern civilisation' to Tibet through the rapid development of infrastructure, urbanisation and resource extraction. Working to discursively territorialise Tibet within the Chinese national imaginary and reinforcing the hegemony of state power, these discourses thus contribute to cultural governance practices and reinforce state authority, boundaries and sovereignty over Tibet. In contrast, Tibetans represent modernity as a site of environmental degradation wherein their cultural and spiritual attachments to land are jeopardized and displaced by rapid and dramatic material transformation. By centring homeland through *place* and *sense of place*, Tibetans advance a critique of the state project of material transformation and secular state ideals more broadly. In doing so, homeland becomes a discursive practice through which Tibetans mobilise historical, cultural and spiritual attachments to land as a way of articulating a distinctly Tibetan territory and critiquing state power.

# 5. Losing the "Spirit of the Grasslands": Discourses of Economic Development and Cultural Commercialisation

## 5.1 Introduction

A core concern of the GWDC is the pursuit of national unity, social stability and state security through promoting economic development across China's 'restive' Western regions.[556] Heralded as a solution to 'the ethnic problem' in Tibet, economic development is characterised as an effective way of assimilating Tibet into the mainstream Chinese economy, thereby facilitating greater national integration.[557] As part of this nation-building project, Tibetan culture has been spotlighted as a potential resource for generating economic growth. While the commodification of Tibetan culture may provide some opportunities for greater visibility, recognition and identity formation for Tibetans,[558] this program of 'cultural development' (*wenhua fazhan* 文化发展) has also produced a "contested regime of value" between state and Tibetan society over the relationship between economic development and cultural authenticity.[559] How does state media frame and communicate this project, and how does it contribute to a broader state representation of Tibetan modernity? In what ways do Tibetans counter such discourses across online spaces, and how do they mobilise homeland as a tool of resistance against official representations?

In this chapter, I examine the online politics of representation surrounding economic development and cultural commercialisation in contemporary Tibet. Using CDA, I identify how state discourses promote notions of harmony between economic development and cultural preservation, and

[556] Susette Cooke, "Merging Tibetan Culture into the Chinese Economic Fast Lane," *China Perspectives* 50 (2003): 1-19.
[557] Zang, *Ethnicity in China*.
[558] John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnicity Inc* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 27.
[559] Yeh, "Blazing Pelts and Burning Passions: Nationalism, Cultural Politics and Spectacular Decommodification in Tibet," 321.

of a new Tibetan subjectivity grounded in diligence, self-responsibility, and entrepreneurial dreams. I argue that these texts produce a "moral economy of cultural identity," which characterises the state as the rightful guardian of Tibetan culture and facilitator of Tibetan empowerment.[560] I describe how these practices of cultural governance generate public support and consent for state policies in Tibet, and further embed Tibet within a national imaginary of the PRC. I then examine Tibetan resistance to these official discourses. With particular attention to the 2015 discussions of the trade and slaughter of the Tibetan mastiff, I analyse how Tibetans critique and counter state-led economic development and cultural commercialisation with stories of corruption, cultural alienation, and a sense of identity crisis. In doing so, I argue that Tibetans mobilise *people*, the third core ingredient of homeland, as a discursive practice to critique the negative impact of state-led economic development and cultural commercialisation on Tibetan identity, and to reject the market ideologies of the state.

In terms of structure, this chapter is divided into five main sections. I begin by briefly describing my methodological approach. I then provide recent historical context to practices of economic development and cultural commercialisation in contemporary Tibet, and how these relate to promoting particular kinds of subjectivity formation. Following this, I examine how this is represented in state media, and how this contributes to the production of cultural governance and state hegemony. I then examine Tibetan counter-stories, with a particular focus on the trade and slaughter of the Tibetan mastiff in 2015. The final section of this chapter brings my findings together through the lens of *people* to discuss how Tibetans challenge state media representations of Tibetan modernity as characterised through news stories about economic development.

[560] Martin Saxer, "The Moral Economy of Cultural Identity: Tibet, Cultural Survival, and the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage," *Civilizations* 61, no.1 (2012): 65-81.

## 5.2 Methodology

To build a corpus of state media texts on the topic of economic development and cultural commercialisation, I first tried terms such as 'economy' (*jingji* 经济), 'economic development' (*jingji fazhan* 经济发展), 'trade' and 'business' (*shangye* 商业), and 'culture' (*wenhua* 文化) with 'Tibet' (*Xizang* 西藏), 'Tibetan areas' (*Zangqu* 藏区; *Zangdi* 藏地) and 'Tibetan' (*Zangzu* 藏族). I found that using the specific combination of terms 'Tibetan', 'economy' and 'culture' broadly provided the most relevant results for this chapter and generated a suitable sample, which in total was 1,978 news pieces produced between January 1st 2000 and December 31st 2017. State media output peaks between the years 2008 and 2012, which is broadly in line with the master corpus described in Chapter Three.

For Tibetan texts, I first searched a similar combinations of key words through Tibetcul, and also added in other related terms that I have seen used to engage this topic, such as 'money' (*qian* 钱), 'city' (*chengshi* 城市) and 'cheat' (*pian* 骗). Finding that the Tibetan mastiff incident was overwhelmingly the dominant subject in my search results and broadly representative of the discourse at large, I chose this as the central topic of analysis for this chapter. I also supplemented these texts with related discussions of economic development and cultural commercialisation from Tibetcul, Weibo, and Wechat. This resulted in a total of 166 texts, from which I chose 30 texts for analysis.

## 5.3 Tibet for Sale: Culture Markets and Changing Subjectivities

In the era of the GWDC, it is difficult to find a single article about Tibet in Chinese state media and not encounter at least one reference to economic development. While the state's obsession with stimulating economic development in Tibet is certainly not new, the accelerated approach and the heightened focus on culture as a resource for generating economic growth is unprecedented and forms a particularly prominent feature of the GWDC.

The state's notable concern for economic development in Tibet is variously reflected in government white papers, party congress reports, and speeches by leading political figures. In 2001, the then Chinese president Hu Jintao, while at a rally to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 'peaceful liberation' of Tibet, stated:

> Rapid economic development is the fundamental condition for realizing the interests of all ethnic groups in Tibet and also the basic guarantee for greater ethnic unity and continued stability there.[561]

President Hu's words capture the state's strong belief in the potential of economic development to resolve ongoing issues of social unrest and inter-ethnic conflict in Tibet, and to ensure social stability and state security.

As a significant part of efforts to promote economic development under the GWDC, provincial and local governments in Tibet began calling for 'cultural development' (*wenhua fazhan* 文化发展). This broadly refers to the preservation and commodification of ethnic traditions that are deemed to contribute to an area's overall economic development.[562] Cultural development has been described by Oakes as "the pervasive metropolitan desire to preserve and commodify the exotic artefacts of ethnic tradition [and] can be interpreted as the latest version of internal colonialism."[563] While Oakes was writing on Guizhou in the 1990s, a similar trend was also taking place across China more broadly at the time.

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[561] "Full Text of Speech by Hu Jintao at Tibet's Peaceful Liberation." *People's Daily*, December 12, 2008, accessed June 10, 2018, http://chinatibet.people.com.cn/96062/96104/6552511.html
[562] Tim Oakes, "Selling Guizhou: Cultural Development in an Era of Marketization," in *The Political Economy of China's Provinces*, ed. Hans J. Hendrischke (New York: Routledge, 1999), 32.
[563] Ibid.

Following on from the 'cultural fever' (*wenhua re* 文化热) of the 1980s, the state was working hard to shore up its legitimacy among an alienated post-socialist population in the wake of 1989 by revving up nationalist fervour.[564] During this time, local governments began to embrace a 'cultural turn' approach to regional development, which began to treat "culture as a renewable resource, subject to the laws of supply and demand."[565] More recently, this has converged with broader official efforts to cultivate a 'commodity consciousness' (*shangpin yishi* 商品意识) "as a necessary prerequisite for becoming modern Chinese citizens suitable for China's growing global power."[566] With many ethnic minority areas in western China suffering from a lack of capital investment, cultural resources have increasingly become a potential economic resource for development planners to exploit these trends.[567]

Tibet was no exception to this 'cultural turn' approach to economic development. In the mid-1990s, 'Tibet Fever' (*Xizang re* 西藏热), a fetishism for all things Tibetan, erupted among China's middle class Han urbanites. Celebrated as "an Arcadia outside alienating modernity," Tibet has long been heavily exoticised and romanticised as a site of "devoutness, sacred landscapes, and kindhearted Tibetans," an enchanted alternative to the boisterous and hectic modern life of interior urban China.[568] With the emergence of "new circuits of commodity production and consumption" across China since the 1990s, middle-class

[564] Ralph Litzinger, "Theorizing Postsocialism: Reflections on the Politics of Marginality in Contemporary China," 88.
[565] Andreas Wilkes cited in: Ralph Litzinger, "The Mobilization of 'Nature': Perspectives from Northwest Yunnan," *The China Quarterly* 178 (2004): 489.
[566] Yeh, "Blazing Pelts and Burning Passions: Nationalism, Cultural Politics and Spectacular Decommodification in Tibet," 340.
[567] Tim Oakes, "Cultural Strategies of Development: Implications for Village Governance in China," *The Pacific Review* 19, no.1 (2006): 14.
[568] Hong Zhu and Junxi Qian, "Drifting" in Lhasa: Cultural Encounter, Contested Modernity, and the Negotiation of Tibetanness," 150.

desires for cultural authenticity through the 'ethnic other' began to fuel a new market for all things Tibetan.[569]

While tourism in Tibet was first promoted in 1996 as a new 'pillar industry' (*zhizhu chanye* 支柱产业) under the 10th Five-Year Plan (2001-2005), the completion of the Qinghai-Tibet railway in 2006 and the emergence of a middle-class population across China with the means and interest to travel have had an enormous impact on Tibet's culture industries.[570] While construction and government administration have accounted for a major share of economic growth in the TAR since the 2000s,[571] subsequent Five-Year Plans have placed considerable attention on Tibet's culture and nature-based tourism as a way to generate economic development.[572] Cooke notes this as an attempt to promote economic development by integrating Tibetan culture into the socialist market economy.[573] As Litzinger notes, these "neo-liberal dreams" of collapsing everything into a commodity to be exchanged on the market are also seen "as a panacea for the increasing problems of poverty and unequal development" across ethnic minority regions in China.[574]

As part of the GWDC efforts to stimulate economic growth, Tibetan culture has become increasingly marketised and commodified. Yeh notes this in the case of Tibetan horse-racing festivals, where even Tibetans themselves are encouraged to "turn themselves into commodities."[575]

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[569] Ralph Litzinger, "Afterword: The Afterlives of Shangrila," 280.
[570] Ben Hillman, "China's Many Tibets: Diqing as a Model for 'Development with Tibetan Characteristics?" *Asian Ethnicity*, 11, no.2 ((2010): 269-277.
[571] Andrew Fischer, "The Great Transformation of Tibet? Rapid Labour Transitions in Times of Rapid Growth," *The Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies* 30, no.1-2 (2011): 66.
[572] "Full Text: Report on the Economic and Social Development of Tibet." *CCTV*, March 30, 2009, accessed June 15, 2017, http://www.cctv.com/english/20090330/106989.shtml
[573] Cooke, "Merging Tibetan Culture into the Chinese Economic Fast Lane," 5.
[574] Litzinger, "The Mobilization of 'Nature': Perspectives from Northwest Yunnan," 504.
[575] Yeh, "Blazing Pelts and Burning Passions: Nationalism, Cultural Politics and Spectacular Decommodification in Tibet," 340.

Within an era of deepening ethno-commodification, Tibetan cultural capital has become a resource that can be exploited in order to "improve business environment, promote entrepreneurship, and encourage private capital to participate in the development of the western regions."[576] As part of its 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020), the Tibet Autonomous Region announced plans to turn the culture industry into "one of the region's national economic pillar industry [*sic*] by 2020" and seeks to "improve the systems of Tibetan unique culture industry [and] modern cultural market."[577] Similar efforts are being made in Tibetan areas across Qinghai, where *Xinhua* have reported calls for "cultural industry, products and brands to be more competitive (*geng ju jingzhengli* 更具竞争力)."[578] In Yunnan, sometimes referred to as China's "great ethnic cultural province," Litzinger has noted the ways in which the future of ethnic minority livelihoods around Tibetan areas such as Shangrila, are "increasingly linked to the establishment of strategically located cultural enterprise sectors and the marketing of ethnic brand names."[579] Indeed, as Bird notes, given the popularity and demand, recent years have marked a pivotal point for the marketisation of Tibetan cultural products.[580]

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[576] "Premier Urges Efforts to Boost Development of China's West." *Xinhua*, December 25, 2017, accessed June 3, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-12/25/c_135931586.htm

[577] Palden Nyima and Daqiong, "Tibet Strives to Make Culture its Pillar Industry by 2020." *China Daily*, July 21, 2017, accessed June 15, 2017, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-07/21/content_30198705.htm

[578] Mengting Wu 吴梦婷, "Qinghai sheng meinian touru yi yuan fuchi wenhua chanye fazhan" 青海省每年投入亿元扶持文化产业发展 [Qinghai Province Invests 100 Million Yuan Every Year to Support Development of Cultural Industries]. *Xinhua*, January 5, 2017, accessed June 15, 2017, http://www.qh.xinhuanet.com/20170105/3607534_c.html

[579] Litzinger, "The Mobilization of 'Nature': Perspectives from Northwest Yunnan," 491.

[580] Joshua Bird, *Economic Development in China's Northwest: Entrepreneurship and Identity along China's Multi-Ethnic Borderlands* (London: Routledge, 2017), 73.

Economic development and cultural commercialisation are about much more than simply alleviating poverty and generating income; it is also about ensuring national unity, social stability, and state security. As former president Jiang Zemin described, the GWDC must also strive to promote "socialist spiritual civilisation," and foster a form of cultural integration that "guarantees the spread of Chinese norms and values."[581] As such, subjectivity formation is also understood as a part of the nation-building project. Ong argues that discourses of development also play a role in national attempts to instil the masses with "market principles of discipline, efficiency and competitiveness," cultivating a particular kind of subjectivity equipped to participate in China's market economy.[582] This aligns with the official discourse of 'quality' (*suzhi* 素质), which not only attributes the source of poverty to individual failings rather than structural factors, but also "attempts to constitute a particular kind of subjectivity within China's market."[583] As Kipnis argues, the discourse of *suzhi* is bound up with questions of governance, and serves to justify "social and political hierarchies of all sorts, with those of 'high' *suzhi* being seen as deserving more income, power and status than those of 'low' *suzhi*."[584] In this sense, *suzhi* can be considered a matter of cultural governance in the context of Tibet, promoting particular kinds of Tibetan subjectivities in order to consolidate state power.

As the next section examines, these broader national developmental goals play out intensively in state media news stories about economic development and cultural commercialisation in Tibet by advancing notions of harmony between traditional culture and economic modernisation, and the making of a particular kind of Tibetan citizenry.

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[581] Cooke, "Merging Tibetan Culture into the Chinese Economic Fast Lane," 5.
[582] Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty (Durham: Duke University Press,* 2006), 4.
[583] Michael L. Zukosky, "Quality, Development Discourse, and Minority Subjectivity in Contemporary Xinjiang," *Modern China* 38, no.2 (2012): 233.
[584] Andrew Kipnis, "Suzhi: A Keyword Approach," *The China Quarterly* 186 (2006): 295.

## 5.4 State Media Discourses

### 5.4.1 "A Fusion of Traditional Culture and Modern Elements": Markets, Cultural Preservation and Harmony

Tibetan cultural products and various forms of cultural performances are regularly characterised in state media as a marketable resource to maximise income generation and economic development. However, state media is careful to frame the commercialisation of culture as an opportunity to preserve and even enhance Tibetan traditions.

Much like the discourses of harmony between material transformation and environmental preservation examined in the previous chapter, a discourse of complementary co-existence between traditional Tibetan culture and economic development is a central discourse in state media about economic development in Tibet. This can be seen in the following news article titles:

> 雪顿节：传统文化与现代元素的融合
>
> Shoton Festival: A Fusion of Traditional Culture and Modern Elements[585]
>
> 西藏百姓文化生活：传统与现代交融和谐
>
> Tibet's Ordinary People's Cultural Life: Tradition and Modernity Blend and Harmonise[586]

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[585] Yunlu Liao (廖云路), "Xue dun jie: Chuantong wenhua yu xiandai yuansu de ronghe" 雪顿节：传统文化与现代元素的融合 [Shoton Festival: Traditional Culture and Modern Elements Merge]. *People's Daily*, August 14, 2015, accessed June 3, 2017, http://xz.people.com.cn/n/2015/0814/c138901-25978107.html

[586] "Xizang baixing wenhua shenghuo: Chuantong yu xiandai jiaorong hexie" 西藏百姓文化生活：传统与现代交融和谐 [Tibet's Ordinary People's Cultural Life: Tradition and Modernity Blend Harmoniously]. *Xinhua*, March 12, 2012, accessed June 3, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/society/2012-03/13/c_111647003.htm

Terms such as “harmony”, “fusion”, and “blend” are repeatedly used to communicate a sense of compatibility and synthesis between ‘the tradition’ and ‘the Modern’. Further emphasising the complementary relationship between economic development and traditional culture, the first text describes the work of the Lhasa government in promoting the Shoton Festival, which has:

> 逐渐演变成集传统展佛、文艺汇演、体育竞技、招商引资、经贸洽谈、商品展销、旅游休闲为一体，传统与现代相结合的国内外知名节庆盛会
>
> gradually evolved into a festival that is well-known both domestically and internationally for integrating tradition and modernity into one, bringing together traditional Buddhist exhibitions, literary and artistic performances, sports and competitions, investment promotion, trade discussions, product exhibitions, and tourism and leisure[587]

Using phrases such as “integrating into one” and “bringing together,” the text repeatedly accentuates the merging of “tradition” (Tibetan cultural practices) with “modernity” (economic development). By seamlessly stringing both types of activities together within the boundaries of one sentence, compatibility is further reinforced and contradiction downplayed.

Reporting on tourism-related economic development, a piece by *China Tibet News* describes the combination of local cultural practices and economic interests as:

> 既增加了国内外游客对藏族传统文化的了解，又提高了西藏百姓对自身文化的自信感和自豪感，同时带来了可观的经济效益

[587] Yunlu Liao, “Xuedunjie: Chuantong wenhua yu xiandai yuansu de ronghe.”

> Not only increasing domestic and foreign tourists' understanding of traditional Tibetan culture, but also raising the sense of cultural confidence and pride of ordinary Tibetans, and at the same time, bringing about considerable economic benefits[588]

Both texts identify "domestic" and "international" audiences as consumers of Tibetan culture. Promoting Tibetan Otherness for the tourist gaze,[589] the piece positions Tibetan culture as an object of consumption. Moreover, the text's use of correlative conjunctions such as "not only", "but also", and "at the same time" again emphasise the multiple benefits of fusing local festival celebrations with economic goals. It even praises the market's ability to generate "ethnic confidence" and "pride". This serves to amplify once more the complimentary relationship between the market and Tibetan culture.

In 2017, *Xinhua* published a story that describes the positive impact of market success on thangka painting:

> 随着唐卡由庙堂走向民间，唐卡在收藏市场上日益火爆，名气也与日俱增。家家画唐卡，人人会手艺，户户有学徒。
>
> Following thangka's move from the temples to the people, thangka became increasingly popular on the collectors market and its reputation grew with each passing day. "'Every family paints thangka, every person makes handicraft and every household has apprentices.'[590]

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[588] Sun Jian 孙健, "Xizang jieqing dadang lüyou ye wenhua zixin jingji xiaoyi shuang fengshou" 西藏节庆搭档旅游业 文化自信经济效益双丰收 [Tibetan Festival Teams up with Tourism Industry: Double Harvest for Cultural Confidence and Economy]. *China Tibet News*, March 13, 2018, accessed March 15, 2018, http://www.tibet.cn/cn/news/yc/201803/t20180313_5543731.html

[589] Robert Shepherd, "From the Temple to the Market: Tourism, Commodification, and Culture," *Tourist Studies* 2, no.2 (2002): 185.

[590] Jianping Ye 叶建平, Yaguang Li 李亚光, and Shuwei Pang 庞书纬, "Regong tangka: Zouxiang shijie de zang wenhua liwu" 热贡唐卡：走向世界的

The syntactical organisation of the sentence links the growing market demand with the popularisation of knowledge and skills needed for thangka production, promoting the link between commercialisation and cultural preservation. The shift "from temples to the people" indicates a shift to mass production, as well as greater access to thangka production, which is subsequently reinforced through the use of the adverbial modifier "increasingly" and the phrase "grew with each passing day." The following sentence's repetition of the adjective "every" further emphasises the popularisation and mainstreaming of a tradition that was once confined to temples and religious elites. As such, the piece promotes the commodification and marketisation of thangka art as a way to promote thangka to new audiences, but also within Tibetan communities themselves. This discourse of cultural preservation through marketisation can also be seen in a 2015 *Xinhua* piece where the commercialisation of traditional butter sculptures and other Tibetan cultural artifacts is further extolled as a means of community-led poverty alleviation and cultural preservation. As one young Tibetan is quoted as saying, enterprise of this kind allows people:

> 让他们靠民族手工艺脱贫致富，也让传统铜器制作的手艺一代代传下去
>
> to rely on ethnic handicraft art to shake off poverty and become prosperous and allow traditional bronze craft work pass on from generation to generation[591]

藏文化礼物 [Rebgong Thangka: The Tibetan Presents Heading out into the World]. *Xinhua*, February 16, 2016, accessed June 3, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/local/2016-02/16/c_1118053829.htm

[591] Hualing Li 黎华玲, "Minzu shougongyi zhu xizang nongmumin gaobie pinkun" 民族手工艺助西藏农牧民告别贫困 [Ethnic Handicrafts Help Tibetan Herders Bid Farewell to Poverty]. *Xinhua*, December 7, 2015, accessed June 3, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/local/2015-12/07/c_1117377940.htm

The article once again emphasises cultural commercialisation as a mechanism for poverty alleviation, while the phrase "pass on from generation to generation" celebrates the role of the market in preserving and promoting traditional handicraft work across different age groups and over time. Once again, commodifying cultural projects is characterised as serving local communities by both generating economic development and safeguarding traditions.

These texts generally pay particular attention to the role of the state in facilitating both the market economy and cultural preservation. As one *Xinhua* piece from 2010 describes:

> 在保护传统文化与发展现代经济的征途中，政府的努力是巨大而有成效的
>
> In the course of protecting traditional culture and developing a modern economy, the government's efforts have been enormous and effective[592]

Government efforts are described as "effective", reinforcing a sense of competency, achievement, and successful management of cultural preservation, while "enormous" further magnifies their contribution. Similarly, a 2014 piece by the *Peoples' Daily*, makes extensive reference to the guiding role of the government, noting that:

> 今后政府将加大对非遗生产性保护的支持力度，鼓励更多的非遗项目依靠市场获得发展的内生力量
>
> From today onwards, the government will increase their support for the production of intangible heritage and encourage more

[592] "Chuantong Xizang yu xiandai Xizang: Jiaorong yu xinsheng" 传统西藏与现代西藏：交融与新生 [Traditional Tibet and Modern Tibet: Blended and Re-generated]. *Xinhua*, September 6, 2010, accessed June 10, 2017, http://tibet.news.cn/gdbb/2010-09/07/content_20831373.htm

> intangible heritage projects to rely on the market to gain self-creating strength.[593]

Alongside five other references that appear in the piece regarding the central role of the government, the text uses active verbs such as "increase" and "encourage" to perform official concern and signify active state engagement, centring the state as the core facilitator of both economic development and cultural preservation.

These pieces thus work to stave off any concerns about the negative or contradictory effects of commercialisation on traditional cultural forms by emphasising the overwhelmingly positive impact. Economic development and cultural commercialisation are discursively constructed as highly compatible with and even necessary for the preservation and promotion of traditional cultural practices. Moreover, the state is often described as an important and central actor in this process. The discourse constructs a persuasive account of effective leadership and positive policy implementation to generate confidence and trust in the state, and promote its legitimacy.

### 5.4.2 "Let Dreams 'Bloom and Bear Fruit'": Agency, Enterprise and Empowerment

State media often portray economic and cultural development as stories of individual empowerment facilitated by the state. These stories typically begin with a highly individualised account, often centring on a personal transformation or journey that is facilitated by state initiatives. One *Tibet Daily* piece in 2018 begins a news story about a Tibetan man who started a local handicrafts business in Lhasa as follows:

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[593] "Xizang Linzhi fei yichuan cheng: dute wenhua shengtai chenggong duijie xiandai shichang" 西藏林芝非遗传承：独特文化生态成功对接现代市场 [Tibet's Linzhi's Intangible Heritage: Unique Cultural Ecology Successfully Joins up with Modern Market]. *People's Daily*, September 17, 2014, accessed June 14, 2017, http://xz.people.com.cn/n/2014/0917/c138901-22345481.html

> 35 岁的拉顿，能说一口流利的英语，也有着一段让当地人感到新奇的经历。2005 年从西藏职业技术学院毕业后，他像其他毕业生一样找到了一份稳定的工作，工作 5 年后，他毅然辞职，开始了创业之路。'我的心里一直有个创业梦，我想让这个梦想'发芽'。' 拉顿说
>
> 35 year old Ladun can speak fluent English, and also had a period of experience that would strike locals as novel. In 2005, after graduating from Tibet Vocational and Technical College, he, like other graduates, found a stable job. After working there for 5 years, he resigned and started on the road to entrepreneurship. ''I always had an entrepreneurial dream in my heart and wanted to let this dream sprout,' said Ladun[594]

The piece goes on to describe how Ladun realizes his "dream" to develop his traditional handicraft business:

> 一方面让游客买到精美的手工艺品，另外还可以带动乡亲增收致富
>
> allowing tourists to buy exquisite handicrafts while also allowing villagers to increase their income.[595]

The personalised account is emphasised through a sole focus on Ladun's experience. The pragmatic use of pronouns throughout the piece further stress Ladun's personal experience of economic development. As Valkenburg et al. argue, this human interest frame "brings an individual's story or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue or problem."[596] This not only serves to humanise the story and boost its

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[594] Cong Pei 裴聪, "Rang mengxiang 'kaihua jieguo'" 让梦想'开花结果'. [Let Dreams 'Bloom and Bear Fruit']. *China Tibet News*, March 1, 2018, accessed March 3, 2018, http://www.tibet.cn/cn/edu/201803/t20180301_5501280.html
[595] Ibid.
[596] Patti M. Valkenburg, Holli A. Semetko, and Claes H. de. Vreese, "The Effects of News Frames on Readers' Thoughts and Recall," *Communication Research* 26, no. 5 (1999): 551.

relatability to readers, but also its persuasiveness through offering a firsthand account from someone at the scene. It serves "to put a human face on propaganda and ideological work."[597] At the same time, however, Ladun's story is "like other graduates." Using this comparative clause, the piece emphasises that while unique in some sense, these opportunities and Ladun's successes are not exceptional and are achievable and available to all Tibetan graduates who apply themselves. Verbs such as "graduates", "join", and "set up" all communicate a sense of initiative and ambition, while references to education, policies, and market demand reference the state's role in Ladun achieving his goals. Tibetan agency is further amplified through use of direct quotations from Tibetans themselves, which again centre Tibetan experience and boost the authority of the piece through representing the 'reality' on the ground. This also reinforces the sense of Tibetan empowerment in these stories, which describe how Ladun was supported by:

> 有了手工艺者的支持和拉萨市出台的各种鼓励创新创业的政策
> various policies launched by Lhasa city to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship[598]

The structure and style of this piece is very commonly reproduced in state media. For example, in one *China Tibet News* piece from 2017 an almost identical story is told. This time a Tibetan woman identifies a market niche in Tibetan clothing and Tibetan milk tea products and uses her qualifications and training to take advantage of local policy initiatives to once again:

> 实现自己的梦想

[597] Ashley Esarey, "Winning Hearts and Minds? Cadres as Microbloggers in China," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 44, no. 2 (2015): 82.
[598] Cong Yu, "Rang mengxiang 'kaihua jieguo'."

realize [her] own dream[599]

The piece again relies on firsthand accounts from Tibetans, often using direct quotations and framing the story in highly individualised terms. Similarly, another state media piece from 2011 opens with a direct quotation from another Tibetan woman, named Pubu Zhuoma 普布卓玛:

> 我的理想是让藏香水像法国香水一样，被全中国、全世界的人知道，让这一藏民族传统走向世界。
>
> My dream is to make Tibetan perfume become just like French, known by people all over China and all over the world; to make this Tibetan tradition go out into the world[600]

> 没有国家的支持，企业就好不起来
>
> Without the state's support, this business would not have come to anything

This piece again celebrates the commodification of Tibetan tradition, this time a fragranced water typically used in religious ceremonies. The reoccurring use of the noun "dream" in these texts, modified by personal pronouns to emphasise the individual, invokes emotionally-charged notions of aspiration and self-fulfilment. Celebrating individual pursuit and self-optimisation in the global market place, the piece again praises the role of the state in facilitating these dreams. Indeed, throughout these

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[599] Jiali Song 宋家丽, "Yushu zangzu qingnian cairen qiucuo de chuangye zhi lu" 玉树藏族青年才仁求措的创业之路 [Yushu Tibetan Youth Cairen Qiucuo's Road to Entrepreneurship]. *China Tibet News*, December 22, 2017, accessed December 22, 2017, http://www.tibet.cn/cn/cloud/xszqkk/zgxz/2017/6/201712/t20171222_5282135.html

[600] Shi Yan 石岩, "Zangzu nü qiye jia: rang zang xiangshui zouxiang shijie" 藏族女企业家：让藏香水走向世界 [Tibetan Women Entrepreneur: Let Tibetan Perfume Go out into the World]. *China News*, June 23, 2011, accessed June 15, 2017, http://www.chinanews.com/cj/2011/06-23/3130316.shtml

pieces, it is clear that it is through the state that Tibetan dreams are realised.

These texts project an overwhelmingly positive portrayal of economic development and cultural commercialisation under the GWDC. They play discursively with the rhetoric of President Xi Jinping's 'Chinese Dream', emphasising self-fulfillment, national prosperity, and realizing 'the good life' through wealth.[601] Invoking this rhetoric of 'dream', self-cultivation, and independence further integrate Tibet not only into the aspirational lifestyle that characterises the rhetoric of the Chinese Dream, but also its neoliberal forms of self-governance and self-cultivation to compete in China's market economy. Furthermore, the individualistic approach that underscores the human interest frame also reinforces the meritocratic values of the Chinese Dream, emphasising that anything is possible with individual diligence and perseverance. At the same time, however, structural inequalities and the roots of specific instances of poverty are downplayed or completely obscured. Using direct quotations and a human interest frame, these texts emphasise Tibetan culture as a resource that Tibetans, facilitated by state training, have learned to exploit in order to realise their entrepreneurial dreams. These stylistic devices celebrate Tibetan agency and self-empowerment, thus reinforcing discourses of Tibetans becoming enterprising "masters of the new era" under the guidance of the state.[602]

### 5.5 Tibetan Discourses

The past decade has seen a huge number of posts and essays by Tibetans on the topic of economic development, particularly in relation to the impact of cultural commercialisation. While countless incidents of Han Chinese tourists behaving inappropriately in Tibet or sacred objects

[601] Callaghan, "Dreaming as a Critical Discourse of National Belonging: China Dream, American Dream and World Dream."
[602] Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, *The Development of Tibetan Culture* (Beijing: 2000), available at: http://www.china-un.org/eng/gyzg/xizang/t418907.htm

becoming commodified for popular consumption have provoked the ire of Tibetans online in recent years (Fig. 4), none reached the scale of response seen surrounding the trade and slaughter of the Tibetan mastiff in 2015.

*Fig. 4: Images from Weibo of Han tourists and consumers of Tibetan culture*

Regularly referred to in online essays and poetry as the 'guardian' (*weishi* 卫士) and 'spirit' (*jingshen* 精神) of the grasslands and even likened to Tibetan's national emblem the snow lion, the Tibetan mastiff is often depicted as an integral part of the cultural ecology that constitutes the Tibetan homeland. Famed among nomads for their companionship while herding and hunting, and also celebrated for their fearlessness and ferociousness, the animal has long been seen as a symbol of life on the grasslands and even of Tibet itself. However, since the incorporation of Tibetan areas into the PRC, the status of the Tibetan Mastiff has experienced a turbulent fate. During the Cultural Revolution, when Mao denounced dog ownership as elitist, reports from Lhasa and other Tibetan areas suggested that the animal was on the brink of extinction after "a massive kill-off."[603] Following the end of the Cultural Revolution and Deng's rise to power, a new phase of dog rehabilitation began across China. Starting in the early 1990s, the possession of dogs as pets began to symbolise affluence among China's urban middle class, embodying an

[603] Don Messerschmidt, *Big Dogs of Tibet and the Himalayas: A Personal Journey (*Bangkok: Orchid Books, 2010), 133.

item that could be used to demonstrate who had 'made it'.[604] Since then, dog-breeding and dog markets have developed enormously across China and Tibet.

The trade of the Tibetan mastiff began to experience a huge surge across China from the late 1990s onwards. At the heights of the frenzy, prices for the nomadic shepherding dog were hovering around as much as $250,000, with one purebred named Big Splash reportedly selling for $1.6 million in 2011.[605] *China Daily* reported on the animal becoming the "must-have luxury for the ultra-rich, to go with mansions and sports cars,"[606] often framing the trade as a win-win story where the mastiff market represented "a rapidly developing source of trade and fortune" for Tibetans.[607] However, since 2013, a slowing economy has seen the Tibetan mastiff market very hard hit, with selling prices falling to a fraction of what they once were during the boom period. Amid President Xi Jinping's harsh crackdown on corruption, the animal came to be viewed as a shameless display of wealth and power that ran the risk of attracting suspicion and unwanted attention. In April 2015, news reports emerged of animal activists in Beijing intercepting a truck of 20 mastiffs bound for a slaughterhouse. Once the 'spirit' and 'guardian' of the Tibetan plateau, and later a highly prized status symbol among Han Chinese, Tibetan mastiffs were now being sold for $5 per head as hot pot ingredients, imitation fur, and linings for winter gloves.[608] Since then, numerous

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[604] Luigi Tomba, "Creating an Urban Middle Class: Social Engineering in Beijing," *Modern China* 51 (2004): 2.

[605] Andrew Jacobs, "Once-Prized Tibetan Mastiffs Are Discarded as Fad Ends in China." *The New York Times*, 17 April, 2015, accessed Jun 3, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/18/world/asia/once-prized-tibetan-mastiffs-are-discarded-as-fad-ends-in-china.html

[606] "Tibetan Mastiff is Top Dog." *China Daily*, March 26, 2010, accessed June 3, 2017, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-03/26/content_9644451.htm

[607] "Tibetans Cash in on Mastiffs." *China Daily*, March 2, 2012, accessed June 3, 2017, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2012-05/02/content_15186625.htm

[608] Jacobs, "Once-Prized Tibetan Mastiffs Are Discarded as Fad Ends in China."

reports have described thousands of Tibetan mastiffs abandoned by their owners across the plateau and in animal shelters.[609]

In many ways the Tibetan mastiff trade was simply the latest fad in a long-standing pattern of Han Chinese commodifying 'exotic' Tibetan cultural products. However, the intensely visceral image that quickly spread of Tibetan mastiffs being sold and consumed as hot pot meat across urban China marked this incident as a particularly dramatic and traumatic example, and generated widespread outrage and a huge response among Tibetans online.

The Tibetan mastiff incident and many more online discussions among Tibetans about the impact of economic development and cultural commercialisation over the past two decades has produced a prominent counter discourse to the related representations promoted in state media. The next two sections examine some of the specific themes that have arisen across these discourses.

### 5.5.1 "Blinded by Greed": Money, Complicity, and Violence

While state discourse focuses heavily on Tibetan empowerment and economic gain through 'cultural development', Tibetan texts often centre on money as a source of social ills. They repeatedly refer to money as a temptation and a vice that corrupts and leads many astray from their own culture, faith, and 'true' identity. This is notable in the case of one essay published in 2008, where a Tibetan blogger asks whether those who have participated in the trade of the mastiff will be able to:

> 洗干净被金钱迷失的双眼

[609] Yan Wang, "Tibetan Mastiffs, Abandoned and Dangerous." *China Dialogue*, June 2, 2017, accessed June 3, 2017, https://www.chinadialogue.net/article/show/single/en/9584-Tibetan-mastiffs-abandoned-and-dangerous

> wash clean those eyes that have been blinded by money[610]

In an essay that circulated in 2011, the author makes a similar comment:

> 藏人的双眼早已被金钱所蒙蔽，他们的血性与斗志早已消失殆尽。藏獒终究难以战胜金钱。
>
> Tibetan eyes for some time have been hoodwinked […] Tibetan mastiffs cannot compete with money[611]

The passive verb constructions "have been blinded" and "have been hoodwinked" that occur across these texts index a sense of deception and trickery. They imply that Tibetans did not act willingly or intentionally, but were instead misled. Money is directly indexed as the agent of deceit in the first example through the preposition "by", emphasising the lack of agency and control.

The question of agency is widely examined across Tibetan discourses surrounding economic development and cultural commercialisation. Many poems and broader discussions repeatedly position Tibetans as complicit in the trade and slaughter of the mastiff. In a poem by Gesang Yuzhen 格桑玉珍, he describes how he "joined the shameless ranks" (*jiaru le wuchi de duiwu* 加入了无耻的队伍) in the murder of mastiffs.[612]

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[610] "Zangzuren ni maiwan zang'ao, shi bushi jixu maidiao zheng ge wenhua? 藏族人你卖完藏獒，是不是继续卖掉整个文化? (Tibetans, After You Have Finished Selling Tibetan Mastiffs, Will You Continue Selling Off the Entirety of [Our] Culture), *Renren Blog*, September 29, 2012, http://blog.renren.com/share/139840936/14334504325.

[611] Pumei Jiacuo (晋美加措), "Zang'ao de kusu" 藏獒的哭诉 [The Weeping of the Tibetan Mastiff], *Sina Blog,* January 14, 2011, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_5caa6bda0100ohgw.html

[612] Zangdi shige 藏地诗歌 (Tibet Poems), "Zangdi shige quan di 113 qi tong yuansu shige: Zang'ao" 藏地诗歌群第 113 期同元素诗歌：藏獒 [Tibet Poetry Group's 113th Periodical Poetry: The Tibetan Mastiff], *Tibetcul Blog*, April 24, 2015, http://blog.tibetcul.com/home.php?mod=space&uid=14307&do=blog&id=292529

Similarly in Luosang Nanjia's 洛桑南嘉 poem "About the Tibetan Mastiff" (*Guanyu zang'ao* 关于藏獒) the poem opens with the lines:

> 我们成功地把它推向了市场
> 他们又成功地把它推向了餐桌
> We have successfully shoved them onto the market,
> they have successfully shoved them onto the dining table[613]

The use of action verbs such as "joined" and "shoved" signal Tibetan's active engagement and participation in the slaughter of the mastiff. Another actor is vaguely referenced through the pronoun "they", but no further details are provided. These sentiments of complicity are echoed in a poem entitled 'Deal' (*Jiaoyi* 交易), by an anonymous author, wherein a Tibetan seller expresses discomfort at the idea of someone eating a mastiff, the buyer responds:

> 那你为什么要卖给我？
> Then why do you sell them to me?[614]

The complicity in the trade of the mastiff also frequently overlaps with references to violence. In 'A Group of Tibetan Mastiffs' (*Yi qin zang'ao* 一群藏獒), written by Nasa 那萨, the narrator describes the gory scene of a group of dogs being prepared for the hotpot.

> 一群剥了皮的藏獒
> A group of skinned mastiffs
> 一群被切块的藏獒
> A group of diced up mastiffs[615]

[613] Ibid.
[614] Ibid.
[615] Ibid

“Skinned” and “diced up”, the mastiffs can no longer find their legs to return to the homeland, all the while the sounds of the dog’s screams “flooded herders’ ears” (*shi le muren de erduo* 湿了牧人的耳朵). Tibetans are present in Nasa’s poem, but do not act. Their passivity and confinement to the role of spectator is amplified in its juxtaposition with the active verbs describing the animal’s slaughter. The physicality of verbs such as “skinned” and “diced up”, though done with an unnamed actor, references the violence and torture that featured in media reports of the mastiff incident at the time. Indeed, poetic responses were replete with violent imagery, commonly with Tibetans described as looking on. In ‘It is Not Jinmang’ (*Bushi Jinmang* 不是金芒),[616] Gesang Yuzhen 格桑玉珍 details the scene of a mastiff being slaughtered:

> 我在一则新闻里看到一滩触目惊心的血迹
> 看到几个强壮的男人共同担起一具獒犬火红的尸
> In one piece of news I saw a ghastly pool of blood
> And saw a few strong men together raise up the corpse of a mastiff with red fur

Nouns such as “blood” and “corpse” again draw attention to the violence and death of the mastiff. The scene is characterised as one in which Tibetans are restricted to the role of spectators. This is emphasised in the repetition of the verb “saw”, again reducing the role of Tibetans to that of onlookers. Tibetans are portrayed as seeing and listening to the violence unfolding, and doing little more than “shedding tears” (*liulei* 流泪). This lack of action and relative passivity can be seen as a demonstration of a perceived subjugation, powerlessness, and an inability to defend the mastiff against violence.

While a major subject of attention, the Tibetan mastiff incident is far from the only topic through which issues of complicity and violence are

[616] Ibid.

engaged to discuss economic development. In a 2011 essay, Tsering Woeser (whose work was described in the previous chapter) similarly invokes the language of violence to refer to the developing tourism industry around Tibet's Mount Kailash in the TAR. She decries the commercialisation of many of Tibet's sacred mountains and lakes, arguing that important sites:

> 被置于了商业的砧板上
>
> Have been placed upon commerce's chopping board[617]

Her deployment of the chopping board as a metaphor to describe the fate of Mount Kailash and other culturally significant places invokes associations of cutting, slicing, and hacking. It again references the sense of destruction and violence enacted upon the homeland in the name of economic development and commercialisation, as well as Tibetans' powerlessness to intervene.

While violence and the Tibetan passivity are important discourses across discussions of the trade and slaughter of the mastiff, it is important to note that Tibetans are not always confined to positions of passivity. Indeed, sometimes Tibetans are represented as playing active role in the process itself. For instance, in 2008, a widely circulated essay describes the "brutal scenes" (*canren changmian* 残忍场面) that the mastiff is sold into, questions how people could:

> 作为一个藏族人，一个有信仰的藏族人，做狗贩子，然后眼睁睁的看着它们被残杀的时候

[617] Tsering Woeser (*Weise* 唯色), "Huyu shu: Qing zhizhi yong Shenshan Sheng hu mouli de 'kaifa'" 呼吁书：请制止用神山圣湖牟利的"开发" [An Appeal: Please Halt the 'Development' of Mount Kailash Profit-making], *Invisible Tibet*, July 10, 2011, http://woeser.middle-way.net/2011/07/blog-post_2345.html

> as a Tibetan, as a Tibetan of faith, engage in the dog trade and then watch on unfeelingly as they are murdered in cold blood[618]

Rather than simply watching on, the use of the verb "engage" implies active involvement and direct participation in the trade of the mastiff and complicity in the ensuing violence. In contrast to the previous cases wherein Tibetans watch on tearfully and aghast at scenes of the animal being slaughtered, the adverbial use of "unfeelingly" depicts Tibetans as disinterested and uncaring. This apathy is further compounded through references to the "brutal" scenes of "murder" and "cold blood" to which they bear witness.

Faith, as referenced in the previous section of text, was also regularly deployed across discussions of economic development and cultural commercialisation, often positioned as contradictory to the trade and slaughter of the mastiff as well as money-making practices more broadly. This has been particularly notable in some of the recent scandals surrounding 'fake tulkas' or 'fake living Buddhas.'[619] In an essay from 2011, Woeser laments the commercialisation of Tibetan Buddhism across China, arguing that:

> 伪佛教的东西充斥了原本应该净化人心的寺院
>
> This pseudo-Buddhism has flooded the monasteries, which were originally meant to purify people's hearts[620]

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[618] "Zangzu ren ni maiwan zang'ao, shi bushi jixu maidiao zheng ge wenhua?" 藏族人你卖完藏獒，是不是继续卖掉整个文化? [Tibetans, After You Have Finished Selling Tibetan Mastiffs, Will You Continue Selling Off the Entirely of [Our] Culture?], *Renren Blog*, September 29, 2012, http://blog.renren.com/share/139840936/14334504325.

[619] "China Launches Living-Buddha Authentication Site, Dalai Lama Not Included." *The Wall Street Journal*, January 19, 2016, accessed June 10, 2018, https://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2016/01/19/china-launches-living-buddha-authentication-site-dalai-lama-not-included/

[620] Tsering Woeser, "Zai Chengde yujian 'Xizang shifu'" 在承德遇见"西藏师傅" [An Encounter with 'Tibetan Lamas' in Chengde], *Invisible Tibet*, June 3, 2011, http://woeser.middle-way.net/2011/06/blog-post_03.html

In a widely shared essay from 2011, another author observes that:

> 藏族人民不再需要布达拉宫——需要的是钱
>
> Tibetan people no longer want the Potala Palace, they want money[621]

Again, as evidenced through reference to the historic, political and religiously symbolic landmark of the Potala Palace, the problem of economic development and its impact on Tibetan culture and faith is seen as extending much further than simply the case of the Tibetan mastiff. The emergence of "pseudo-Buddhism", as Woeser describes, signifies the broader impact of commercialisation and money-making practices on religious institutions. "No longer" draws attention to a disjuncture or change from a previous practice, indicating that this willingness to commodify Tibetan culture was not always the case. Similarly, in 'The Death of the Tibetan Mastiff' (*zang'ao zhi si* 藏獒之死), a poem that circulated widely in April 2009 before being censored and later reposted to Woeser's blog, well-known poet Gade Tsering 嘎代才让 wrote that:

> 如今，人们想念着藏獒，但可以肯定的是：他们还将沿着这条路走下去，有什么卖什么，直到两手空空！
>
> Today, people long for the Tibetan mastiff, but one thing we can be sure about is: they will still follow down this road of selling everything they possess, until they are left with nothing![622]

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[621] Tao laoshi 陶老师, "Yi ge zangzu ren yan li de zang'ao" 一个藏族人眼里的藏獒 [The Tibetan Mastiff in the Eyes of a Tibetan], *Tieba*, February 8, 2010, http://tieba.baidu.com/p/708965006

[622] Tsering Woeser, "Gadai Cairing: Zang'ao zhi si" 嘎代才让：藏獒之死 [Gade Tsering: The Death of the Tibetan Mastiff], *Invisible Tibet*, May 1, 2015, http://woeser.middle-way.net/2015/05/blog-post.html

The sense of change in Tibetan willingness to engage in the commodification of Tibetan culture is again marked by reference to a distinct temporality through the word “today”. The juxtaposition of the totalising pronouns “everything” and “nothing” reinforce the extreme scale and impact of cultural commodification on contemporary Tibet.

Depicted as led astray by the temptations of money, Tibetans lament the impact of economic development and a loss of a previous situation in which cultural commodification was not so widely practiced by Tibetans. These texts often reference violence, emphasising the degree of injury and destruction to Tibetan culture. Representations of Tibetan agency oscillate between collective powerlessness and a shared complicity in the commercialisation of Tibetan culture. As the next section will examine further, these texts are also permeated by discourses of identity, and express anxiety and grief for the perceived ways in which economic development and commercialisation have spoiled the collective identity of the Tibetan people.

### 5.5.2 “The Grasslands Are Already Merely a Mosaic Image”: Identity, Authenticity, and Loss

Discussions of money, agency, and violence in relation to the mastiff trade quickly extend into broader questions of identity, authenticity, and a sense of loss arising from rapid economic development and its impact on Tibetan culture. This was perhaps most notable in the responses received by the ‘Take You Back to the Prairie’ (*Dai ni hui caoyuan* 带你回草原) campaign, a Tibetan celebrity-driven social media campaign that began shortly after reports emerged about the slaughter of the Tibetan mastiff in April 2015 (Fig. 5). Featuring some of Tibet’s most well-known public figures such as film director Pema Tseden (Tib. བད་མ་ཚེ་བརྟན།; Ch. Wanma Caidan 万玛才旦) stage actor, writer and comedian Shide Nyima (Tib. ཞི་བདེ་ཉི་མའི།; Ch. Xide Nima 西德尼玛) and musician Dekyi Tsering (Tib. བདེ་སྐྱིད་ཚེ་རིང།; Ch. Deji Cairen 德吉才仁), the campaign garnered thousands of shares as soon as it was released. It called for Tibetan mastiffs to be

returned to the grasslands where they would be properly cared for and looked after.


*Fig. 5: Images of the 'Take You Back to the Prairie' campaign*

The pictures were posted across Weibo, often accompanied with the caption:

> 你本该属于草原【。。。】草原才是你的摇篮，才是你的家园
> Originally, you should have belonged to the grasslands […] There alone is your cradle; there alone is your homeland

The campaign centred on the role of Tibetans in bringing the mastiff back to what was argued to be their rightful home, as evidenced in the references to "originally", "cradle", and "homeland". While the campaign was generally well received as a call of resistance to the commercialisation of the mastiff, many were critical of its core message. Indeed, some pointed out a perceived hypocrisy in the campaign:

> 嚷着让藏獒回家的是不是正在赶往内地的路上
> Are not those who cry for the Tibetan Mastiff to return home right now hurrying off along the road to interior China?[623]

[623] Qi huama de shaonian 骑花马的少年 [The Youth that Ride the Flower-dappled Horse], *Weibo*, April 28, 2015.

The writer juxtaposes the outpouring of emotion for the mastiff to return home through reference to “cry” and “return home” with the seemingly carefree attitude of those who ‘hurry off’ to the various opportunities of interior China and desert the homeland. The contradictory predicament denotes a sense of inauthenticity, dishonesty, and unrealistic aspirations underscoring the campaign, while simultaneously revealing a changed landscape where Tibetans are no longer necessarily the best placed to take care of the mastiffs.

The ‘Take Me Home to the Prairie’ campaign raised a number of questions about the cultural impact of rapid economic development and cultural commodification across Tibet, as well as changing relationships to homeland. While on one hand, the mastiffs’ ‘Tibetanness’ was scrutinized, so too was Tibetan identity itself. Indeed, many parallels were made between the experience of the dog and Tibetan people themselves. As one essay by lha_Rje_pal, a popular and influential Tibetan Weibo user, describes:

> 我们自己也如老狗一般，已身陷在高楼大厦与灯光华丽的城市。草原不过是一个已经与我们渐行渐远的马赛克图像
>
> We ourselves are just like the old dogs, already imprisoned among the high buildings and bright lights of the city. The grasslands is already merely a mosaic image from which we gradually grow further apart[624]

Using the comparative phrase “just like”, the writer likens the situation of the mastiff to that of Tibetans who have moved away from the plateau. Reflecting on their own circumstance, the writer describes his feelings of

[624] lha Rje pal, “Dai bu huijia de women” 带不回去的我们 [We Who Cannot be Taken Home], *Sina Blog*, May 22, 2015, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_943bf8c00102vn7j.html

increasing alienation and estrangement from the grasslands, intensifying through use of “further” alongside the phrasal verb “grow apart”.

The sense of anxiety and loss surrounding a sense of connection and belonging to the grasslands permeates Tibetan online discussions. This is perhaps most notable in a collection of essays entitled “The Ugly Tibetan” (*Choulou de Zangzu ren* 丑陋的藏族人), which were written between 2003 and 2015 across various online platforms. Discursively drawing on another online essay series entitled “The Ugly Chinese” (*Choulou de Zhongguo ren* 丑陋的中国人) that also circulated at that time,[625] the essays critiqued Tibetan society for its failure to modernise and preserve traditional culture. In one of the most widely shared essays of the series, the author Zhaxi Wangsuo, a Tibetan university student from Qinghai writes:

> 如今的藏民族渐渐地失去了文化、语言、历史 [。。。] 而我们藏民族青年人沉睡在繁华世界里还是灯红酒绿夜市里呢？
>
> Tibetans today have gradually lost their culture, language, history [...] Yet, are our young Tibetans slumbering in the bustling world or dissolute night markets?[626]

In another essay in “The Ugly Tibetan” essay series published in 2015, the author writes that young Tibetan university students studying in interior China have:

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[625] The title “The Ugly Chinese” likely draws from the influential Taiwan-based writer Bo Yang’s 柏杨 book *Choulou de Zhongguo ren* 丑陋的中国人 (The Ugly Chinese), which was published in 1985 and famously criticised various aspects of Chinese culture.

[626] Zhaxi Wangsuo 扎西旺索, “Choulou de zangzu ren – xuyao fansi de minzu” 丑陋的藏族人- 需要反思的民族 [The Ugly Tibetan – The Nationality that Need to Reflect], *Tibetcul Blog,* April 13, 2014, http://blog.tibetcul.com/home.php?mod=space&uid=210273&do=blog&id=226693

> 把向善的信仰转变为打架斗殴 喝酒 泡酒吧
>
> traded a virtuous faith for fighting, brawling, drinking and hanging around bars[627]

The "bustling world" and "dissolute night markets" reference economic wealth and materialism, and are described as leading young Tibetans away from Tibetan culture, faith, language and history towards a money-driven, urban lifestyle. The use of verbs such as "slumbering", "partying", "hanging around bars" and even "brawling" all characterise young Tibetans as untroubled or blissfully unaware of a crisis unfolding in Tibetan culture. It also suggests the loss of a moral compass among young people as they learn "bad habits" while living in cities and a call to return to "real" Tibetan culture. The syntactical use of "yet" as a discourse marker connecting both sentences, however, links this carefree, urban life with the loss of Tibetan culture, faith, language and history, setting up the two in an antagonistic relationship with each other.

The sense of cultural loss and identity crisis under the impact of economic development is a reoccurring discourse in the context of modernisation. As one essay reads:

> 也许有一天，我们的优秀文化将成为历史，成为别人眼里的的一个欣赏品、手中的一样玩物呢？
>
> …perhaps one day our wonderful culture will become history, will become a thing to enjoy or a toy in one's hand?[628]

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[627] Jiawa Songbao 加哇松宝, "Choulou de zangzu ren" 丑陋的藏族人 [The Ugly Tibetan]. *Zine*, December 24, 2015, https://zine.la/article/8e4df084aa0e11e5a80e52540d79d783/

[628] Caiwang Nima 才旺尼玛, "Cong chuantong dao xiandai women yinggai zenme zouguo" 从传统到现代 我们应该怎样走过 [From Tradition to Modernization: How Should We Proceed?], *Tibetcul Blog*, September 5, 2007, http://blog.tibetcul.com/home.php?mod=space&uid=10821&do=blog&id=36148

In a poem, well-known Yul shul poet and blogger Daowei Duoji 道帏多吉 describes the traditional nomadic black tent becoming no more than an image that hangs:

> 在博物馆冰冷的墙上
>
> on the ice-cold walls of the museum[629]

Both texts draw attention to cultural loss through economic development and cultural commodification, and the limits of cultural preservation. Describing the transformation of Tibetan culture into "a thing" or "toy" invokes a quality of frivolousness that is only intensified by the suggestion that it would be something "to enjoy" and merely a material object that could be held "in one's hand." Both texts contrast this with a culture that is described as "wonderful" and marked by the possessive pronoun "our", heightening the sense of collective loss of Tibetan culture under economic transformation. Indeed, this is also persistently echoed across texts relating to the trade and slaughter of the mastiff. This discourse of authenticity and loss can, for instance, also be seen in a 2011 essay where the author bemoans the rise of a "commercialized society" (*shangyehua de shehui* 商业化的社会):

> 现在世界上已经没有藏獒了，有的全是'汉獒''洋獒'
>
> The world no longer has any Tibetan Mastiffs, all that are left are 'Han mastiffs' and 'foreign mastiffs'[630]

The adjectival shift from "Tibetan" to "Han" and "foreign" indicates loss and dispossession, as well as a questioning of claims to authenticity of the mastiff as truly Tibetan, while "all that are left" draw attention to the

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[629] "Daowei Duoji 2015 nian zixuan shi" 道帏多吉 2015 年自选诗 [Self-Selected Poems of 2015 by Daowei Duoji], *Tibetcul*, Last modified December 30, 2015, http://wx.tibetcul.com/zuopin/sg/201512/37263.html

[630] Tao laoshi 陶老师, "Yi ge zangzu ren yan li de zang'ao" 一个藏族人眼里的藏獒 [The Tibetan Mastiff in the Eyes of a Tibetan], *Tieba*, February 8, 2010, http://tieba.baidu.com/p/708965006

intensity of the mastiffs' cultural commodification under the force of domestic and even global markets. Similar to the claims that Tibetan culture "will become history," the author of this text also criticises a perceived erosion of Tibetan culture under the impact of economic development and cultural commodification. In doing so, these examples can also be seen as an important critique of state discourses of the market as a form of cultural preservation, instead drawing attention to its harmful impact on Tibetan culture.

### 5.6 Discussion

In this section I examine how official and Tibetan online discourses of economic development and cultural commercialisation are used to represent Tibetan modernity. I argue that the state mobilises discourses of harmony and entrepreneurship to consolidate its authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty over Tibet. In contrast, Tibetans construct a counter discourse that focuses on the detrimental impact of economic development and cultural commodification on Tibetan culture and identity. I draw attention to the ways in which *people*, one of the core ingredients of homeland, works through these discourses. In doing so, I show how homeland is enacted as a discursive practice to resist and contest state discourses of economic development and cultural commercialisation.

Discourses of 'cultural development' and economic development in state media characterise Tibetan culture as an economic resource to be integrated into the socialist market economy. It forms a way of showcasing the state's "moral economy of cultural identity," or the ways in which the state emphasises its efforts to safeguard Tibetan cultural identity, its creation, maintenance, and defence under rapid economic development.[631] This also functions as a means of bolstering domestic public opinion against claims of "cultural genocide," as argued by many

[631] Saxer, "The Moral Economy of Cultural Identity: Tibet, Cultural Survival, and the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage."

critics of Chinese rule in Tibet. By performing concern and celebrating the positive impact of the market in safeguarding Tibetan culture, the state is elevated to the role of guardian of Tibetan tradition and protector of Tibetan identity. As such, this discourse consolidates the paternal role of the state in 'liberating' Tibetans from poverty and guiding them in navigating the market and preserving their own culture. Moreover, no reference is made to longstanding state failures relating to high rates of illiteracy, employment discrimination and exclusion, economic inequalities, and various problems of rural poverty, all of which have left many Tibetans without the necessary skills to respond to the economic changes that have taken place under the GWDC. This discourse of state guardianship thus conceals the "broader structural mechanisms that perpetuate peripheral status" in the first place.[632] What is more, it also promotes an understanding of the integration into the national economy as a 'harmonious' solution to ensuring cultural preservation, rather than as a contributing factor to cultural erosion. These texts thus work to generate public support and bolster state legitimacy for continued economic development in Tibet.

State media representations of economic development and cultural commercialisation also represent Tibetan modernity as a site of empowerment. Equipped with skills gained from state training programs, Tibetans are depicted across state media texts as hyper-empowered, market-savvy entrepreneurs. The elevation of Tibetan agency through human interest framings, direct quotations and active verb usage all construct an image of modern Tibetans as innovative producers and service providers reaping the benefits of market integration opened up by the GWDC. Aligned with national discourses of *suzhi*, this ideal Tibetan subjectivity is characterised through various texts as "ambitious, strong-willed, hard-working, and responsible."[633] In doing so, these discourses work to 'discipline' and manage "the dispositions and meanings" of

[632] Oakes, "Selling Guizhou: Cultural Development in an Era of Marketisation," 65.
[633] Liu, *Urban Youth in China: Modernity, the Internet and the Self*, 147.

Tibetan bodies as a way of territorialise them within a national imaginary of ideal citizenship.[634] These highly positive representations of Tibetan empowerment and Tibet's integration into national markets are a powerful tool in generating approval for party rule. Showcasing positive stories of entrepreneurship and commercialisation in Tibet reinforces a discourse of the emancipatory power of the state and market in successfully guiding Tibetans towards modernity. Reaffirming Chinese rule and authority, these stories promote "the mass's [*sic*] identification with the regime," justifying the legitimacy of the state in once again leading Tibet's march to modernisation.[635] The discourse of the ethnic entrepreneur is interdiscusive, aligning closely with the language of the Chinese Dream, which, as President Xi noted in 2013, aims to make China "a prosperous country, a revitalized nation, and having happy people."[636] Reaffirmed as part of the national project of rejuvenation and development through economic growth, Tibet becomes discursively re-embedded within the PRC.

Through generating support and consent for policies and rule over Tibet, these discourses that are deployed through state media thus converge to form a strategy of cultural governance, which sustain the status quo and naturalise Tibet's place within the PRC. In this sense, these discourses operate as a powerful tool of place-making and ideological influence that contribute to the shaping of public knowledge and the maintenance of state power over Tibet.

Tibetan discourses on the topic of economic development and commercialisation diverge from state discourses in a number of important

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[634] Shapiro, *Methods and Nations—Cultural Governance and the Indigenous Subject*, 31.
[635] Yang and Tang, "Positive Energy": Hegemonic Intervention and Online Media Discourse in China's Xi Jinping Era," *China: An International Journal* 16, no.1 (2018): 2.
[636] "How is the Chinese Dream Changing the World?" *Xinhua,* June 9, 2015, accessed June 14, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-06/09/c_134311735.htm

ways. Firstly, while state media represents economic development and commercialisation as preserving and enhancing Tibetan culture, Tibetans challenge this discourse by characterising economic development as fundamentally harmful to traditional culture and identity. Replete with references to 'loss' and 'disappearance', Tibetan texts produce a discourse of anxiety concerning questions of belonging, authenticity and identity under rapid economic development and cultural commercialisation.

These discourses also challenge the discourse of empowerment promoted in state media by offering a much more ambiguous sense of agency. Rather than acting out of their own volition or actively reaping the benefits of market opportunities, some Tibetan texts characterise Tibetans as helpless or "blinded" by desires for money and a materialist lifestyle. This directly challenges the official discourse of Tibetans as 'masters of their own destiny.' Moreover, when Tibetan agency is acknowledged within the Tibetan discussion of commercialisation, it is described not in terms of diligence or empowerment, but in negative terms as complicit in the trade and slaughter of the mastiff, "selling off" Tibetan culture, or simply partying in cities across urban China while Tibetan culture, faith, language and history are increasingly disappearing.

In doing so, these texts reject official efforts to cultivate a 'commodity consciousness' in the making of modern Chinese citizens. They resist what they describe as the violence of state efforts to further integrate Tibet into a Chinese nation-making project through the market and criticise those Tibetans who have involved themselves in the commodification of Tibetan culture. These counter-discourses of cultural erosion, lack of agency, and a sense of alienation from homeland enact a 'war of position' on state media representations of Tibetan modernity as a site of empowered ethnic entrepreneurs successfully exploiting the market to end poverty and preserve culture. In doing so, they contest the official regimes of value surrounding Chinese economic development

that reduce Tibetan culture and identity to "the logic of the commodity form."[637]

A sense of a collective peoplehood permeates the Tibetan counter-story of commercialisation and represents an important instance of homeland as a discursive practice. As described in Chapter Three, the notion of *people* is a core ingredient of homeland, and is bound up with a sense of peoplehood and collective identity through an attachment to a particular social territory. Throughout the discussions about the cultural impact of economic development and commercialisation, there is a persistent interrogation of the nature of Tibetan collective identity today. Whether powerless or complicit in the trade of the Tibetan mastiff, or like the animal, alienated and estranged in a city in interior China, questions of identity and attachment to place are key features of Tibetan discourse across social media.

While "a strong sense of attachment to the region"[638] is demonstrated across the discourse, a shared Tibetan identity and culture is framed as something in decline and under threat. Through a constant reference to displacement, the discourse characterises Tibetans as having lost their connection to homeland. Paralleling the dislocation of the mastiff and their own sense of placelessness, 'Tibetanness' is questioned and scrutinized across the discourse in terms of a growing distance, whether geographically or culturally, from homeland. Tibetan complicity in the trade and slaughter of the mastiff is similarly used as a moment of collective soul searching. Money and urban life in interior China are frequently referenced as a problem source, where Tibetans, particularly young Tibetans, lose their culture, faith, language and history. Commercialisation is itself deeply entangled with broader questions of a perceived external influence and the rise of materialism, all of which are portrayed as detrimental to Tibetan identity and connection to homeland.

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[637] Litzinger, "The Mobilization of 'Nature': Perspectives from Northwest Yunnan," 504.
[638] Jordan, "The Anglo-Texan Homeland," 75.

This collective concern for the fate of a Tibetan peoplehood was thus at the heart of Tibetan counter discourses, directly challenging official discourses of cultural preservation efforts and empowerment.

Through *people*, homeland functions as a core part of Tibetan counter-discourses to hegemonic state representations of Tibetan modernity. Tibetans promote a discourse of homeland under threat through cultural erosion, identity anxieties and alienation. This becomes an act of counter-storytelling through "exposing, analysing and challenging" official representations of Tibetan modernity as a site of successful Tibetan entrepreneurs preserving their culture and pulling themselves out of poverty through state-led economic development.[639] Homeland then becomes an act of discursive subversion that disrupts, rejects, and displaces power/knowledge production practices of the state.

Homeland also reflects on questions of identity formation, probing the consequences of rapid economic development and cultural commercialisation on a collective sense of Tibetan peoplehood. It often critiques official discourses of harmonious co-existence between economic development and the preservation of Tibetan culture. These Tibetan discourses of resistance often verge into a discursive territory that positions Tibet as best confined to the "imaginary waiting room of history."[640] This certainly echoes some of the hallmarks of internal orientalism that characterises Tibetans as primitive, non-materialistic and simply "baffled by political and economic institutions" and thus resisting change.[641] Yet, it can also be seen as an act of strategic essentialism whereby Tibetans self-essentialise for the purpose of resistance, formulating a sense of Tibetan identity as incompatible with both the economic policy of the GWDC and of President Xi's 'Chinese Dream' more generally. In this sense, these tactics of self-essentialisation can be

[639] Solórzano and Yosso, "Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Story Telling as an Analytical Framework for Education," 32.
[640] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe,* 7.
[641] Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity,* 12-16.

seen as a refusal to assimilate to the "socialist spiritual civilisation" promoted by the GWDC and a rupturing of the national modernization project. Yet, while strategic essentialism is an important part of the discourse, it is also important to acknowledge its limits. Certainly, some Tibetans were critical of what they saw as hypocrisy from those supporting the 'Take You Back to the Prairie' campaign. The clear inconsistencies between calling for the mastiff to return to Tibet while Tibetans themselves move elsewhere also undermined attempts to construct a 'pure' Tibetan identity completely removed from challenges of Chinese modernity. Self-essentializing discourses in this case also sometimes tended to do more to promote a process of internal othering, focusing more on scolding Tibetans who participated in self-commodification and those who "slumber in the bustling world", rather than critiquing the structural conditions that push people into those practices in the first place.

Despite these occasional moments of internal contradiction, a rejection of the state's market ideology is nonetheless the prevailing discourse, marking an expression of frustration at the onslaught of a rapid and state-defined development process that threatens to negate Tibetan identity and cultural difference.[642] While most Tibetan texts avoid direct confrontation with the authorities, these discourses represent an effort to promote decommodification, advancing a political, social or cultural discouse that attempts to reduce "the scope and influence of the market in everyday life."[643] In doing so, they even contest the very entrenchment of the "capitalist regime of value" that has characterised post-reform China more broadly.[644] As such, these discourses thus engage in "a competition over the consciousness of the masses" as to how Tibetan

[642] Mridula N. Chakraborty, "Everybody's Afraid of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Reading Interviews with the Public Intellectual and the Postcolonial Critic," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 35*, no.3 (2010), 622.
[643] John Vail, "Decommodifcation and Egalitarian Political Economy," *Politics and Society* 38, no.3 (2010): 313.
[644] Yeh, "Blazing Pelts and Burning Passions: Nationalism, Cultural Politics and Spectacular Decommodification in Tibet," 339.

modernity ought to be represented.[645] In this way, homeland becomes a discursive practice that challenges official discourses promoting the commodification of people and place, and the assimilation of Tibet into the national economy.

### 5.7 Summary

This chapter examined the online politics of representation surrounding economic development and cultural commercialisation in Tibet under the GWDC. I have argued that state media promotes an image of economic development in Tibet as creating entrepreneurs, alleviating poverty, and also contributing to the preservation of Tibetan culture through commercialisation. It celebrates a Tibetan subjectivity grounded in ideals of hard work, self-responsibility, and ambition, and characterises Tibetan modernity as a site where Tibetans realise their 'dreams' through state-facilitated training programs. These thus work to persuade public opinion of a competent and effective leadership in order to reproduce state authority, legitimacy and sovereignty over Tibet. In contrast, Tibetan discourses of resistance decry the lack of and/or corruption of Tibetan agency resulting from economic development, and criticise the impact of cultural commercialisation on Tibetan identity. While their counter-stories depict a Tibetan modernity characterised by corruption, cultural alienation, and identity crisis, instances of strategic essentialism, despite some moments of internal inconsistency, attempted to locate Tibetans outside of modernity as a rejection of economic development and the national modernisation project. By foregrounding a crisis of peoplehood, these discourses thus challenge the positive depictions of Tibetan modernity as promoted in state media. In this way, homeland becomes a discursive practice that is deployed to resist and reject the market ideologies of the state.

[645] Tong and Lei, "War of Position and Microblogging in China," 296.

# 6. "No Way of Imagining History": Discourses of Historical Progress

## 6.1 Introduction

The GWDC is heavily centred on a story of linear historical progress within which Tibet advances towards its destiny within China's socialist modernity. Amidst the unprecedented scale of material transformation, economic development and other rapid changes that have taken place across Tibet under this campaign, written and visual juxtapositions of 'Old Tibet' (pre-'liberation') and 'New Tibet' (post-'liberation') have become a notable part of the state's discursive repertoire to legitimise its rule and policies across Tibet. While the expansion of information technologies has provided a means for the state to further reinforce this discourse of the "historical inevitability of Tibet's modernisation,"[646] it has also provided Tibetans a limited but important space to "rescue history from the nation" by challenging the state's singular account of the Tibetan past as a 'dark' and 'backward' feudal serfdom.[647] How does state media discursively mobilise histories of Tibet to represent Tibetan modernity, and why? In what ways do Tibetans resist and challenge these representations in online spaces, and what is the place of homeland within these discourses?

This chapter examines the online politics of representation surrounding historical progress in Tibet. Using a combination of written and visual texts, I analyse how official media represent 'Old Tibet' as a place of cruelty, misery and oppression to characterise 'New Tibet' as progressive, prosperous and free. Mobilised during a period defined by major protests and self-immolation, these discourses reinforce state legitimacy, authority and sovereignty by furthering a discourse of the

[646] Melvin C. Goldstein, Ben Jiao, Cynthia M. Beall, and Phuntsog Tsering, "Development and Change in Rural Tibet: Problems and Adaptations," *Asian Survey* 43, no. 5 (2003): 758–79.
[647] Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

state as the rightful ruler of Tibet. I then examine how Tibetans contest this by visualising and curating counter discourses that celebrate 'Old Tibet' as modern, globally integrated, and culturally diverse. Focusing on the remaining core ingredients of homeland – *control of place* and *time*, I describe how homeland is deployed as a discursive practice to assert value and attachment to an ancestral past in order to disrupt official representations of 'Old Tibet' and reclaim control over the narration of Tibetan histories. In doing so, Tibetan discourses challenge the singular official narrative of 'Old Tibet' as 'hell on earth' and disrupt the neat trajectories of historical progress upon which the GWDC rests.

In terms of structure, this chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section outlines the methodological approach used to collect and analyse relevant source materials. Following this, I describe the role of history and photography in Chinese propaganda relating to Tibet, and identify the ways in which this plays out through state media discourses of historical transformation in the era of the GWDC. I then analyse the popular online practice of 'old photo' sharing among Tibetans, as well as some of the wider discussions about the role of history in contemporary Tibet. In the final section, I discuss how and why homeland occupies such a central role in these discourses and how it serves to challenge state media's portrayals of 'Old Tibet' and 'New Tibet' in the era of the GWDC.

### 6.2 Methodology

In order to analysis both written and visual texts, this chapter merges CDA and Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA). While CDA is largely mono-modal (i.e. focusing on written texts only), CMDA investigates the role of visual semiotics in a wide range of media texts.[648] CMDA claims that discourses are communicated not just through political speeches and news items, but also through various other forms of media

[648] Theo van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt, "Introduction," in *The Handbook of Visual Analysis,* ed. Theo van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt (London: Sage, 2001), 1-9.

texts, such as images and videos.[649] Recognising visual texts as a site of discourse, CMDA also takes a critical approach by focusing on the ideological and political practices that work through different forms of media.

CMDA is also interested in the dialogic relationship between written and visual texts. Drawing from Barthes' work on intertextuality, CMDA emphasises the ways in which written text can "anchor" the way in which an image is read.[650] By combining CDA and CMDA, this chapter will describe, interpret and analyse the ways in which visual and verbal texts work together to produce and reproduce ideas of societal power relations.

Supplementing CDA with CMDA did not require any major modification of my methods for conducting analysis. I began by first building a corpus of texts produced by state media on the topic of historical progress by searching for terms such as 'history' (*lishi* 历史), 'development' (*fazhan* 发展), 'peaceful liberation' (*heping jiefang* 和平解放), 'Dalai lama' (*Dalai lama* 达赖喇嘛) and 'Tibetan' (*Zangzu* 藏族) or 'Tibetan areas' (*Zangqu* 藏区; *Zangdi* 藏地). I found that using the specific combination of terms 'Tibetan,' 'history' and 'development' broadly provided the most relevant results for this chapter and generated a suitable sample, which totalled 1,908 news pieces between January 1st 2000 and December 31st 2017. The corpus peaks in the period between 2008 and 2011, the reasons for which I will describe in the next section.

For texts authored by Tibetans, I searched Tibetcul, Weibo, and Wechat for discussions and photo essays using a combination of the same core terms, as well as other related terms that I have found to engage this topic, such as 'ancestors' (*zuxian* 祖先) and 'old photos' (*jiu zhao* 旧照).

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[649] David Machin and Andrea Mayr, *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis. A Multimodal Introduction* (London: Sage, 2012).
[650] Jiayu Wang, "Criticising Images: Critical Discourse Analysis of Visual Semiosis in Picture News," *Critical Arts* 28, no.2 (2014): 264-286.

This returned over 250 results, from which I then selected 30 texts for analysis.

### 6.3 Imag(in)ing the Past: History and Photography

History often serves an important if not indispensable role in nation-making projects. As noted by Duara, history is far from a "transparent medium of understanding" and must instead be seen as:

> a discourse enabling historical players (including historians) to deploy its resources to occlude, repress, appropriate and sometimes, negotiate with other modes of depicting the past and, thus, the present and future.[651]

As a central point of nationalist pedagogies, discursive constructions of history are intricately tied up with the present. As Guehenno has argued, with modernity itself comes a "resurgence of history."[652] Similarly, Bhabha writes that "being obliged to forget becomes the basis for remembering the nation."[653] Framings of history, however, can play an even broader role in formulations of national modernity projects. They may also establish a "colonial temporality," which embeds different people and places within a hierarchy that "frames differences in politics, the economy, and sometimes even in culture in a temporal way."[654] Within such hegemonic configurations of temporality, "progress is a forward march, drawing other kinds of time into its rhythms."[655] Entrenching colonised regions into an ideological system of linearly progressing time, discourses of history and modernity converge to produce representational practices that incarcerate the colonised within

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[651] Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 5.
[652] Jean-Marie Guehenno, *The End of the Nation-State* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis, 1995), x.
[653] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 161.
[654] Marius Meinhof, "Colonial Temporality and Chinese National Modernization Discourses," *Interdisciplines* 1 (2017), 53.
[655] Anna L. Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 21.

the confines of a particular mode of temporality wherein alternatives become almost unthinkable. It thus attempts to set the limits through which the past, present and future can be imagined, working to sustain and consolidate state authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty.[656] Historical representations can thus be highly politicised, and subject to selective readings to serve and justify present needs.[657]

Photography is sometimes considered as offering a cinematic freeze-frame image of a time and place, visualising an objective history through capturing, documenting and bearing witness to 'real' experiences across different places and times. However, photography is far from a neutral medium. As Bate writes, photography plays an important role in the struggles over how history is remembered. He notes that its very accumulation in archives, databases and indeed media "is a means by which power is manifest."[658] Hight and Sampson have examined the ways in which photography has "functioned as a cultural and political medium intricately tied to the establishment and support of colonial power."[659] In order to identify and analyse the techniques of power at work in visual representations of the past, it is thus important to identify the ideological networks within which particular instances of photography are produced, reproduced, and interpreted.

In China, the nation-making project has rested on a linear narrative of history based on moments of victimhood, triumphalism, and destiny.[660] They often focus on the process of overcoming and transcendence, a way of "negating the past as a way of affirming present directions and

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[656] Hall, "Culture, Media, and the "Ideological Effect,"" 333.
[657] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
[658] David Bate, "The Memory of Photography," *Photographies* 3, no.2 (2010): 248.
[659] Elenor M. Hight and and Gary D. Sampson, *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place* (London: Routledge, 2002), 1.
[660] Prasenjit Duara, "The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China," *History and Theory* 37, no.3 (2002): 288.

projecting toward a more positive future."[661] Often fixated upon "an imaginary state of future achievement,"[662] official discourses of historical progress are regularly deployed to cultivate a sense of 'imagined community' and "to inspire a personal investment in the idea of the nation and its political sovereignty."[663] This is achieved through various official mediums, such as television, education, museums, public monuments and commemoration days.

Photography has had an important function in this project since the establishment of the PRC. Serving as a tool in collective memory-making and nation-building, photography has often been used to visualise progress and achievement under the Chinese Communist Party. Roberts notes that photography played "an active role in the ideological moulding of the population" during the Mao era, and became a tool that could "reflect glorious scenes of struggle by the Chinese people to create a new historical epoch."[664] Examining the 'weaponisation' of photography in the state's quest for ideological control and to arouse patriotic sentiment, Roberts argues that images were regularly mobilised to paint the party and its government "in eulogistic terms" and win over hearts and minds across China.[665]

Photography essays represent one example of the ways in which Chinese state media has exploited the affordances of digital media. New online technologies enable them to combine "different, often interactive modes of communication" to produce and disseminate historical discourses with much greater speed, scope, and scale than ever

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[661] Tamara Jacka, *Rural Women in Urban China: Gender, Migration and Social Chance* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2005), 268.
[662] Deborah Bird Rose, *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonisation* (Australia: University of New South Wales, 2004), 17.
[663] Florian A. Schneider, "Mediated Massacre: Digital Nationalism and History Discourse on China's Web," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 77, no.2: 431.
[664] Claire Roberts, *Photography and China* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), 104.
[665] Ibid., 109.

before.[666] This has become an important part in the state's digital persuasion tactics to promote "identification with the regime,"[667] and forms part of the broader production of history in contemporary China, which serves to bolster state authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty.

In the case of Tibet, the issue of history tends to touch "one particular nerve" in China's polemic campaign to assert its sovereignty over the region.[668] Indeed, in many ways, the most basic contentions surrounding Chinese rule in Tibet are all deeply entangled with claims about Tibetan history. As described in Chapter One, although the state continues to hold steadfastly to its claims that Tibet has been an inalienable and integral part of China since the Yuan Dynasty, this is variously challenged by scholars outside of China, the Tibetan Government in Exile, and also by Tibetans within China.[669] It is within this context that Tibetan history has taken on the role of "arbiter of sovereignty" for the Chinese state.[670] State media, through a combination of visual and written texts, play a key role in shaping the public discourse on this issue in order to reinforce the state's claims to China's proper sovereignty over Tibet.

While China's claims over Tibet are longstanding and relatively constant, it is important to consider the particular moments within which they are circulated, and for what ends. The GWDC represents a major project of economic, political, social and cultural transformation across Tibet, and

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[666] Schneider, "Mediated Massacre: Digital Nationalism and History Discourse on China's Web," 430.
[667] Yang and Tang, "Positive Energy": Hegemonic Intervention and Online Media Discourse in China's Xi Jinping Era," 2.
[668] Elliot Sperling, "Tibet and China: The Interpretation of History since 1950," *China Perspectives* 3 (2009): 25.
[669] It is important to note that, while these accounts do challenge Chinese narratives of Tibetan history, Tibetan Government in Exile accounts are also problematic in many ways. For more, see: Elliot Sperling, *The Tibet-China Conflict: History and Polemics* (Washington: East-West Centre, 2004), 15.
[670] Matthew Wills, "Tibet and China 65 Years Later." *JSTOR Daily*, May 23, 2016, accessed June 4, 2018, https://daily.jstor.org/tibet-and-china-65-years-later/

historical progress has formed a core discourse within this process. One white paper released in 2001, just two years after the launch of the GWDC, makes dozens of references to Tibetan history. It declared that Tibet's "march toward modernisation" represented a "historical inevitability" that embodies "the internal demands of Tibet's social development and the fundamental interests and wishes of the Tibetan people."[671] A 2015 white paper made similar claims, going on to assert that "the destiny of Tibet has always been closely connected with the destiny of the great motherland and the Chinese nation."[672] Under the GWDC, history has become a tool not just of reaffirming China's territorial claims over Tibet, but also of providing a *raison d'être* for the implementation of modernisation policies there.

Starting in March 2008, official references to Tibetan history increased dramatically.[673] Indeed, while they amounted to only 6 in 2006 and 3 in 2007, in 2008 and 2009 they jumped to 59 and 131 respectively. Since then hundreds more news pieces referencing the topic have been published. Photo essays were also produced in especially notable quantity during this time. The sudden rise in written and visual references to 'Old Tibet' across state media from 2008 onward is not coincidental. While state media often refers to the GWDC as Tibet's "best period of development in history,"[674] it has also been an era characterised by various expressions of Tibetan frustration. Along with widespread economic inequality and political marginalisation, other issues such as

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[671] Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Tibet's March Toward Modernization (Beijing, 2001), available at: http://ee.china-embassy.org/eng/ztlm/zgxz/xzxw/t112415.htm

[672] Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Tibet's Path of Development Is Driven by an Irresistible Historical Tide (Beijing, 2015). Available at: http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/2015/Document/1415607/1415607_1.htm

[673] According to CNKI's China Core Newspapers Database (see Chapter 3 for more details).

[674] "New Five-Year Plan Brings Hope to China's West." *China Daily*, December 27, 2017, accessed July 13, 2017, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2016-12/27/content_27786244.htm

increased Han migration into Tibetan areas, increased surveillance, compulsory 'Patriotic Education' (*aiguozhuyi jiaoyu* 爱国主义教育) sessions at monasteries and tighter restrictions on organized religion, as well as poor Tibetan language programs in many areas have all led to a rise in various grievances and ethnonationalism among Tibetans.[675] All of this culminated in the Lhasa Uprising in 2008 and the first of dozens of self-immolations across Tibet beginning in 2009, both of which attracted huge media attention worldwide. These issues have again challenged the state's attempts to forge a sense of national unity and the legitimacy of Chinese rule and policy in Tibet.

As the next section demonstrates, a combination of visual and written texts in state media have become a crucial part of the state's strategy to diminish the potential for public support and sympathy in response to these instances of unrest, justify and shore up support for the GWDC, and bolster state authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty.

## 6.4 State Media Discourses

### 6.4.1 "Exposing the Dalai Lama's Lies": Violence, Oppression, and Darkness in 'Old Tibet'

State media often positions itself as dispelling some of, what they argue to be, popular mischaracterisations of 'Old Tibet'. This can be seen in questions posed across photo essays:

> 旧西藏的真实情况究竟是什么样的呢?
>
> What Was Actually the Real Situation of Old Tibet?[676]

> 揭露达赖谎言 还原真实西藏——卢森堡学者谈其西藏专著

[675] Hillman, "Interpreting the Post-2008 Wave of Protest and Conflict in Tibet."
[676] "Yangshi xinwen diaocha: jiu xizangde fengjian nongquanzhi" 央视新闻调查：旧西藏的封建农奴制 [CCTV News Investigates: Old Tibet's Feudal Serfdom]. *People's Daily*, April 15, 2008, accessed June 22, 2017, http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1026/7123066.html

Exposing the Dalai Lama's Lies: Restoring the Real Tibet – Luxembourg Scholar Discusses His Monograph about Tibet[677]

旧西藏是'香格里拉'还是'人间地狱'

Was Old Tibet a 'Shangrila' or a 'Hell on Earth'?[678]

Repeatedly deploying the adverb "actually" and adjective "real", these texts positions themselves as uncovering the 'Truth' about 'Old Tibet'. These texts appeal to written and visual texts as evidence of the horrors of 'Old Tibet', emphasising state accounts as fact-based and as incontrovertible truth. These texts proclaim to "expose" the myth of 'Old Tibet' as "a magical land" or "paradise" (*renjian xianjing, shiwaitaoyuan* 人间仙境、世外桃源),[679] accounts described as propagated by the "Dalai Lama Clique" (*Dalai jituan* 达赖集团). The reference to such unachievable and unrealistic extremes of "paradise" and "Shangrila" produce a 'straw man' effect, intentionally amplifying the absurdity of a characterisation in order to easily dismiss it.[680] This discursive attempt to undermine positive portrayals of 'Old Tibet' is further advanced through describing accounts produced by the Tibet Government in Exile as "lies" and even as a "reckless disregard for historical facts" (*wanggu lishi shishi* 罔顾历史事实

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677 Zhonghua Shen 沈忠浩 and Bo Rao 饶博, "Jielu Dalai huangyan huanyuan zhenshi Xizang – lüsenbao xuezhe tanqi Xizang zhuanzhu" 揭露达赖谎言 还原真实西藏——卢森堡学者谈其西藏专著 [Exposing the Dalai Lama's Lies: Restoring the Real Tibet – Luxembourg Scholar Discusses His Monograph about Tibet]. *Xinhua*, July 2, 2015, accessed June 22, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-07/02/c_1115794011.htm

678 "Jiu Xizang shi 'Xianggelila' haishi 'renjian diyu'" (旧西藏是"香格里拉"还是"人间地狱") [Was Old Tibet a 'Shangrila' or a 'Hell on Earth'?]. *People's Daily*, March 16, 2009, accessed June 26, 2017, http://xz.people.com.cn/GB/139198/139214/8970834.html

679 "Yangshi xinwen diaocha: jiu xizangde fengjian nongquanzhi" 央视新闻调查：旧西藏的封建农奴制 [CCTV News Investigates: Old Tibet's Feudal Serfdom]. *People's Daily*, April 15, 2008, accessed June 22, 2017, http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1026/7123066.html

680 Robert Talisse and Scott F. Aikin, "Two Forms of Straw Man," *Argumentation* 20 (2006): 345.

).[681] As such, these persistent attempts to discredit any discourses beyond those that affirm official Chinese discourses work to elevate the purported veracity and trustworthiness of state media representations of 'Old Tibet.'

Photo essays produced and circulated in state media emphasise violence, oppression, and suffering to demonstrate the cruelty of the political order in 'Old Tibet'. This can be seen in many state media news article titles alone:

> 西藏历史：封建农奴制下藏民的悲惨生活[组图]
> Tibetan History: the Tragic Life of Tibetan People under Feudal Serfdom [Photo Collection][682]
>
> 珍贵历史档案见证：西藏封建农奴制是人类发展史上最黑暗的一页
> Valuable Historical Cases and Evidence: The Feudal Serfdom Was One of the Darkest Pages in the History of Humankind's Development[683]
>
> 黑暗、残酷的旧西藏农奴制度

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[681] "Jiu Xizang shi Xianggelila ma?" 旧西藏是香格里拉吗?) [Was Old Tibet a Shangrila?]. *China Tibet News*, April 17, 2015, accessed June 20, 2017, http://www.tibet.cn/news/index/xzyw/201504/t20150417_2691832.htm

[682] "Xizang lishi: Fengjian nongnu zhixia zangmin de beican shenghuo" 西藏历史：封建农奴制下藏民的悲惨生活 [组图] [Tibetan History: the Tragic Life of Tibetan People Under Feudal Serfdom]. *Xinhua*, April 30, 2008, accessed June 3, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/photo/2008-04/30/content_8080195_14.htm

[683] "Zhengui lishi dang'an jianzheng: Xizang fengjian nongnu zhi shi renlei fazhan shishang zui hei'an de yi ye" 珍贵历史档案见证：西藏封建农奴制是人类发展史上最黑暗的一页 [Valuable Historical Cases and Evidence: The Feudal Serfdom Was One of the Darkest Pages in the history of Humankind's Development. *People's Daily*, March 28, 2015, accessed June 3, 2017, http://pic.people.com.cn/n/2015/0328/c1016-26763952.html

The Dark, Brutal Serfdom System of Old Tibet[684]

These pieces are replete with images that visualise 'Old Tibet as a site of extreme cruelty. They focus heavily on objects used by the Tibetan aristocracy and monastics such as whips, chains and knives, coupled with detailed textual descriptions of how the tools were used on Tibetans at the time (Fig. 6).

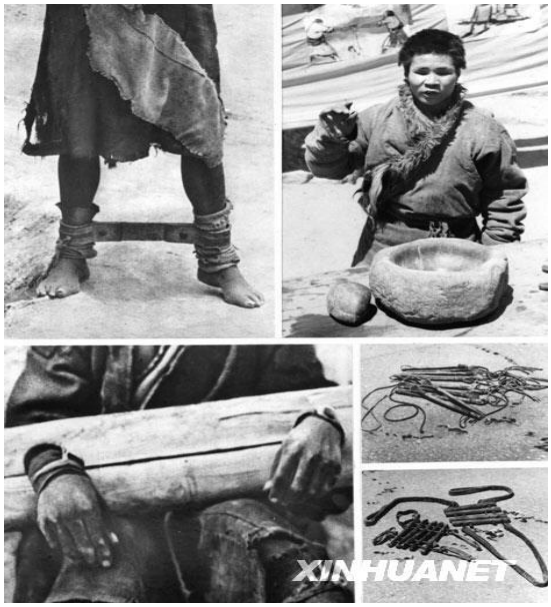


*Fig. 6: Images of implements used to torture Tibetan 'serfs'*[685]

One image commonly reproduced in state media features what are reported to be sets of human skin (Fig. 7).

[684] "Hei'an, canku de jiu Xizang nongquan fengjian zhidu [zu tu]" 黑暗、残酷的旧西藏农奴制度 [组图] (The Dark, Brutal Serfdom System of Old Tibet). *Xinhua*, January 20, 2009, accessed June 3, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/photo/2009-01/19/content_10685678_1.htm
[685] Ibid.

*Fig. 7: Image of skins from adult and child 'serfs'*[686]

In one *People's Daily* piece published in 2008, this image is followed by a paragraph of text that describes the violence and oppression of 'Old Tibet':

> 在旧西藏封建农奴制度下，占西藏人口 95%以上的农奴和奴隶，没有任何人身自由，深受官家、贵族、上层僧侣的压迫和剥削。'三大领主'对农奴和奴隶施行最残酷、最黑暗、最反动的统治——沉重的苦役，苛刻的地租和捐税，还有剜眼、砍手、断足、剥皮等种种酷刑，其黑暗、残酷比中世纪西欧的农奴制度有过之而无不及
>
> Under the feudal serf system of old Tibet, serfs and slaves made up more than 95% of the Tibetan population. They had no personal freedom at all, and were deeply oppressed and exploited by the officials, nobles, and upper class monks. The 'three major lords' imposed the cruellest, darkest, and most reactionary rule on serfs and slaves—heavy hard labour, harsh rents and taxes, and various forms of torture such as gouging out eyeballs, chopping

[686] "Zu tu: Fengjian nongnu zhi xia de beican xizang" 组图：封建农奴制下的悲惨西藏 [Image Collection: Tragic Tibet under the System of Feudal Serfdom]. *People's Daily*, April 17, 2008, accessed June 17, 2017, http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1026/7132763.html

> off hands, cutting off feet, and skinning. The darkness and cruelty went even further than the serfdom of medieval Europe.[687]

The passage describes, in explicit detail, life under the "feudal serfdom" (*fengjian nongnu zhi* 封建农奴制) of 'Old Tibet'. Ordinary Tibetans are characterised throughout the piece as "serfs" and "slaves", emphasising their subordinate and powerless status. Their lack of "personal freedom" is reinforced through the passive verbal structure of "imposed….upon," as well as through adjectives "oppressed" and "exploited". Repeated references to "darkness" and "cruelty" further reinforce attempts to construct 'Old Tibet' as a wholly oppressive and miserable place. The violence imposed upon these "serfs" and "slaves" is variously described, with particular focus on experiences of torture. The statistic of 95% not only works to lend credence and authority to the claims of historical fact,[688] but also emphasises how widely the practice of serfdom extended. The use of superlatives "cruellest", "darkest", and "most reactionary" to modify "rule" all work to emphasise 'Old Tibet' as an exceptional and unparalleled regime of tyranny. This is further consolidated in the subsequent sentence, where the comparative clause "even further than" is used to again amplify the horrors of 'Old Tibet' as even worse than those of medieval Europe, often considered one of the most notable examples of everyday brutality.

Alongside "dark" and "cruel", other descriptive words used to shape perception of 'Old Tibet' include "tragic" (*beican* 悲惨)[689], "deprivation"

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[687] "Zu tu: Fengjian nongnu zhi xia de beican xizang" 组图：封建农奴制下的悲惨西藏 [Image Collection: Tragic Tibet under the System of Feudal Serfdom]. *People's Daily*, April 17, 2008, accessed June 17, 2017, http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1026/7132763.html

[688] Tom Crook and Glen O'Hara, eds, *The 'Torrent of Numbers': Statistics and the Public Sphere in Britain, c. 1800-2000* (London: Routledge, 2011).

[689] "Hei'an, canku de jiu Xizang nongquan fengjian zhudu [zu tu]" 黑暗、残酷的旧西藏农奴制度 [组图] (The Dark, Brutal Serfdom System of Old Tibet). *Xinhua*, January 20, 2009, accessed June 3, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/photo/2009-01/19/content_10685678_1.htm

(*boduo* 剥夺),[690] "bloody" (*xielinlin* 血淋淋)[691] as well as explicit and detailed accounts of "doing labour in shackles" (*dai shang suolian laodong* 带上锁链劳动)[692] and people who were "beaten to death" (*canhai zhi si* 残害致死).[693] Graphic photographs and detailed captions accompany the text, often displaying amputated limbs, people in chains, and endless other images used to reference practices of torture under 'feudal serfdom' (Fig. 8). In their constant circulation of these images, state media representations of 'Old Tibet' are almost entirely defined by accounts of a social and political order built on severe violence and oppression.

*Fig. 8: Image of 'serf' showing his amputated leg*[694]

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[690] "Xizang lao zhaopian: Rang lishi xiang shijie shuoming zhenxiang (zu tu) 西藏老照片：让历史向世界说明真相 (组图) [Old Photos of Tibet: Let History Show the World the Truth" (Collection of Images)]. *China.com.cn*, April 1, 2008, accessed June 17, 2017, http://www.china.com.cn/culture/txt/2008-04/01/content_14051812.htm

[691] Ibid.

[692] "Zhengui lishi dang'an jianzheng: Xizang fengjian nongnu zhi shi renlei fazhan shishang zui hei'an de yi ye" 珍贵历史档案见证：西藏封建农奴制是人类发展史上最黑暗的一页 [Valuable Historical Cases and Evidence: The Feudal Serfdom Was One of the Darkest Pages in the history of Humankind's Development. *People's Daily*, March 28, 2015, accessed June 3, 2017, http://pic.people.com.cn/n/2015/0328/c1016-26763952.html

[693] "Zhaxi Wangdui lao ren: jiu Xizang fuqin he gege bei lingzhu canhai zhi si" 扎西旺堆老人：旧西藏父亲和哥哥被领主残害致死 [Old Man Zhaixi Wangdui: In Old Tibet His Father and Older Brother Were Beaten to Death by Lord]. *People's Daily*, October 21, 2013, accessed June 23, 2017, http://tv.people.com.cn/n/2013/1031/c150716-23393964.html

[694] "Zhengui lishi dang'an jianzheng: Xizang fengjian nongnu zhi shi renlei fazhan shishang zui hei'an de yi ye" 珍贵历史档案见证：西藏封建农奴制是人

This discourse of violence and oppression is used to warn Tibetans about what an independent Tibet under the rule of the "Dalai Lama clique" would look like. As one *People Daily* piece from 2009 reads:

> 让我们看到，他们对政教合一封建农奴制是何等的眷恋，对重新恢复农奴主阶级对人民大众的统治是何等的渴望！
>
> we can see what they mean as they yearn for a system of theocratic feudal serfdom means, and what they mean as they aspire for a revival and restoration of serf-owning classes ruling over the masses![695]

In 2008 People's Daily published an interview "by popular demand" (*guangda wangmin de yaoqiu* 广大网民的要求) with Zhu Weiqun 朱维群, the then deputy head of the United Front Work Department of the CCP, in which he is quoted as saying:

> 重新建立政教合一的封建农奴制才是他所追求的'自治'
>
> re-establishing a theocratic feudal serfdom is the only 'autonomy' [the Dalai Lama] seeks[696]

Following on from graphic visual and written descriptions of the conditions of 'Old Tibet', the texts conflate any struggle for Tibetan independence or greater autonomy with a restoration of what they

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类发展史上最黑暗的一页 [Valuable Historical Cases and Evidence: The Feudal Serfdom Was One of the Darkest Pages in the history of Humankind's Development. *People's Daily*, March 28, 2015, accessed June 3, 2017, http://pic.people.com.cn/n/2015/0328/c1016-26763952.html

[695] "Jiu Xizang shi 'Xianggelila' haishi 'renjian diyu'" (旧西藏是"香格里拉"还是"人间地狱") [Was Old Tibet a 'Shangrila' or a 'Hell on Earth'?]. *People's Daily*, March 16, 2009, accessed June 26, 2017, http://xz.people.com.cn/GB/139198/139214/8970834.html

[696] "Deguo "jiaodian" zazhi: Zhu Weiqun bu chongxu guoji ganyu Zhongguo neizheng," (德国《焦点》杂志：朱维群不允许国际干预中国内政) [German Magazine 'Perspective': Zhu Weiqun Will Not Allow International Interference in Internal Affairs]. *People's Daily*, October 17, 2009, accessed June 10, 2017, http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1027/10208637.html

characterise as a cruel and horrible 'feudal serfdom'. Working to instil disgust, fear and distrust in the 'Dalai Lama clique,' these texts also attempt to diminish public potential for sympathy for Tibetan calls for independence or political autonomy, amplify a sense of external threat, and bolster support for state rule and security measures.

By positioning themselves as revealing the 'Truth' about the horrors of pre-'liberation' Tibet and the true intentions of the 'Dalai Lama clique,' state media thus works to achieve a kind of "ascendency in both thought and practice over"[697] readers. It seeks to persuade Tibetans and Han Chinese of the necessity of rejecting the regressive aspirations of 'separatists' in the interest of protecting Tibet from once again becoming a 'hell on earth.' In this sense, it works as a form of cultural governance to discursively shore up state authority by generating acceptance, trust, and support for Chinese rule over Tibet.[698]

### 6.4.2 "Only the CCP Can Save Tibet": From Old Tibet to New Tibet

Descriptions of 'Old Tibet' are always closely bound up with the conditions of 'New Tibet'. In this sense, history is mobilised to "serve current propaganda purposes."[699] While 'Old Tibet' is represented as a 'hell on earth' that was full of oppression, backwardness, and darkness, 'New Tibet' is depicted as 'liberated', 'democratic,' and an open place reaping the benefits of socialist transformation.

Across all texts, 1959 is often referenced as a "turning point" (*zhuanzhedian* 转折点) setting a clear binary opposition between 'Old Tibet' and 'New Tibet'. Texts are replete with temporal phrases such as "Tibetan society prior to 1959" (*1959 nian qian de Xizang shehui* 1959 年

[697] Hall, "The Work of Representation," 33.
[698] Cited in Florian Schneider and Yih-Jye Hwang, "The Sichuan Earthquake and the Heavenly Mandate: Legitimizing Chinese Rule Through Disaster Discourse," 637.
[699] Powers, *History as Propaganda,* 14.

以前的西藏社会)[700] and "after Tibet's democratic reform in 1959" (*1959 nian Xizang minzhu gaige hou* 1959 年西藏民主改革后).[701] Through repeated comparing and contrasting of 'Old Tibet' and 'New Tibet', the magnitude of change achieved under Chinese rule is accompanied by modal phrases such as the Chinese idiom "earth shattering" (*fantian fudi* 翻天覆地).[702]

'Old Tibet' and 'New Tibet' are often directly juxtaposed in state media photo essays. For instance, in one *China Tibet News* piece, one image depicts a person in the stocks, while the next shows Tibetans voting and celebrating the end of feudal serfdom.[703] The images, positioned side by side, thus project 'Old Tibet' as a site of oppression and 'New Tibet' as a site of liberation and a democratic political system. The final image of the collection, the only one in colour, depicts six Tibetan children in traditional Tibetan clothing. They all wear a red scarf and matching caps, smiling and laughing under a blue sky (Fig. 9). It is followed by written text that proclaims:

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[700] Ying Hu (胡英), "BBC yiwai qi di: Yixie zhichi dalai jituan de 'xuezhe' jing ruci huangmu" BBC 意外起底：一些支持达赖集团的"学者"竟如此荒谬 [BBC Unexpectedly Exposed: Some 'Scholars' Who Support the Dalai Lama Clique Are Actually So Absurd]. *China Tibet News,* June 1, 2016, accessed June 24, 2017, http://www.tibet.cn/news/focus/1464770919493.shtml

[701] "Nongnu dang niu zuo ma mingyun beican, fanshen hou gongfeng mao zhuxi xiang" 农奴当牛做马命运悲惨，翻身后供奉毛主席像 [The Tragic Fate of Serfs Who Worked like Horses and Toiled Like Oxen, After Escape Worship Images of Chairman Mao]. *China Tibet News*, October 28, 2016, http://www.tibet.cn/news/focus/1477622754766.shtml

[702] "Yu xin Zhongguo yiqi chengzhang: Xin Xizang chuangzao ji shi nian kuayue qian nian de renjian qiji" 与新中国一起成长 新西藏创造几十年跨越千年的人间奇迹 (Growing Together with China - New Tibet Overcomes Thousands of Years in a Few Decades to Create a Miracle of Humanity), *People's Daily*, September 18, 2009, http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/165240/167238/10076434.html

[703] "Nongnu dang niu zuo ma mingyun beican, fanshen hou gongfeng mao zhuxi xiang" 农奴当牛做马命运悲惨，翻身后供奉毛主席像 [The Tragic Fate of Serfs Who Worked like Horses and Toiled Like Oxen, After Escape Worship Images of Chairman Mao]. *China Tibet News*, October 28, 2016, accessed June 3, 2017, http://www.tibet.cn/news/focus/1477622754766.shtml

随着中国的不断发展，西藏也有了突飞猛进的发展，在民主、文化、生态、卫生等多方面取得了很大进步

Following China's continuous development, Tibet has also made rapid development. Democracy, culture, ecology, sanitation and many other areas have achieved great progress.

如今, 西藏的城乡面貌焕然一新, 现代化设施日趋完备。西藏各族人民幼有所育、学有所教、劳有所得、病有所医、老有所养、住有所居、弱有所扶,成为了幸福生活的奋斗者、共享者。

Today, Tibet's urban and rural areas have an entirely new look. With each passing day modern facilities are perfected. People of all ethnicities of Tibet have access to childcare, education, employment, healthcare, elderly care, housing, welfare support. They have become people who strive for and enjoy together a happy life.

*Fig. 9: Images of 'Old Tibet' and 'New Tibet'*[704]

"Development", "progress", and "new look" converge to create a sense of positive transformation. All modified by intensifying adverbs "continuous",

[704] Ibid.

"rapid", and "entirely", these words characterise Tibet as constantly modernising and advancing forward. References to "democracy", "culture", "ecology" as well as material living conditions and social amenities are all listed as examples of achievements and manifestations of Tibet's 'liberation'. Tibetans themselves, in contrast to 'Old Tibet', have become active and empowered citizens who can now "strive" and "enjoy" a "happy life." This contrasts sharply with the passive verbal structures and descriptions of 'Old Tibet' as oppressive, thereby again amplifying the positive gains of 'New Tibet'.

Alongside the highly positive descriptions of 'New Tibet', expressions of extreme gratitude to the state also permeate comparisons of 'Old Tibet' and 'New Tibet'. In one *Xinhua* piece in 2018, Mingji Cuomu 明吉措姆, the vice president of Tibet Medical College, is quoted as saying:

> 通过新旧西藏对比，我深深感到，只有中国共产党才能救中国、救西藏！
>
> Through a comparison of new and old Tibet, I really feel that, only the Chinese Communist Party can save China and save Tibet.[705]

> 没有中国共产党就没有新西藏，只有中国共产党才能救西藏、发展西藏
>
> Without the Chinese Communist Party, there could be no new Tibet. Only the Chinese Communist Party can save Tibet and develop Tibet[706]

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[705] Qinou Wang (王沁鸥), "'Zhe shi women de jieri' – Xizang bai wan nongnu jiefang ri de renmin xinsheng" 这是我们的节日"——西藏百万农奴解放纪念日的人民心声 ['This is Our Holiday' – The Voice of the People on Tibet's Million Serfs' Liberation Commemoration Day]. *Xinhua*, March 28, 2018, accessed March 29, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-03/28/c_1122605938.htm

[706] "Meiyou gongchandang jiu meiyou xin Xizang" 没有共产党就没有新西藏 [Without the Communist Party There Would be No New Tibet]. *Tibet Daily*, March 29, 2018, accessed March 30, 2018, http://epaper.chinatibetnews.com/xzrb/html/2018-03/29/content_824420.htm

The use of adjective “only” and conditional clause “without… there could be no” draw attention to the unique and exclusive ability of the Chinese Communist Party to guide Tibet towards modernity, while the verbal expression “save” once again positions the state as the hero who rescues and protects Tibetans from the oppressors of ‘Old Tibet’.

The contrastive expression of “a comparison of old and new Tibet” draws attention to transformation, while the personal pronoun “I” and “feel”, modified by “really” for emphasis, centre personal experience. These first-hand testimonials reinforce a sense of agency, empowerment and authenticity in state media accounts of modern Tibetan history, but it also affirms the state’s account of Tibetan empowerment.[707] As in previous chapters, this again serves “to put a human face on propaganda and ideological work” in order to generate an emotional angle and relatability.[708] Indeed, accounts of ‘Old Tibet’ and ‘New Tibet’ are often propped up with testimonials from Tibetans. As part of this state project, CCTV have since 2009 been running a daily segment on their Tibet service entitled ‘Contrasting New Tibet and Old Tibet’ (*Xinjiu Xizang duibi* 新旧西藏对比).[709] The short videos are all posted and circulated online and rely heavily on personal testimonies from Tibetans about the progress and positive changes they have seen under the Chinese state (Fig. 10). Interspersed across the footage are again images of ‘Old Tibet’ and ‘New Tibet’, reinforcing the narrative of Tibetans being liberated from

[707] This enacts a long-standing narrative most famously depicted in the influential film *Nongnu* 农奴 [Serf] (1963). Produced by the PLA film unit, Serf depicts ‘Old Tibet’ on the eve of ‘liberation’ as a corrupt, cruel and oppressive society. Jampa, the protagonist, becomes mute after being subjected to repeated torture. When the PLA soldiers ‘peacefully liberate’ Tibet, Jampa regains his voice and immediately uses it to praise Chairman Mao.
[708] Ashley Esarey, “Winning Hearts and Minds? Cadres as Microbloggers in China,” 82.
[709] “Xinjiu Xizang duibi” 新旧西藏对比 [Contrasting New Tibet and Old Tibet]. *CCTV,* Last modified September 15, 2017, http://tv.cntv.cn/video/C11182/f5e2ca149c703de24e89ccd00a4e5c44

the “shackles of serfdom”[710] to become the “masters of their own destiny.”[711]

*Fig. 10: Images from CCTV’s ‘Contrasting New Tibet and Old Tibet’*[712]

These discourses of ‘Old Tibet’ as an oppressive and miserable place full of suffering and torture, and that of ‘New Tibet’ as a socialist utopia for which Tibetans continuously express their gratitude, reinforce a linear story of progress and development. These pieces work to frame ‘Old Tibet’ as necessitating intervention, liberation, and continued protection

[710] “Changes Some People Don’t Want to See in Tibet.” *China Daily,* April 11, 2009, accessed July 13, 2018, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2009-04/11/content_7668187.htm

[711] “From Serfs to Masters of Their Own Destiny: Tibetans Remember.” *China.com.cn*, March 28, 2009, accessed June 22, 2017, http://www.china.org.cn/china/tibet_democratic_reform/content_17515351.htm

[712] “Xinjiu xizang duibi,” *CCTV.*

from external threat. In doing so, these discourses of 'Old Tibet' and 'New Tibet' attempt to generate public consent and support for Chinese state policy and rule over Tibet.

### 6.5 Tibetan Discourses

This section examines how Tibetans use written and visual descriptions of 'Old Tibet' to challenge and counter official discourses about Tibetan history. While a very common practice across Tibetan online spaces in general, I focus on the Tibetcul profile of Lingka Luorong Zeren 岭卡·洛绒泽仁, the most popular Tibetan platform for sharing 'old photos' (*jiuzhao* 旧照) and the one which attracts the most commentary.

Lingka Luorong Zeren, a Tibetan man from Sichuan's Kangding 康定 (Kham's Dartsedo དར་རྩེ་མདོ།), has been a very active user on Tibetcul since 2007 and has posted over 300 essays to date. His posts attract a lot of attention, with each having garnered at least a few thousand views. Lingka's photo essays are his most popular posts by far and have generated well over 100,000 views so far. These essays are usually compiled according to particular topics and focus on early 20th century representations of Tibet and Tibetans. Past examples include essays focusing on Tibetan attire during the Republican era, the Tibetan army, and various collections of landscapes and architectural landmarks. Lingka generally provides little to no context for the photographs he shares, but does generally include the year and place where the photograph was taken. From markings on the photographs, many of the images Lingka shares appear to come directly or indirectly from *The Tibet Album*, a virtual collection of over 6000 images of early 20th century Tibet at Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.[713] However, the ways in which his photo essays are compiled rarely reflect their original arrangement on *The Tibet Album*. The essays are often highly de-

[713] "The Tibet Album: British Photography in Central Tibet 1920-1950," *The Tibet Album*, Last modified June 26, 2017, http://tibet.prm.ox.ac.uk/

contextualised and are compiled in such a way to tell a particular story or reflect on a particular issue, i.e. fashion, sports, architecture etc.

In my analysis of Tibetan discourses of historical progress, I focus on Lingka's photograph essays, and supplement them with reference to other popular 'old photo' sharing platforms on Weibo and Wechat, and other popular online texts about Tibetan history more broadly.

### 6.5.1 "We Cannot Forget Our History": Recovering the 'Real' 'Old Tibet'

Like state media, Tibetans are also very concerned with the search for the 'real' 'Old Tibet'. Photographs taken from early 20th century Tibet are framed in such a way as to not only showcase different eras in Tibetan history, but also to challenge representations of 'Old Tibet' as it is represented in official media. Lingka himself has noted the significance of the images he compiles, prefacing one image collection with the comment that:

> 都是上世纪 40 年代的拉萨旧照，可以看出那时候藏区并不是封闭的，还是有很多新奇的玩意
>
> These are all old photos of Lhasa in the 40's era in the last century. It can be seen from them that at that time Tibetan areas were actually not closed off but had many new and novel things.[714]

Lingka's use of the adverb "actually" implicitly invokes broader scepticism of an existing narrative and presents subsequent information in a way perceived to be contrary to expectation and popular understanding. The contrastive clause pattern of "actually not…. but had" embeds his essay within a broader politics of representation around the Tibetan past. It

[714] Luorong Zeren Lingka (岭卡·洛绒泽仁), ""1940 niandai Lasa shimao jiu zhao" 1940 年代拉萨时髦旧照 [Old Photographs of Lhasa: Fashion in the 1940s], *Tibetcul Blog*, March 17, 2013, http://blog.tibetcul.com/home.php?mod=space&uid=7561&do=blog&id=196292

closely mimics the claims to veracity in state media, as described in the previous section. In this sense, his texts are interdiscursive, showing a dialogic play between different texts produced on the topic. Rather than being "backward, isolated and stagnant,"[715] 'Old Tibet' is represented as having "had many new and novel things." The essay goes on to show images of Tibetans wearing Chinese and Western clothing, using microphones and gramophones, and uses modal phrases such as "modern" (*xiandai* 现代) to describe various trends and technologies (Fig. 11). Across written and visual texts, Lingka's photo essays thus work to counter official representations of 'Old Tibet'.

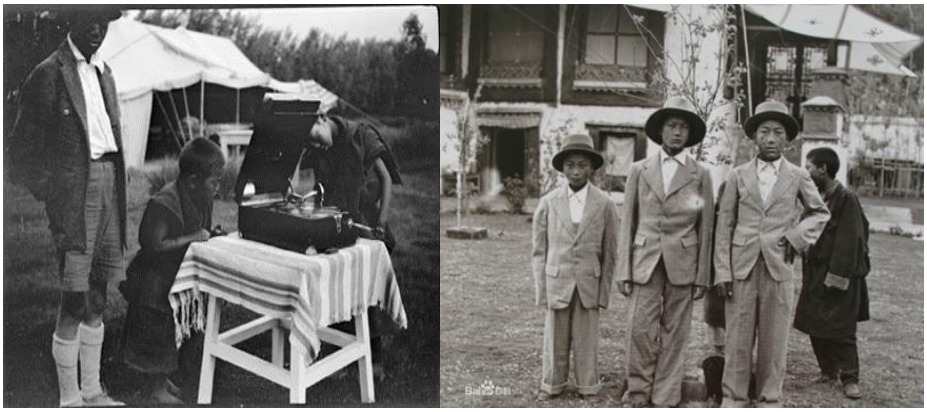

*Fig. 11*: *Images of 'Old Photographs of Lhasa: Fashion in the 1940s'*[716]

In the preface to another of his essays, Lingka writes that the photographs he shares:

> 让大家直观了解那个时代，人们的一种生活状态
>
> let everyone directly observe and understand that era and the kind of living situation of the people.[717]

[715] Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, *Tibet's March Toward Modernization* (Beijing, 2001), available at: http://ee.china-embassy.org/eng/ztlm/zgxz/xzxw/t112415.htm

[716] Lingka, "Old Photographs of Lhasa: Fashion in the 1940s."

[717] Luorong Zeren Lingka, "1920 nian Luobulinka de dongwu" 1920年罗布林卡的动物（老照片）[Animals of Norbulinka in 1920 (Old Photos)], *Tibetcul Blog*, December 30, 2009, http://blog.tibetcul.com/home.php?mod=space&uid=7561&do=blog&id=75426

Lingka invites his audience to bear witness to how people 'really' lived in 'Old Tibet'. The use of "directly" as an adverbial modifier casts the images as a neutral and objective window into the past.

Lingka's photographs are often represented as evidence or proof of how the past was. This is often reinforced through the comments his essays receive. For example, one Tibetan commentator wrote in response to another of Lingka's essays that:

> 黑色图片是真实的历史写照！
>
> Black and white pictures are the portrayal of real history![718]

The discourse of 'real' 'Old Tibet' implicitly references a 'fake' history and again indicates a broader politics of representation. This appeal to truth that characterises Tibetan discourses of 'Old Tibet' is again made explicit elsewhere. For instance, in another of Lingka's photo essays, one comment reads:

> 按照现在的宣传，无法想象历史。从你发来的图片中，能看到真实的东西
>
> According to propaganda today, there is no way of imagining history. From your pictures we can see real things[719]

The use of the adjective "real" to describe the images Lingka provides is directly contrasted with the "propaganda" of those found elsewhere.

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[718] "Xueyu minyue lao yiren jiu zhaopian" 雪域民乐老艺人旧照片 [Entertainers from the Land of Snows], *Tibetcul Blog*, June 14, 2016, http://blog.tibetcul.com/home.php?mod=space&uid=7561&do=blog&id=304635

[719] Luorong Zeren Lingka, "Jiu Xizang de Yingguo ren yiyuan (zu tu)" 旧西藏的英国人医院（组图） [The English People's Hospital of Old Tibet (Photo Collection)], *Tibetcul Blog*, January 12, 2010, http://blog.tibetcul.com/home.php?mod=space&uid=7561&do=blog&id=76747

“Propaganda” overtly references an official agenda in the determination of which stories get told and how. The sense that official sources offer “no way of imagining history” is again a prominent discourse, expressing an awareness of the political sensitivities and distortions of Tibetan history in contemporary China. In response to another of Lingka’s essays that features images of visitors, business people, and officials from Mongolia, India, and England (Fig. 12), one comment reads:

> 照片不措。值得收藏和学习。在中国这样复杂的环境很难让我们藏人看到这些
>
> These pictures are great. They are worth collecting and studying. In a complex environment as that of China it is very difficult for us Tibetans to see these[720]

Through the adjectives “complex” and “difficult”, this comment further draws attention to the broader politics of representation surrounding Tibetan history. This reinforces the sense of power involved in how Tibetan history is discussed and the challenge in accessing alternative information. It is for this reason that the images are ascribed value and described as “worth collecting and studying.” This is a common response to Lingka’s essays. For example, in another essay featuring images of the Potala Palace, Tibetan aristocrats, soldiers, and a Lhasa market place (Fig. 13), one comment reads:

> 从照片上可以研究当时的布达拉宫周围环境，还可以研究当时的服饰等，很珍贵。

[720] Luorong Zeren Lingka, “Minguo shi lai Lasa de waixiang ren” 民国时来拉萨的外乡人 [People from Foreign Lands Who Came to Lhasa in the Republican Era], *Tibetcul Blog*, March 8, 2010, http://blog.tibetcul.com/home.php?mod=space&uid=7561&do=blog&id=82538

> From these pictures we can study about the surrounding environment of the Potala Palace, and also study about the fashion of that time. Very valuable.[721]

The repeated references to "study" again draw attention to the material as a rare and a "very valuable" source of information worth investigating further as a means of understanding more about Tibet's past. They are characterised as producing knowledge about Tibetan history.

*Fig. 12: Images from 'People from Foreign Lands Who Came to Lhasa in the Republican Era'*

*Fig. 13: Images from 'Old Photos of Lhasa in the 1900s.'*

[721] Luorong Zeren Lingka, ""1900 niandai de Lasa jiuzhao" 1900 年代的拉萨旧照 [Old Photos of Lhasa in the 1900s], *Tibetcul Blog*, March 15, 2013, http://blog.tibetcul.com/home.php?mod=space&uid=7561&do=blog&id=196160

The value ascribed to Lingka's images is often linked to a desire to connect with the past. For instance, in response to another collection of images of Tibetan men from the early 20th century, one comment reads:

> 感谢你给我们讲述祖先的故事
>
> Thank you for telling us the story of our ancestors[722]

The use of "us" and "our" as a collective pronoun marks an expression of a shared identity and history. The noun "ancestors" signifies a social and cultural bond to the past through lineage. The role of the photographs in establishing connections between past and present can be seen in a number of other comments:

> 你的照片拉近了历史和现代的距离
>
> Your photographs pull history and the present closer together[723]

> 照片作为链接过去和现在的桥梁
>
> Photographs are a bridge that link the past and the present[724]

Use of the verb "pull… together" and "bridge" both indicate a connection across past and present. Lingka's collections are also presented as a source of value in their ability to interrogate connections across different periods of Tibetan history. These temporal references emphasise an

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[722] Luorong Zeren Lingka, "Bai nian qian mingxinpian zhong de zangzu nanzi" 百年前明信片中的藏族男子 [Tibetan Men in Postcards from 100 Years Ago], *Tibetcul Blog*, June 22, 2010, http://blog.tibetcul.com/home.php?mod=space&uid=7561&do=blog&id=97740

[723] Luorong Zeren Lingka, "1936 nian Lasa youguo daxiang (duo tu)" 1936 年拉萨有过大象（多图） [Lhasa Had an Elephant in 1936 (Many Photos)], *Tibetcul Blog*, January 9, 2010, http://blog.tibetcul.com/home.php?mod=space&uid=7561&do=blog&id=76496

[724] Luorong Zeren Lingka, "Ouran fanpai de Kangding lao zhaopian" 偶然翻拍的康定老照片 [A Random Reproduction of Old Photographs of Kangding], *Tibetcul Blog*, June 16, 2015, http://blog.tibetcul.com/home.php?mod=space&uid=7561&do=blog&id=293462

enduring bond that is recoverable through history. Indeed, the need to connect past and present is echoed across discussions of Tibetan history more broadly. As one young Tibetan poet wrote in a widely shared essay for *China Writer* (*Zhongguo zuojia wang* 中国作家网), the website of the prestigious *China Writers Association* (*Zhongguo zuojia xiehui* 中国作家协会):

> 我们是一粒青稞，有自己的生长的土地，有自己哺育的文化、有自己归根的族谱 [...] 无法磨灭的根，写刻在骨子里的母语，时刻提醒着我们，不能忘记祖先、不能忘记历史、不能忘记自己姓甚名谁。
>
> We are grains of barley who have our own land to raise us, our own culture to feed us and our own lineage to root us […] Roots that cannot be worn away and our mother tongue that is inscribed in our bones constantly remind us that we cannot forget our ancestors, we cannot forget our history, and we cannot forget who we are.[725]

In another impassioned essay, a young blogger named Ciren Sangzhu 次仁桑珠 writes:

> 每个人的历史构成了联系的历史，每份血缘关系纽系着每份历史！血脉相连！落叶归根！
>
> Each person's history forms part of a connected history. Each bloodline is bound up with each history! Blood connections! A falling leaf always returns to its root![726]

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[725] Quejie66, "Zangzu xiandai shi chuangzuo qian tan" 藏族现代诗创作浅谈 [A Brief Discussion of Modern Tibetan Poetry Production]. *China Writer*, July 14, 2016, accessed June 25, 2017, http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/n1/2016/0714/c404014-28554424.html

[726] Ciren Sangzhu 次仁桑珠, ""Xian gei 80-90 hou de xin yidai zangzu ren" 献给 80-90 后的新一代藏族人 [Dedicated to the New Post-80s and 90's

Within these extracts, the entanglement of history, ancestry, and identity is especially acute. Through reoccurring reference to “roots”, the writers convey connections extending across time. Reference to barley, as discussed in detail in Chapter Four, denotes transgenerational cultural practices. Verbal expressions “forms part of”, “grounded”, and “reminded” all link past and present together, while repeated reference to “we”, “us”, and “our” signals ownership, possession, and shared experience. In this sense, the visual and written discourses surrounding the compilation and sharing of photographs of ‘Old Tibet’ draw from those taking place in online Tibetan discussions of Tibetan history more broadly.

Tibetan discourses surrounding ‘Old Tibet’ focus heavily on learning more about and connecting with the ‘Truth’ about Tibetan history prior to the Chinese invasion. Often indicating a wider context within which politically–motivated and less factually accurate accounts are produced and circulated, Lingka and his audience present ‘old photo’ essays as portraying the ‘real’ ‘Old Tibet’. They are discursively rendered as a source of knowledge about ‘Old Tibet’ that ought to be recovered through study, and used as a way of connecting with their ancestors and bringing together past and present. In doing so, they attempt to reclaim control over how Tibetan history is told.

### 6.5.2 “Many New and Novel Things”: ‘Old Tibet’ as Culturally Diverse and Globally Integrated

While the previous section focused on ‘old photos’ as a source of ‘Truth’, value, and a means of connecting past and present, another prominent discourse concerns the kind of place ‘Old Tibet’ was. Both visual and written texts produce a discourse of ‘Old Tibet’ as a culturally diverse and globally integrated region.

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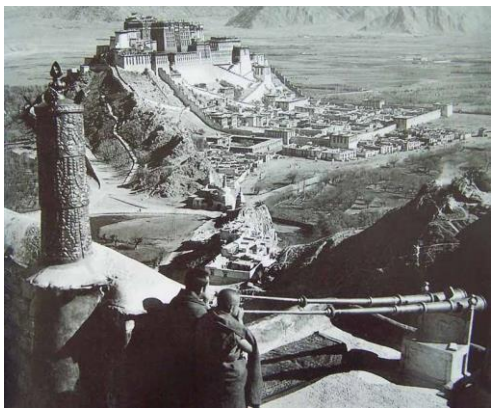
Generation of Tibetans], *Sina Blog*, November 1, 2012, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_b044ca1c0101cevp.html

Attempts to showcase positive aspects of 'Old Tibet' are very common in Lingka's essays. This is particularly the case in "Old Photos of Lhasa in the 1900s" (*1900 niandai de Lasa jiuzhao* 1900年代的拉萨旧照), which attracted over 20,000 views and was also shared widely on other online platforms.[727] The essay features 19 black and white photographs. It begins with one of the most well-known images of the Potala Palace in which two monks blow *radung* (ceremonial horns) on the roof of the Chakpori Medical College.[728] It then moves on to images of a marching army entering Lhasa, as well as monks and government officials of the Qing and *Kashag* (the governing council of Tibet under the Qing). Images of Tibetan women involved in carpentry and masonry, a pilgrim, and soldiers dressed in ceremonial warrior attire also feature. The collection continues with an image of a Tibetan man and a Tibetan mastiff, a Tibetan mother and son, as well as an image of a monk writing, and a final image of a Lhasa market place (Fig. 14). The selection of images present Lhasa as a functional political and economic system, and a diverse and culturally rich society made up of lamas, labourers, pilgrims, and entertainers. It omits any mention of a 'feudal serfdom', torture or poverty, all of which, as seen above, dominate official representations of 'Old Tibet'.



[727] Lingka, "1900 niandai de Lasa jiuzhao."
[728] The building of the medical college was destroyed during the Lhasa Uprising in 1959.

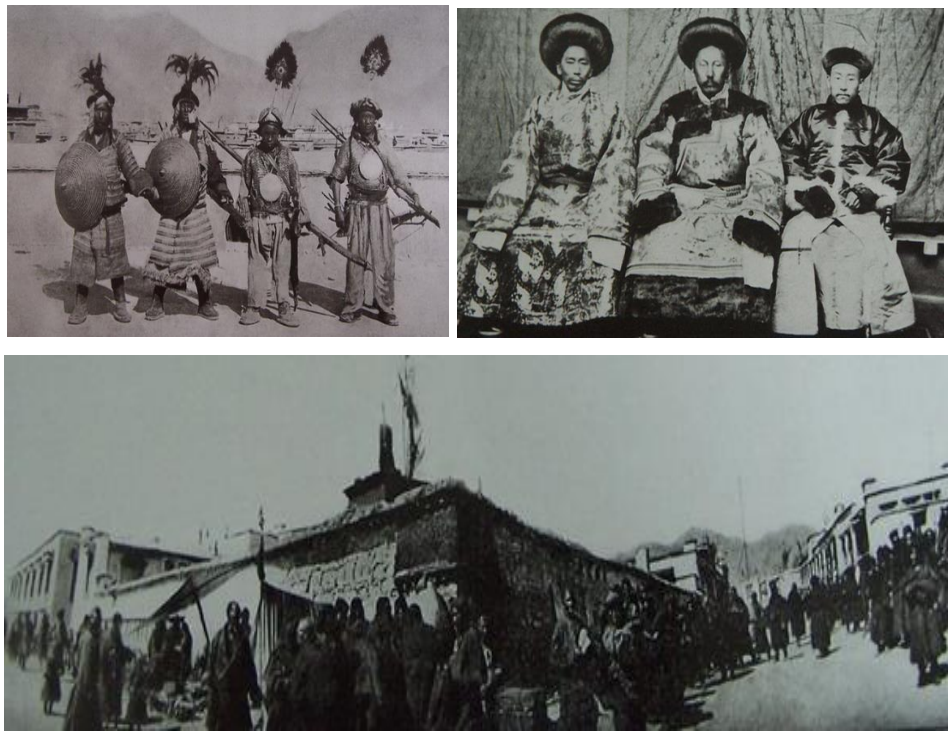


*Fig. 14: Images from 'Old Photographs of Lhasa: Fashion in the 1940s'*[729]

Similar themes are at work in Lingka's essay "Old Photographs of Lhasa: Fashion in the 1940s" (*1940 niandai Lasa shimao jiu zhao* 1940年代拉萨时髦旧照), which has received over 16,000 views to date, and features eight images.[730] It includes images of two women described as wearing leather shoes, others wearing qipao, and a Beijing manager of a trading company in Lhasa. The collection continues with an image of Tibetan women using a microphone to perform a song for British representatives, and "a modern bridge of Lhasa" (*Lasa de xiandai qiaoliang* 拉萨的现代化桥梁). It then concludes with an image taken in a garden in Central Tibet's Gyantse རྒྱལ་རྩེ། (now the TAR's Jiangzi 江孜), featuring a young monk "listening to a gramophone" (*ting liushengji* 听留声机), while to the side stands a Tibetan aristocrat in "western styled clothing" (*xishi fuzhuang* 西式服装) (Fig. 15). Through written and visual descriptions, Tibetans are portrayed as active participants in their history, rather than wholly oppressed and exploited victims. The modal adjective "modern", in

[729] Ibid.
[730] Lingka, "1940 niandai Lasa shimao jiu zhao."

reference to regional and world fashion and technological trends, promotes an understanding of Tibet as globally connected and culturally dynamic, rather than 'backward' and 'stagnant'. This is again present in another of Lingka's essay, which features images of visitors, business people and foreign officials from Mongolia, India, and England (Fig. 16).[731] Across these essays, visual and written text merge to produce a discourse of 'Old Tibet' as globally aware, integrated, and engaged with ideas from beyond its own borders.


*Fig. 15: Images from 'Old Photographs of Lhasa Fashion in the 1940s'*[732]

[731] Lingka, "Minguo shi lai Lasa de waixiang ren."
[732] Lingka, "1940 niandai Lasa shimao jiu zhao."

*Fig. 16: Images from 'People from Foreign Lands Who Came to Lhasa in the Republican Era'*[733]

This discourse of 'Old Tibet' as a site of Tibetan agency, cultural diversity, and a globally integrated society is part of a broader attempt to diversify representations of 'Old Tibet' to shape and influence public understanding among both Tibetans and Han Chinese.

It is however important to note that the Tibetan discourse does not seek to suggest that 'Old Tibet' was problem-free, but merely to challenge the single story of 'Old Tibet' as a 'hell on earth.' This is most notable on 'Serf Emancipation Day' (*Xizang baiwan nongnu jiefang jinianri* 西藏百万农奴解放纪念日), an annual holiday introduced as a public holiday in 2009 and marked across the Tibet Autonomous Region on March 28th to celebrate the end of feudal serfdom in Tibet.

Against the wave of state propaganda shared across social media on 'Serf Emancipation Day,' Tibetans often use old photos to challenge state representations. In 2017, Xire Duoji 希热多吉, a Tibetan scholar and blogger, confronted a Weibo post by *CCTV News* featuring pictures of Tibetans doing hard labour, serf's bones, letters of serf ownership and a Tibetan man with his wrists locked in the stocks (Fig. 17).

[733] Ibid.


*Fig. 17: CCTV's Weibo post to commemorate 'Serf Emancipation Day,' 2017*

Duoji publicly responded to CCTV's post by reposting the images with the following comment:

> 旧西藏的社会制度和满清一样，都是封建农奴制
>
> The social order of Old Tibet and that of the Qing Dynasty were the same; they were both feudal serfdoms.

The use of the comparative adjective "same" equates the conditions of 'Old Tibet' and the Qing Dynasty, thus undoing the state's singling out of 'Old Tibet' as uniquely horrible at that time. This is reinforced in the subsequent clause through the use of "both" to again show how similar the two social orders were. A similar strategy was used by Nine Flavours of Anshen Tea (Jiuwei Anshen cha 九味安神茶), a highly popular Weibo account dedicated solely to sharing images of 'Old Tibet'. This account also responded to the celebration of 'Serf Emancipation Day' in official media with a number of images from the Qing era of people being punished and tortured (Fig. 18). Nine Flavours of Anshen Tea shared the photos with the accompanying text:

> 这些也是大清朝的那些事，但绝对不是清朝的全部。
>
> These images are also of those things in the Qing Dynasty, but that is absolutely not the whole story of the Qing Dynasty.


*Fig. 18: Nine Flavours of Anshen Tea's Weibo post on 'Serf Emancipation Day,' 2017*

Like Xire Duoji, Nine Flavours of Anshen Tea again indicates the similarity of 'Old Tibet' and 'Old China'. Using the adverb "also", it can again be seen how Tibetans attempt to challenge the view that 'Old Tibet' was a unique case by drawing attention to similar instances of torture and violence in the Qing Dynasty.[734] Moreover, Nine Flavours of Anshen Tea adds that the Qing Dynasty cannot be reduced to a story of feudal serfdom. Using the intensifying adverb "absolutely" and in conjunction with the verbal expression "is not", the post serves to vehemently oppose the use of a small number of images to give a full account of an entire historical period. By linking the two clauses through the conjunction "but", the post thus likens their own misrepresentation of Qing history to that of ongoing official representations of 'Old Tibet'. This post was later shared almost 100 times, with some Tibetan netizens reposting the images with their own captions:

[734] Sperling has also argued that British imperial accounts of "decadent Chinese barbarism" prior to 1949 could be used to create a similar narrative to the one state media so often promotes about 'Old Tibet'. He even notes that, while pre-'liberation' Tibet "was not without its cruelties" […] they paled in comparison to what transpired in China in the same period." See: Elliot Sperling, "Tibet as 'Hell on Earth', Tibetan Buddhism in the West," https://info-buddhism.com/Tibet_as_Hell_on_Earth_Elliot_Sperling.html

旧中国 亿万农奴’

Old China: One billion serfs

这些汉农奴被解放了吗？

Have the Han serfs been liberated yet?

Here, by using the words “serfs” and “liberated” to describe living conditions during the Qing dynasty, Tibetans directly reference the language of state media reportage about ‘Old Tibet’. This instance of interdiscursivity, wherein Tibetans overtly and playfully mimic other discourses, is used to satirise state representations by appropriating its language to critique official discourse. In doing so, Tibetan subvert official narratives of history used to uphold and justify current modernisation policies and state legitimacy over Tibet.

### 6.6 Discussion

In this section, I examine how these discourses of ‘Old Tibet’ and ‘New Tibet’ come together to represent Tibetan modernity. I argue that official discourses use written and visual representations of ‘Old Tibet’ to emphasise the positive change that Tibetans have enjoyed under Chinese state rule and diminish support and sympathy for instances of unrest across Tibet since 2008. In doing so, I show how this works to justify and shore up support for the GWDC, and bolster state authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty over Tibet. Tibetan discourses, in contrast, use photographs of ‘Old Tibet’ to present an alternative picture of Tibetan history, and challenge official discourses of ceaseless historical progress upon which the GWDC rests. By focusing on *control of place* and *time*, I demonstrate how homeland becomes a discursive practice across Tibetan online discussions to resist representations of Tibetan modernity in state media.

State media represents ‘Old Tibet’ as a ‘hell on earth’ full of oppression, torture, and injustice. Emphasising the violence and cruelty of life under

what is repeatedly referred to as a 'feudal serfdom', 'Old Tibet' is depicted as a place in which Tibetans were variously exploited under the regime of the 'Dalai Lama clique.' Replete with detailed visual and written descriptions of instruments of torture and punishment techniques, state media uses 'Old Tibet' to serve present needs, stirring up a sense of threat and fear that such a situation would be revived if those who strive for greater autonomy were to succeed. These discourses similarly attempt to arouse a broader nationalist sentiment to protect the territorial integrity of China from potential external sabotage by 'hostile forces'. They also work to undermine and dismiss calls for Tibetan independence as ultimately regressive and harmful for Tibetans, and vilify those who strive for greater autonomy as ultimately engaged in reviving the 'feudal theocracy' of 'Old Tibet'. These discourses reaffirm the role of the state as the 'real' guardian of the Tibetan people. This "conveys notions such as influence, patronage, or leadership" of the state over Tibet, once again reaffirming an earned and rightful legitimacy.[735] In doing so, these discourses become a powerful tool for generating consent by way of promoting the "intellectual and moral leadership" of the state, while also undermining any potential for meaningful public understanding of Tibetan grievances and unrest relating to rapid development under the GWDC.[736]

Another key discursive strategy is the blunt juxtaposition of 'Old Tibet' with 'New Tibet'. Through this heavily reiterated binary, 'New Tibet' is celebrated as a place of freedom where Tibetans dance and sing, avail themselves of a wide variety of public services, and express gratitude to the state for the liberation and 'modern' living conditions they now enjoy. Through a constant contrasting of the polar extremes of 'Old Tibet' and 'New Tibet', these discourses amplify Tibetan modernity as a site of freedom, happiness, and empowerment. They consolidate positionalities of the state as the bestower of development and Tibetans as the recipients. In doing so, the gift of 'liberation' and progress become an act

[735] Daniel Kendie, "How Useful is Gramsci's Theory of Hegemony and Domination to the Study of African States?" 90.
[736] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, 57.

of bondage, territorialising Tibet[737] and affirming its rightful place within "the destiny of the great motherland and the Chinese nation."[738] Tibetan modernity thus becomes a story of Chinese state goodwill and heroism in liberating, civilising, and developing Tibet, thus feeds into Han nationalism and fuelling expectations of gratitude from Tibetans. This reaffirms a discourse of internal orientalism that sustains "regulated ways of speaking" about the place of Tibetans within China's social order.[739] It also establishes a discourse of "colonial temporality," which entrenches Tibetans into a linear history of modernisation where the terms of progress have been firmly set by the state.[740] Discursively lodging Tibetans within a hegemonic configuration of temporality, this sets the limits through which the past, present and future can be imagined. In doing so, it upholds the "historical inevitability" of Tibet's place within China's march to socialist modernity.[741]

These discourses form a representational strategy that work to variously embed Tibet within the PRC. As a form of "digital persuasion and propaganda" designed to "sway public opinion in favour of the party,"[742] discourses of 'Old Tibet' and 'New Tibet' communicate a way of thinking about 'Old Tibet' as a means of justifying current modernisation and security goals under the GWDC. This combination of written and visual texts are thus a strategy of "creative ideological intervention" in the

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[737] Yeh, *Taming Tibet.*

[738] Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Tibet's Path of Development Is Driven by an Irresistible Historical Tide (Beijing, 2015). Available at: http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/2015/Document/1415607/1415607_1.htm

[739] Schein, "Gender and Internal Orientalism in China"; Barker, *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies,* 54.

[740] Meinhof, "Colonial Temporality and Chinese National Modernization Discourses," 53.

[741] Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China*, Tibet's March Toward Modernization* (Beijing, 2001), available at: http://ee.china-embassy.org/eng/ztlm/zgxz/xzxw/t112415.htm

[742] Repnikova, "Media Openings and Political Transitions: Glasnost versus YulunJiandu," 147.

shaping of public opinion about Tibetan modernity.[743] As such, it forms part of the state's cultural governance goals that aim to generate public consent and support for Chinese policies in Tibet and make "territorial and national/cultural boundaries coextensive."[744]

Tibetans attempt to counter these official representations of Tibetan modernity through a number of discursive strategies. Also relying on a combination of visual and written texts, they position their account of 'Old Tibet' as genuine and valuable, in contrast to other accounts that they dismiss as 'propaganda'. Others respond to state media with photographs from the Qing Dynasty showing torture and punishment, questioning why only old Tibet is singled out as an exceptional case. Distrust, scepticism, and even mockery of state media reportage of 'Old Tibet' all serve to subvert and undermine the power of official discourses surrounding 'Old Tibet' and 'New Tibet'. Resistance in this instance takes the form of what Watkins and Shulman argue to be "an interruption of dominant narratives."[745] Constructing a discourse of 'Old Tibet' as globally integrated and home to a wide array of modern technologies, Tibetans creatively use written and visual texts as an act of counter-storytelling. In doing so, they reject state media claims of the Chinese state's unique ability to bring 'modernity' and 'civilisation' to Tibet. Similarly, countering official representations of Tibetans in 'Old Tibet' as wholly oppressed and powerless, Tibetan discourses emphasis 'Old Tibet' as a site of various forms of Tibetan agency and cultural diversity. This can be seen as a form of discursive subversion that challenges and ruptures official discourses of 'liberation' and linear development that are used to justify the GWDC and Chinese rule more broadly. Indeed, Tibetan discourses enact a 'war of position' that seeks to offer a counter account of 'Old Tibet' in order to influence public opinion and generate new understandings.

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[743] Zhang, *The Transformation of Political Communication in China*, 19.
[744] Shapiro, *Methods and Nations,* 31.
[745] Mary Shulman and Helene Shulman, *Towards Psychologies of Liberation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 233.

By appropriating the state's penchant for using photo essays to evidence the 'brutalities' and 'cruelties' of 'Old Tibet' as a feudal serfdom to justify its 'liberation' and modernisation in 'New Tibet', Tibetans' use 'old photos' as a means of recovering and connecting with Tibetan history. In doing so, they implicitly question and disrupt the knowledge production process that underpins official representations of Tibetan modernity, and initiate a transformative process of community-led knowledge-generation. Though relatively unfocused and individualised, these acts can generally be seen as a combination of 'low-profile' resistance.[746]

These Tibetan accounts are certainly not an unproblematic framing of Tibetan history. There is, for example, a largely uncritical and even sometimes rosy treatment of the British imperial presence in early 20th century Tibet. As McGranahan has noted, while Tibet was never colonized by the British Empire, its history and even current political status are strongly impacted by the politically ambiguity of Tibet that resulted from Britain's undefined relations with Tibet prior to the Chinese invasion, which allowed the PRC to move into Tibet.[747] It may be possible that Tibet's experience with British imperialism is downplayed in this instance in order to produce a particular kind of counterstory to the immediate problem of Chinese propaganda. Indeed, while certainly the Shangri-la myth of Tibet persists among some Tibetans today, Sperling noted that most Tibetans would admit that the social structures of Tibet prior to the Chinese invasion were highly inegalitarian, but they would not accept "the cartoonish, cruel "Hell-on-Earth" that Chinese propaganda has portrayed it to be."[748] Given this context and the way in which state media has chosen to depict pre-'liberation' Tibet, Tibetan discourses, despite some of the historical inaccuracies, succeed in unsettling the neat

[746] James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 19.
[747] Carole McGranahan, "Imperial but Not Colonial: Archival Truths, British India, and the Case of the "Naughty" Tibetans," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 59, no.1 (2017): 94.
[748] Sperling, "Tibet as 'Hell on Earth', *Tibetan Buddhism in the West*."

account of ‘Old Tibet’ as promoted in state media and disseminate counter discourses to shape and influence public opinion. These discourses thus disrupt the historical linearity that define state discourses of modernisation and the foundational promises of the GWDC itself. They undermine present official attempts to mobilise a particular framing of ‘Old Tibet’ that bolsters support for state authority and legitimacy.

Tibetan discourses of resistance are closely bound up with attachment to place, representing again an important instance of homeland as a discursive practice. This plays out most explicitly through the two final homeland ingredients of *control of place* and *time*.

As noted in Chapter Three, *control of place* concerns the power to determine (to some degree) the fate of a particular place. It relates to the ability of a people to manage and decide, to some extent, their own relationship to a particular place. As the visual and written discourses of ‘old photos’ demonstrate, the ability to control the narration of one’s relationship to place represents one such example. Tibetans do so by compiling photo essays about the Tibetan past and sharing them on social media to counter the hegemonic hold of official discourse and influence how their history is understood. Homeland often manifests itself as a “compulsion to defend.”[749] Seeking to challenge and counter how the Tibetan past is understood represents an important instance of this. Moreover, an act of “rescuing history from the nation,”[750] it can also be seen as an attempt to exert ownership over the Tibetan past. Indeed, as Smith notes, “to hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges.”[751] In this sense, control of place also becomes a question of controlling the knowledge production of place. It challenges and attempts to displace official knowledge-making practices about ‘Old Tibet’ and ‘New Tibet’ as well as offering a counter-story to take its place.

[749] Nostrand and Estaville, Jr., "Introduction: The Homeland Concept.”
[750] Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*.
[751] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies,* 34.

In this sense, homeland becomes an important discursive practice of resistance to state hegemony in Tibetan history-making.

*Time*, the final core ingredient of homeland, denotes an enduring connection to place across generations. It can play an important role in "building up or diluting the sense of homeland."[752] It is closely connected to what Conzen calls indigenity, which denotes ancestral ties, long occupance of and adjustment to a particular region.[753] Ancestral lineage and the enduring social, cultural, and political ways in which a people inhabit place over time forms a core part in their bond with a particular place. This manifests itself very vividly in Tibetan discourse through a desire to connect with the past. The 'old photo' discourse promotes a new means of visualising their history beyond the hegemonic single story of the state. It becomes a way "to 're-story' the past and to 're-imagine' the future,"[754] and to re-establish connections with previous generations. This discourse of 'Old Tibet', both visual and written, thus helps to strengthen bonds with the past and re-affirm a sense of ancestral connection to homeland. In this sense, it can be seen as a practice of identity formation through "identifying themselves as subjects, by defining their reality, shaping their new identity, naming their history, [and] telling their story."[755] Indeed, against an official discourse that continually and actively works to discourage positive associations with 'Old Tibet', articulating a desire to connect past and present and learn about ancestors is in itself an act of resistance, snatching from the hidden histories another place to stand in, another place to speak from."[756] It

[752] Conzen, "Culture Regions, Homelands, and Ethnic Archipelagos in the United States: Methodological Considerations," 25.
[753] Ibid., 22.
[754] Leslie Espinoza and Angela P. Harris, "Afterward: Embracing the Tar-Baby – LatCrit Theory and the Sticky Mess of Race," *California Law Review* 85, no. 5 (1997): 1585.
[755] hooks, *Talking Back*, 43.
[756] Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991), 123.

functions as a form of discursive subversion that challenges and counters the official discourse of colonial temporality that emphasises ceaseless progress under the hegemony of a single, state-defined Chinese nationalist modernity. Instead, Tibetans reject discourses of overcoming the past and assimilating into Chinese timeframes, and reimagine a different temporality through connections with an ancestral past. Through time, homeland becomes a discursive practice that resists the state's hegemonic conception of Tibetan temporality and puts forward a Tibetan counter story of Tibetan modernity.

Through *control of place* and *time*, homeland operates as a discursive practice of resistance to state media accounts of historical progress in Tibet. Official representations of Tibetan modernity are characterised as a denial and distortion of the 'Truth', derided as no more than propaganda to serve a present political agenda. However, by producing and disseminating different visual representations of the past, Tibetans attempt to challenge state history-making practices, reimagine connections to their history and ancestors, and undo the neat trajectories of continuous progress that underlie the GWDC.

By centring *control of place* and *time*, Tibetans engage in a 'war of position' against the dichotomy of 'Old Tibet' and 'New Tibet', and work to promote an alternative reading of history that challenges hegemonic official accounts. Instances of strategic essentialism also form part of this discursive battle, particularly in references to "roots" and "blood" that emphasise a primordial authentic identity. However, references to global connectedness prior to the Chinese occupation trouble claims to a pure Tibetan identity. Despite some of these internal contradictions within the discourse, this emphasis on a stable collective Tibetan subjectivity and an enduring connection to place extending across time asserts difference against the majority Han. In doing so, these discourses create new opportunities for identity formation through connecting with an alternative past, and resist official efforts to discursively embed Tibet within the colonial temporality of China's national march to socialist modernity. As

such, these discourses of homeland are deeply bound up with a broader questioning and even rejection of official discourses of historical progress used to bolster public support for the GWDC. In this sense, homeland becomes a discursive practice of resistance, disrupting state media discourses of Tibetan history and modernity by producing and promoting counter readings of the past.

### 6.7 Summary

This chapter has examined the online politics of representation surrounding historical progress in Tibet. Using a combination of written and visual texts, I argue that state media characterises 'Old Tibet' as a "dark", "cruel" and "backward" place where ordinary Tibetans were oppressed and tortured in order to magnify 'New Tibet' as a place of liberation, human rights, prosperity and happiness. By embedding Tibetans within a colonial temporality of historical progress, these discourses generate public support and reinforce state power by celebrating the progress Tibet has made under Chinese rule. In doing so, it works to entrench Tibet within a national imaginary of modernisation and further consolidate state authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty. Tibetan counter stories, however, challenge this by celebrating 'Old Tibet' as modern, globally integrated, and culturally diverse. Despite some of the historical inaccuracies and the contradictions at work between the representations of an authentic, pure identity and a globally connected Tibet, these discourses nonetheless disrupt the neat discourses of historical linearity and the 'civilizing mission' that characterise the GWDC. Through *control of place* and *time*, Tibetans mobilise homeland to assert value and attachment to an ancestral past that resists and counters the simplistic stock stories of 'Old Tibet', 'liberation', and linear progress that are foundational to state media representations of Tibetan history in the GWDC era.

# 7. Conclusion

## 7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I bring together the key findings of this thesis to reflect on how they address my central research questions. I also examine the limitations of this study and the possibilities it opens up for future research in both Chinese and Tibetan Studies.

## 7.2 Overview of Key Arguments and Findings

This thesis examined the online politics of representation surrounding Tibetan modernity in contemporary China. Contextualised within the rapid modernisation that has defined the GWDC era, with a particular emphasis on the post-2008 period, I identified and analysed representations of Tibetan modernity in Chinese state media, and the ways in which Tibetan social media users challenge this by promoting counter-discourses to shape understanding about Tibet among Han audiences. I used CDA to analyse discourses of material transformation, economic development and cultural commercialisation, and historical progress in state media and Tibetan counter-stories produced and disseminated online. Engaging theories of power and resistance, I demonstrated how and why homeland is deeply entangled in Tibetan discourses of resistance, and how it is mobilised to challenge and counter official representations. In doing so, I argued that current theoretical approaches to homeland must go beyond seeing human-land relations as simply an emotional bond that individuals experience towards a particular place. I claimed that it is important to consider the ways in which homeland is embedded within and responding to broader social, cultural, political, and economic relations. To address this issue, I developed a new theoretical approach that focuses on homeland as a form of discursive practice that is mobilised to effect political change.

Each empirical chapter examines the online politics of representation surrounding Tibetan modernity between state media and Tibetans. I

found a number of distinctive features in how state media represents Tibetan modernity and the ways in which this attempts to generate public support and consolidate state authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty over Tibet. Firstly, across each topic of material transformation, economic development and cultural commercialisation, and historical progress, Tibetan modernity is characterised in wholly positive terms. The rapid and wide-ranging forms of modernisation that have taken place under the GWDC are portrayed in terms of happiness, prosperity, cultural preservation, and empowerment. Through a variety of discursive strategies and reportage styles, state media uses Tibetan modernity to generate public attitudes and emotions that are aligned with state interests. Indeed, in addition to censoring sensitive topics pertaining to the modernisation-drive across Tibet, state media present a very positive framing in order to "keep a lid on public opinion and to maintain stability."[757] State media also use representations of Tibetan modernity to shape the ways in which Tibetan modernity can be imagined and discussed. This is demonstrated across each empirical chapter through references to the central role of the state in facilitating positive transformation in Tibet. Whether by building mega-projects, promoting environmental protection, developing training programs to support local 'ethnic entrepreneurship' and cultural preservation, or by defending Tibetans against the continuing 'threat' of the 'Dalai Lama clique,' the Chinese state is positioned throughout as the guardian and vanguard of Tibetan modernity. In this way, these discourses embed Tibet within the national imaginary and secure state territorial sovereignty over Tibet. In doing so, they form part of a discursive process of reaffirming China's "sovereignty abstraction" into a "territorial concrete."[758] This represents a powerful tool of discursive place-making and ideological influence that shape and contain public knowledge about Tibet, thereby working to consolidate state power over Tibet.

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[757] Repnikova, *Media Politics in China: Improvising Power Under Authoritarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 55.
[758] Hinsley, *Sovereignty*, 142.

State media representations of Tibetan modernity also serve to reinforce the dynamics of state paternalism and the infantilisation of Tibetans that has long shaped Han-Tibetan relations.[759] By promoting a discourse of delivering development, happiness and ensuring cultural preservation, state media upholds a power/knowledge constellation of Han-Tibetan relations built around internal orientalism. Representations of Tibetan modernity provide a valuable tool for the state in terms of its attempts to reproduce ideas of social harmony and stability through the constant act of naturalising and normalising the existing social order. Through constant reference to integration and broader national projects, these discourses 'other' Tibetans while simultaneously embedding them within a national discourse of modernisation. As such, they represent a place-making tactic that discursively entrenches Tibet within the fabric of the Chinese nation. This is further achieved through the constant reproduction of the discourse of the Han-dominated state as a competent and responsible actor, which again reinforces a sense of "performance-based legitimacy."[760] Reaffirming the authority of the Chinese state, these stories convey notions of influence, patronage, and leadership in order to encourage public support and consent for Chinese policies in Tibet.[761] In doing so, they promote both acceptance and identification with the state among Han audiences, justifying the rightfulness of the Chinese state in guiding Tibetans towards modernity.

Harnessing the scope, scale, and speed of online media, the Chinese state mobilises these representational practices as a strategy of cultural governance, working to galvanize public support for government policies and consolidate Chinese rule in Tibet. In this sense, these discourses are operationalised to reproduce a particular set of knowledge about Tibetan

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[759] Harrell, *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, 14.
[760] Anne-Marie Brady, "Mass Persuasion as a Means of Legitimation and China's Popular Authoritarianism," *American Behaviour Scientist* 53, no. 3 (2009): 434.
[761] Kendie, "How Useful is Gramsci's Theory of Hegemony and Domination to the Study of African States?" 90.

modernity in the name of territorial integrity, national security, and social stability.

By examining the ways in which Tibetans respond to state media representations of Tibetan modernity, I identified a number of core discourses of resistance. Across each empirical chapter, I analysed the ways in which Tibetans challenge and counter the hegemonic representations of Tibetan modernity as they appear in state media. Critiquing the impact of material transformation, economic development and cultural commercialisation, and official characterisations of historical progress, Tibetans draw attention to environmental degradation, cultural erosion, a crisis of identity, and the need to recover and re-establish connections to the Tibetan past. These discourses of resistance take place along a spectrum. As we have seen, the majority tend to indirectly question and critique state practice, while others, particularly Woeser, are more explicit about the impact of state power in Tibet, but are united in their refusal to fully accept the state's representations of Tibetan modernity under the GWDC.

Often centring on spiritual, cultural, and ancestral connections to place, homeland forms a core part of these discourses. I noted the ways in which texts produce and disseminate discourses centred upon a perceived displacement of traditional ways of living on land, understandings of peoplehood, memories, and meanings.[762] In doing so, homeland forms a discursive practice that is mobilised to decentre state place-making practices and reaffirm a distinctly Tibetan territory. It occupies an important part of counter storytelling practices, which aim to "expose, analyse and challenge" the ways in which Tibetan modernity is represented in state media.[763] In doing so, they challenge the prevailing hegemonic representations of state media and advance alternative

[762] McGaw et al, "Indigenous Place-Making in the City: Dispossessions, Occupations and Implications for Cultural Architecture," 297.
[763] Solórzano and Yosso, "Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Story Telling as an Analytical Framework for Education," 32.

stories in their place. This represents a cultural struggle to win the hearts and minds of the masses.[764] Through contesting the official regime of representation, Tibetan discourses of resistance thus seek to shape and influence public opinion about contemporary Tibet.

Tibetan discourses of resistance often engage in practices of strategic essentialism as a means of further subverting state discourses and affirming a collective identity. Relying on what might be perceived as heavily romanticised notions of a spiritual connection with nature, non-materialism, and a rejection of modernisation, Tibetans deploy counter discourses that echo many tropes of internal orientalism. While sometimes contradictory, as seen in Chapter Five and Six, these discourses centre homeland as fundamental to Tibetan identity, but also under threat by the rapid and wide-ranging transformations under the GWDC. Homeland is deployed within practices of strategic essentialism as a way of drawing attention to a distinct Tibetan identity and relationship to place. Drawing from prevailing state media discourses of Tibet as a Shangrila, Tibetans mobilise a "simplification of group identity" as a way to disrupt state media's efforts to integrate and assimilate Tibetans into the national modernisation project through the GWDC. This provisional acceptance and advantageous deployment of essentialising characterisations also promotes a form of cultural reclamation and identity formation. They articulate, assert and project a distinct and collective Tibetan cultural identity embedded in a deep connection to place. In this sense, strategic essentialism forms a practice of discursive subversion and identity formation that works to resist the hegemonic official discourses of integration and national unity of the GWDC.

Throughout this thesis, I described the ways in which homeland plays an important role in discourses of resistance to official representations of Tibetan modernity. Variously manifesting itself across each empirical chapter in its core ingredients of *people, place, sense of place, control of*

[764] Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics*, 195.

*place*, and *time*, homeland clearly demonstrates a deep emotional bond for a social territory as well as a broader discursive function within Tibetan counter storytelling practices. Indeed, whether engaging questions of material transformation, economic development and cultural commercialisation, or historical progress, Tibetans mobilise homeland as a cultural resource that disrupts and decentres state media discourses of spectacle, harmony, happiness, ethnic entrepreneur success, progress, prosperity, and so on. Taking place in a largely "scattered, unfocused, individualised" manner,[765] Tibetans discourses of homeland challenge the prevailing hegemonic ideology promoted in state media and generate counter discourses about Tibetan modernity. This forms an important instance of resistance, whether intentional or unintentional, to state hegemony by projecting an oppositional identity politics and place differentiation to China's nation-building project. In doing so, homeland works to promote an alternative knowledge, centred on Tibetan experiences, to Han Chinese audiences. In this sense, homeland becomes politicised, functional, and performative. As a form of discursive subversion and identity formation, homeland goes beyond an emotional bond for a particular place to become a discursive practice, navigating a web of power relations through texts to produce a series of political effects.

### 7.3 Implications of this Study

Having provided an overview of the key arguments and findings in each individual chapter and considered how they relate to each other to address my core research questions, this section examines the impact and implications of this study in relation to the relevant literature.

The major theoretical contribution of this thesis is its development of existing approaches to homeland. This thesis identified homeland theory's lack of engagement with questions of power as a major

[765] Guobin Yang, "Contesting Food Safety in the Chinese Media: Between Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony," *The China Quarterly* 214 (2013): 337.

shortcoming. As such, a central aim of this thesis has been to develop a theoretical approach to understanding the ways in which homeland is situated within contexts of power. By bringing together ideas from Cultural Geography, Cultural Studies and Practice Theory, and drawing from Di Masso et al.'s work on place as a discursive practice, my theoretical framework approaches homeland as something that is discursively mobilised in response to power and with political effect. Building on the work of Smyer Yu, Morcom, Yannick and Hladíková, this thesis examines the place of homeland within Tibetan discourses of resistance to state media representations of Tibetan modernity, identifying and analysing the ways in which Tibetans mobilised homeland as a discursive practice in order to challenge and counter official discourses. Across practices of counter storytelling and strategic resistance, I demonstrated how homeland is deployed to decentre state place-making practices, reaffirm a distinctly Tibetan territory, and assert cultural difference. In this sense, homeland is enacted as a form of subversion and identity formation through online practices against state efforts to sustain and reproduce power over Tibet. In doing so, homeland becomes a discursive practice in the Tibetan 'war of position' and cultural struggle 'from below' to shape public ideas and impressions of Tibetan modernity.

This thesis also makes a number of important contributions to studies of Sino-Tibetan relations as well as representation, media, and power in contemporary China. Drawing attention to the ways in which the state uses online media to represent Tibetan modernity and the kinds of discourses that this generates, this thesis builds on the growing scholarly attention to the Chinese state's evolving media strategies to manage information and shape public opinion in online spaces through generating stories that are favourable to the leadership. As we have seen, state media discourses focus heavily on reaffirming Tibet's place within the PRC, working hard to downplay any claims to the contrary. Building on Yeh's work on how Chinese development projects in the TAR work to consolidate state space and power, this thesis has shown how online

state media platforms are harnessed to manage discourses about Tibet and promote particular kinds of discourses to Han audiences across China. In this sense, these discourses are a powerful tool of place-making and ideological influence that contribute to the shaping of public knowledge and the maintenance of Chinese state power over Tibet.

By emphasising positive representations of Tibetan modernity under the GWDC, these stories uphold an ethnic hierarchy wherein the Han-dominated state 'brings civilisation' to Tibet. Endless references to state generosity, and Tibetan happiness and gratitude work to generate public support and galvanise state legitimacy. At the same time, these discourses also undercut and diminish the potential for public sympathy for Tibetan independence, meaningful autonomy, and criticisms of Chinese oppression in Tibet. State media thus engages a strategy of self-preservation that obscures and silences sources of frustration, dissent and unrest amidst endless positive reportage about Tibet. Rather than attempting to address longstanding grievances between Tibetans and the Han or the Han-dominated state, state media wilfully promotes an extremely limited and self-serving view of life in contemporary Tibet in order consolidate its own authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty. Long-term, clouding out the various inequalities and injustices that inform everyday life in contemporary Tibet is a poor strategy for ensuring national goals of harmony, unity and sovereignty. It is at most a short-term measure in maintaining a precarious stability built upon the oppression of Tibetan people.

By tackling issues such as economic inequality, political marginalisation, and the lack of cultural and religious expression in Tibet, state media could play an important role in generating meaningful discussion and national dialogue about ethnic relations in China, and even a process of reconciliation. It could facilitate greater public understanding among its readership about Tibet by providing a fuller, more critical account of Tibetan modernity. It could hire more Tibetan journalists to investigate and report on why Tibetans feel anxious and frustrated about their

experiences of education, employment, economic development, inward migration, religious oppression, and much more, as well as how Han people fit into these experiences and what they could do to create change. State media representations could even be a drive for change in terms of how policy is developed and implemented in Tibet. Better media representation alone, however, will not provide a solution to continued colonial occupation by an authoritarian state, but they could certainly play an important part in interrogating how and why Tibet was been depicted, and the impact of that on the lives of Tibetan people in the PRC. Currently, as demonstrated across this thesis, state media is actively working against all of this and a major revolution would be required for any of the above constructive practices to be into place. Moreover, under the increased police presence and surveillance, various crackdowns and an increasing tight hold over civil society and media under President Xi Jinping, changes of this kind seem more unlikely than ever before.

### 7.4 Limitations

While this thesis has significant implications for how we think about state media representations of Tibetan modernity and the ways in which Tibetans engage with homeland in their counter representations, there are also a number of limitations that must be acknowledged.

This thesis focuses on the politics of representation surrounding Tibetan modernity across online media platforms. It does not, however, engage with the producers or consumers of these discourses, which would help illuminate both intention and and provide a deeper understanding of their particular demographics.[766] Moreover, while it describes and analyses the different kinds of competing discourses surrounding Tibetan modernity between Chinese state media and Tibetans, and how both attempt to shape the ways in which Tibetan modernity is represented to Han audiences, this thesis does not provide data on how successful

[766] See discussion of discourse intentionality and social consequence on page 113.

these discourses are in terms of changing hearts and minds across Han Chinese society. Given that Chinese state media enjoys a much larger audience and much greater power in terms of circulating their content, it is unlikely that Tibetan discourses exercise very much influence over how Han audiences understand Tibetan modernity. Also, given the growing censorship, increasingly sophisticated tactics of digital persuasion, and rising risks for challenging authority under President Xi Jinping, the space for online Tibetan dissent continues to narrow, further limiting Tibetan capacity to influence public opinion.

This thesis does not provide an exhaustive survey of all discourses of Tibetan modernity in online spaces in the PRC. It does not, for example, examine the ways in which Tibetans internalise or even reproduce certain aspects of state media discourses, nor does it focus on intra-Tibetan debates concerning the polemics of Tibetan modernity. In this sense, given its explicit focus on how Tibetans contest state media discourses and attempt to promote new understandings of Tibetan modernity among Han audiences, it does not and cannot claim to demonstrate the full spectrum of Tibetan discourses about Tibetan modernity. To do so would also require the analysis of Tibetan-language texts, rather than just Sinophone Tibetan discussions. A related limitation to this thesis' focus on social conflict is that it only examines discursive practices of homeland in terms of resistance. As a consequence, it is unclear how and when Tibetans operationalise homeland beyond this particular frame.

A further limitation concerns the binary focus on Chinese state media and Tibetan online users. This does not take into account the role of journalists, whether Tibetan or Han, in producing state media content nor does it consider the role of Han Chinese writers and social media users who may also be critical of state media representations of Tibetan modernity across these online spaces. How the work of Wang Lixiong, a Han Chinese writer, and also partner to Tsering Woeser, who has written many critical pieces on state policy in Tibet and Xinjiang, for example, fits into the broader discourses has not been explored. Although subject to

strict regulations and rigorous self-censorship, commercial media outlets such as Sina and iFeng also regularly write pieces about Tibet, but this is not explored here. As such, while state media and Tibetan social media discourses may be two central nodes in the online politics of representation surrounding Tibetan modernity, the above examples could also be examined as producers of relevant discourse on this topic.

### 7.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Having examined the key findings of this thesis and their implications for research in relation to homeland and power relations in China and Tibet, as well as some of the limitations of this study, this final section considers possible directions for future research.

While developed to examine the specificities of contemporary Sino-Tibetans relations across online media, I believe that my theory of homeland as a discursive practice could be applied elsewhere. Many points of commonality exist between the challenges facing Tibetans in their homeland today, and those of indigenous groups struggling against territorial occupation, colonisation and cultural genocide elsewhere in the world. In Brazil, for example, the indigenous Yanomami lands have come under increasing attack since Jair Bolsonaro became president in January 2019, with the new government making various vows to legalise mining and commercial farming there.[767] In the United States, the Trump administration have been pushing the Dakota Access Pipeline project, a 2,000 kilometre oil pipeline that would be built on the lands of the Standing Rock Sioux and Cheyenne River Sioux people, despite their opposition and protests at Standing Rock since 2014.[768] Even in China itself, there are many striking similarities between the Tibetan homeland

[767] Tom Phillips, "Brazil: indigenous people rally in capital to protest against Bolsonaro onslaught," *The Guardian*, April 24, 2019 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/24/brazil-indigenous-people-bolsonaro-protest

[768] Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (London: Verso, 2019).

and the Uyghur homeland in the northwest of China, which has experienced widespread and violent dispossession since 2014 under the guise of the "People's War on Terror".[769] In this sense, we should consider Judith Butler's call for an acknowledgement of "competing universalities," which emphasises both the commonality and heterogeneity of humanity around the world without conflating different experiences, and the importance of translating struggles for building global alliances and solidarity.[770] With some modification to accommodate for political, economic, social, cultural, and historical factors at the local level, this theoretical framework could be used to examine homeland as a discursive practice in these contexts. While my examination of homeland as a discursive practice has been limited to the context of resistance, further research might consider other ways in which homeland as a discursive practice manifests itself and to what effect.

In terms of online media practices, while this thesis has focused on the discursive content of texts produced by Chinese state media and Tibetans across online spaces in the PRC, future research might examine how effective they are in shaping social perspectives. Online surveys, focus groups and one-to-one interviews are some research strategies that might be used to examine audience reception. Furthermore, although non-state media is also tightly controlled and regularly reproduces official media pieces, future research might

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[769] See Darren Byler, "Violent Paternalism: On the Banality of Uyghur Unfreedom," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 16, no.4 (2018): 1-15; Joanne Smith Finely, "Securitization, Insecurity And Conflict in Contemporary Xinjiang: Has PRC Counter-Terrorism Evolved into State Terror?", *Central Asian Survey*, 38, no.1 (2019): 1-26; Sean Roberts, "The Biopolitics of China's 'War on Terror' and the Exclusion of the Uyghurs," *Critical Asian Studies* 50, no.2 (2018): 232-258.

[770] Judith Butler, "Competing Universalities," in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*: *Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, ed. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Zizek (London: Verso, 2000), 136–81. Also see: Angela Y. Davis, "Transnational Solidarities," in *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement*, ed. Frank Barat (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 129-147.

examine the extent to which these publications offer some degree of divergence from official discourses. It might also consider how Han and Tibetan journalists working in the PRC navigate and even challenge public discourses on Tibet-related issues. Moreover, given the Chinese state's concerted efforts in shaping public understanding about Tibet through its own global media channels as well as partnerships with western news outlets,[771] scholars could also analyse the kinds of discourses promoted there, their intended purpose, and to what extent they differ from discourses promoted domestically. There are also opportunities for researchers to examine the various specificities that characterise how different minoritised groups in China use information technologies to generate awareness, promote dialogue, fight for recognition, and so on. All these practices are part and parcel of Chinese online spaces and represent fertile grounds for further scholarly inquiry about how and why different populations of people across China use online spaces.

This thesis has also identified a number of new possibilities and areas for further research in the case of Tibet. While I have focused on Tibetan resistance in this thesis, future research might consider how and in what circumstances Tibetans internalise, reproduce, or even contribute to official discourses across online spaces. It might also examine how Tibetans engage with the various transnational actors, from multilateral institutions to non-governmental organisations, involved in developmental projects under the GWDC, and the kinds of discourses of modernity that emerge in such contexts.[772] It could also consider the internal conflicts over how Tibetan counter-stories of modernity ought to be told. Such studies might also examine some of the emancipatory limits

[771] For an example of Chinese state-produced articles in western media outlets, see: "Rural Revitalization Transforms Tibet," *The Telegraph*, May 25, 2018, accessed June 27, 2018, *https*://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/world/china-watch/society/rural-transformation-in-tibet/

[772] Litzinger, "The Mobilization of 'Nature': Perspectives from Northwest Yunnan," 504.

of some of these discourses identified and analysed in this thesis. They could ask, for example, how such discourses of resistance reproduce oppressive and exclusionary systems in themselves.[773] This is particularly of concern in the case of strategic essentialism, which, in the process of appealing to 'traditional values' and generating a coherent identity to address a political problem, can sometimes produce a politics of purity that negatively impacts already marginalised members within a particular social category.[774] There is also much potential for examining other forms of online engagement in Tibet. Online media offers an indispensable tool for providing real-time coverage of developments on the ground as well as discussions of social change and the various complexities of local, regional, national, and global interactions. Indeed, these media have become such an important and even central part of everyday life for many around the world, and this is true too for Tibetans, particularly those who are educated and urban-based. Future research might also consider how Tibetans are increasingly engaging popular media practices such as livestreaming and vlogging, and could also examine other forms of Tibetan media production, such as online gaming, apps, podcasts, and so on. Moreover, there are also opportunities to explore other cultural mediums such as music, art, film and literature that Sinophone Tibetans use to engage Han Chinese and other audiences in order to shape public opinion about contemporary Tibet. All of this would help to further our understanding of the ways in which power and resistance shape the contested landscapes of Tibetan modernity in the PRC today.

[773] Cara Wallis, "Gender and China's Online Censorship Protest Culture," *Feminist Media Studies*, 15, no.2 (2015): 223-238.
[774] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Other Asias* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 260.

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