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Exile, Transnational Connections, and the
Construction of Identity: Tibetan Immigrants in Montreal

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the processes through which a small group of Tibetans in Montreal constructs a sense of community identity in exile. I argue that membership in the extended, transnational organization, the Tibet Movement, provides the framework within which these processes take place. The incorporation of non-Tibetans, the role of technology, and the part played by the Tibetan government-in-exile and, in particular, that of the Dalai Lama are significant elements in sustaining community identity. The notion of immigrants retaining links with their home country, let alone their previous countries of settlement, contradicts many of our traditional perceptions of immigration, migration and community. To assist me explain what is happening here, I look at recent theories on transnationalism and diaspora. With its unique history, though, the Tibetan case cannot be encompassed by more recent theoretical models. I therefore draw on existing approaches but find it necessary to move beyond them so as to capture the complexities and dynamics of Tibetan transnational connections.

Cette étude examine les processus par lesquels un petit group de Tibétains battit un sens d'identité communautaire en exil à Montreal. Je pretends que

le fait d'appartenir a l'organisation transnationale étendue, le mouvement de Tibet, fournit le cadre dans lequel ses processus se développent. L'incorporation de non Tibétains dans le groupe, le rôle de la technologie et l'action du gouvernement tibétain en exil, et surtout celle du Dalai Lama sont des éléments significatifs pour soutenir l'identité de la communauté. La notion que les immigrants retiennent des liens avec leur pays d'origine, sans parler de leur pays d'immigration antérieure, contredit plusieurs de nos perceptions traditionneles sur l'immigration, la migration et la communauté. Pour m'appuyer dans l'expliquation des faits qui se développent ici, j'ai pris connaissance des théories récentes sur le transnationalisme et la diaspora. Avec son histoire unique, cependent, le cas Tibétain ne peut pas être englobé par les modèles théoriques récents. Ainsi, je travaille avec des approches connues mais crois nécessaire d'aller au delà pour capturer les complexités et la dynamique des liens transnationaux Tibétains.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Three moments[1] in the Montreal Tibetan community:

April 29, 1997 - Approximately fifty Tibetan immigrants, mainly adults, some in Tibetan dress, gather in the basement of a house belonging to one of their members. They are waiting to meet Professor Samdhong Rinpoche, Chairman of the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies (the Tibetan government-in-exile) who is visiting Montreal as part of a five city tour across Canada. The minister speaks to them about the importance of speaking Tibetan and retaining a sense of Tibetan identity and thanks them for their efforts on behalf of Tibet. He also makes the point that Tibetans in Canada are ambassadors for the Tibetan people and as such he hopes that they will be good, law abiding citizens in their adopted country as their conduct, good or bad, reflects on the Tibetan Struggle.

Professor Samdhong Rinpoche then brings community members up-to-date on the attempts by the Tibetan Government and His Holiness the Dalai Lama to negotiate an agreement with the Chinese government for the future of Tibet and of the Chinese government's response to their efforts. A general question and answer session follows with community members asking how government money is being spent, what modernization efforts the government is undertaking, and why it is that mainly older Tibetans work for the government rather than younger members of the community.

* * * * *

March 10, 1999 - the 40th anniversary of the Lhasa Uprising and a crowd of approximately 350 Tibetans and Tibet supporters (two busloads from Montreal, four from Ontario together with supporters from Ottawa) stand on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. They hold Tibetan flags and placards; many Tibetans are wearing Tibetan dress. An altar with a picture of the Dalai Lama is set up on the steps in front of the crowd together with a palanquin with a young Tibetan boy inside representing the imprisoned Panchen Lama, and three coffins representing the 1.2 million Tibetans who have died as a result of the Chinese occupation. A supporter holds a large puppet of a Chinese soldier carrying a chain at the end of which is a young Tibetan, others hold banners and Tibetan flags. The rally is addressed by two members of the 'Tibetan Parliamentary Friends of Tibet', the President of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development in Montreal, and the President of the Canada-Tibet Committee. The Dalai Lama's annual March 10th message is read out by four young Tibetans speaking alternately in English and French. Some prayers are chanted and the Tibetan national anthem is sung.

The buses then take the protesters to the Department of Foreign Affairs where they stand outside waving placards and chanting slogans while three Tibetans meet with an official representative and hand in a petition. From here the crowd marches to the Chinese embassy where they continue shouting their demands "China Out, Free Tibet", "Tibet for Tibetans" and "Long Live the Dalai Lama". There is no response from a closed embassy. More prayers are said and the national anthem

sung. After an hour or so, the demonstration ends and the Tibetans and their supporters climb aboard their buses and return home. (March 10th rallies are held in all major cities in India as well as in a growing number of cities around the world.)

* * * * *

A Tibetan, President of the Canada-Tibet Committee, returns home from work and goes down to the office in the basement of his house, which is also the national office of the Canada-Tibet Committee. He sits at his computer as he does every evening after returning from his regular job, and updates the daily electronic news on Tibet. This he does by selecting news items that have come in during the day from many organizations and individuals, including the world press, local and international Tibet-related organizations, and the Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamsala, India. This daily electronic news service has over three thousand subscribers and is picked up by other international networks. It is used as a resource by Offices of the Tibetan government around the world, and organizations such as Amnesty International and the Chinese Democracy Movement.

* * * * *

Sixty Tibetan immigrants first came to Montreal in the early 1970s as part of a special refugee resettlement scheme. Over the years some of them have moved to other provinces while other family members have joined the community so that, today, approximately ninety Tibetans live in Montreal. Initially placed in accommodation and jobs, the Tibetans have since settled in Quebec, establishing a home for themselves, working, and raising their

families. At the same time, however, as the above vignettes show, the Tibetans in Montreal still retain a strong sense of community consciousness and an on-going, active commitment to the Tibetan struggle to reclaim its independence or, at least, autonomy.

The notion of immigrants retaining links with their home country, let alone their previous countries of settlement, contradicts our traditional perceptions of immigration, migration and community. In early theoretical models, the term 'immigrant' evoked images of a permanent break with the country of origin, while studies of community membership, ethnic and national, in turn, focused on the immigrant experience in the country of destination (for example, Barth, 1969; Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1991). As Smith (1998) points out, however, these approaches do not tell the whole story, and the part of the story they leave out is yearly becoming increasingly interesting and important.

In this thesis I argue that the 'Tibet Movement', the large transnational organization comprising the diasporic Tibetans and their non-Tibetan supporters around the world (McLagen, 1996), provides the context within which the Tibetans in Montreal develop a sense of community consciousness and maintain the core of their identity. Central to the Tibet Movement and its continuing struggle is the perception of Tibetans as exiles expelled from their homeland. This notion of exile, together with the figure of the Dalai Lama as the spiritual and political leader of Tibet, form a symbolic framework within which Tibetans in Montreal shape their interpretation of Tibetanness and make sense of their lives in the diaspora.

Three factors are of particular significance in this process: first, the incorporation of westerners, secondly, the role of technology, especially computer-mediated communication; and thirdly, the role of the Tibetan government-in-exile and, in particular, that of their charismatic leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The objective of this thesis is to explore these claims; it is organized around two interrelated questions: how, given the small size of the community, is this small group able to undertake such a varied range of activities and, why, now that they have established themselves in Canada, do the Tibetans in Montreal feel the need to maintain such a strong commitment to their country? In order to answer these questions, I look at the range of links that community members have with the larger diaspora, how these links affect the social organization of the community and the implications of this social organization for the construction of identity.

To assist me in this I look at recent theories on transnationalism and diaspora. In an attempt to come to terms with the dynamics of these and similar immigrant experiences, a number of social scientists have proposed the term "transnational"; a number of diffferent approaches have emerged in this area (Hannerz, 1992, 1996; Glick Schiller et al, 1992; Basch et al, 1994; Rouse, 1991, 1992; Smith, 1997; Amit-Talai, 1997, 1998). Hannerz (1996), for example, looks at occupational migrants from western industrial societies, intellectuals, bureaucrats, politicians, cosmopolitan elites who, he claims, are at home wherever they travel thanks to their organizational networks. Other research has considered the social networks forged mainly by labour migrants from the third world to the United States. Basch et al, 1994, Glick Schiller et al, 1992, and Rouse, 1991, for instance, argue that migrants build social

fields that cross national borders so that they continue involvement with both their home and host societies while forming cross-border social networks. Such people are referred to by those who study them as transmigrants. Attempts to re-define the term "diaspora" to bring it into line with, and make it reflect, these more dynamic immigrant experiences include those of Safran (1991) and Clifford (1994). Clifford's (1994) notion of diaspora, for instance, is of people dwelling distinctly within their host countries, while retaining identities or lived experiences which continue to be linked to the home country.

It is evident that the Tibetans in Montreal are transmigrants, yet the Tibetan case is not wholly encompassed within either of the two approaches which have come to dominate the field, those of Hannerz and Basch et al. The Tibetans can be characterized neither as cultural elites nor labour migrants. Like a growing number of immigrants today, they are political refugees who have been forced to leave their country. As such, their links are not primarily maintained to support family at home nor to provide a safety net for themselves in their new country. They are, rather, an attempt to oust what the exiles consider to be an illegal regime controlling their homeland. Furthermore, because Tibetans have migrated to a number of different countries around the world, their links are much broader in scope and more complex than those described by Basch et al. Indeed, because of their particular history, there are many ways in which the Tibetan case does not fit such a model. The institutional nature of the Tibetan links, in particular, takes it far beyond Clifford's notion of living in exile. On the other hand, Hannerz's approach, although it catches more the cosmopolitan nature of the

Tibetan diaspora, is too abstract to examine the everyday lives of people and therefore to explain what is taking place here. To enable me to explore what is going on in the Tibetan community in Montreal, therefore, I will take elements from Basch et al and Hannerz. But, drawing on my case study, I also intend to move some distance beyond the ambit of their explanations.

Empirically, the main focus of the thesis is on the Tibetan community in Montreal. Yet, to enable us to understand what is taking place at this level, we also need to know something about the organization of the Tibetan diaspora and the emergence of Tibetan nationalism. I will deal with this in a later chapter. In the following section, I give a brief explanation of how Tibetan immigrants come to be in Montreal.

Historical Background

In 1949 China invaded Tibet. There was immediate popular resistance to the Chinese occupation, but it was not until 1956 that open fighting broke out in eastern Tibet [DIIR, 1993:28]. As this resistance escalated, the Chinese repression, which included the destruction of religious buildings and the imprisonment of monks and other community leaders, drastically increased. Three years later, the uprising took on national proportions, leading to massive demonstrations in Lhasa in March 1959 [ibid:28]. Within days, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people, was forced to leave his country and flee to India. Over the following months, approximately 85,000 refugees followed him and sought refuge in India, Nepal and Bhutan [ibid:32].

On his arrival in India, the Dalai Lama re-established the Central Tibetan Administration (the Government-in-Exile) whose first priority was to

see to the immediate needs of the refugees. With the help of the Indian Government, transit camps were constructed to receive them while separate Tibetan schools were set up for the children, many of whom were orphans. [ibid:149]. Thousands of refugees were offered work building roads in northern India [ibid:153]. In 1960, some new arrivals were transferred to the south of India where land was made available by several Indian states [ibid:155]. Many of the educational and resettlement projects were funded with the help of the Indian Government and a range of foreign relief organizations [ibid:150].

Originally, the Dalai Lama had hoped to settle all Tibetan refugees in India where they would feel close to their homes in Tibet [Archives:1]. Owing to the large numbers involved, however, this was not feasible and, in 1961, he appealed for assistance to resettle his people in countries where they could establish and adequately support themselves [ibid]. Switzerland, the first country to respond, now has approximately 2,000 Tibetans living in the country [ibid].

In November 1966 the Dalai Lama made a personal appeal to the Prime Minster of Canada to ask whether Canada would accept up to 2,000 Tibetans for group settlement [Archives:2]. Settlement of a self-contained group was not deemed practicable but the Canadian Government agreed to look into the possibility of establishing Tibetans in Canada by family groups [Archives:3]. On June 18th, 1970, the Cabinet in Ottawa agreed to the resettlement in Canada of up to 240 Tibetan refugees [Archives:4]. Between March 1971 and August 1972, 228 Tibetans were admitted to Canada under

this scheme and were settled in eleven localities in Quebec, Ontario and the Prairies [Archives:5].

The Tibetans who came to Quebec were among the first to arrive in Canada. They arrived in three groups - 17 on March 25th, 38 on June 3rd, and four on October 4th 1971 [Archives:6]. A Lama joined the group in August 1972. On arrival, the Tibetans were housed at the Centre D'Orientation et de Formation des Immigrants (COFI) at Lapraire, some twenty miles to the south of Montreal [Archives:7]. Here, they underwent an adaptation and orientation programme designed to ease their entry into Canadian life and they received extensive French language training. As soon as possible after their training ended (approximately six months for individuals and married couples without children, and nine months for families with children), housing and jobs were found for them. A few families and individuals were placed in Longueuil on the South Shore of the St. Lawrence river from Montreal, and in Montreal city, but the majority were settled in various small towns to the east of Montreal - Drummondville, Farnham, Granby and St. Hyacinthe. Those families requiring it, received counselling and settlement assistance from Canada Manpower Centres for several years [Archives:8]. Two families still live to the east of Montreal but the remainder moved to Montreal to join their fellow Tibetans as soon as they were able. Since then, more than half the Tibetans arriving through the initial scheme have left Quebec for other parts of Canada.

Rationale for Study

In today's global world, immigrants maintain contacts across national borders in increasingly sophisticated ways. To date, though, much of the

9

research in this area has concentrated on the links created by labour migrants. But, in fact, many contemporary migrants are political refugees, forced to leave their homeland and seek refuge in other countries. Moreover, with the growth of ethnic conflicts taking place around the world today, the number of such refugees is likely to increase. My hope is that a study such as this, which looks at both the broader political dimensions of transnationalism and also at the specifics of a minority group which has migrated from another area of the world, will make a useful contribution to the emerging body of literature on the subject. In a country like Canada, moreover, formed largely through immigration, such research may add to the understanding of the multicultural nature of its society and citizenry.

More particular studies of the Tibetan diaspora appear to have focused on the resettlement of refugees in India (for example, Nowak, 1984). McLagen's (1996) study of Tibet activism is one of the few works on Tibetans in the United States which discusses transnational connections, while in Canada, Tibetan researches include an official evaluation of the success of the resettlement scheme (Smith, 1975) and studies on the Tibetan communities in Lindsay, Ontario (McLelland, 1986) and Lethbridge, Alberta (Dargay, 1988). No study has yet been made of the Tibetan community in Montreal, however, and none of the Canadian studies cited has focused on the transnational nature of the communities.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five main chapters. In Chapter I, I discuss the methodological approach I have used. My introduction to the community, the way in which the research was carried out, the importance of reflexivity

and ethical considerations in research of this kind, are also discussed here. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the theoretical literature relevant to the study. The more orthodox concepts of ethnicity and nationalism are shown to be insufficient to explain today's processes of identity construction and the potential of the alternative concept of transnationalism is examined. I also explain the composition of the Tibetan diaspora and the emergence of the Tibet Movement. Given the central role of the Dalai Lama in the Tibet Movement, Chapter 3 focuses on his position as the spiritual and political leader of Tibet as well as what he means specifically to the Tibetans in Montreal. Chapters 4 and 5 concentrate on the Tibetan community itself. In Chapter 4, after a brief description of the demographics of the community, I explore the migration experiences of community members, the wide range of multi-level connections and the resultant activities of Montreal's Tibetans. . In this way, I attempt to clarify the position of the local Tibetans within the wider frame of the Tibet Movement. Then, in Chapter 5, I examine the social organization of the community's transnational links in greater detail to show how participation in these activities promotes a deeper sense of community consciousness and an ongoing commitment to the Tibet cause. In the Conclusion, after a brief summary of the most important issues arising from the study, I finish by examining the implications of the study for our notions of migration, community, critical mass, transnationalism and diaspora.

1.The March 10th 'moment' comes from my fieldnotes, the other two 'moments' were reported to me by members of the Tibetan community.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

I first became aware of the existence of the Tibetan community in Montreal in October 1993 when a friend drew my attention to a short article in 'The Gazette' reporting on the death of a Tibetan Lama. Reading the article made me realize not only that I knew little about this group of people living in the same city as myself but, indeed, how little I knew about Tibet and its people in general. Writing a thesis on the community would, I thought, provide me with an excellent opportunity to learn more and understand something of their culture. The fact that not much has been written about Tibetans in Canada added to the attraction of the project and, finally, studying a community based in Montreal was important to me in terms of access to my chosen subject.

With the initial decision made, my first step was to contact the community. Its small size made them difficult to locate at first but the problem was eventually solved when I found reference to a Tibetan Temple in the Yellow Pages. I telephoned the Temple and was given the name of a community member. Over the next few weeks I met with this person several times and she gave me useful background information about the community - including the reasons why they came to be in Montreal, details of community activities, names of a number of community members, and many other aspects of community life. She also invited me to attend community events that were taking place at the time, and so I made my first tentative entrance into the world of the Montreal Tibetans.

The Research Approach

Following the initial contact with the community, I was in a position to

begin my data collection in earnest. First, I needed to deepen my knowledge about Tibetans in general - some history and especially to find information on reasons for the diaspora. Secondly, I required more specific information about the community itself: for example, what being a Tibetan in Montreal involves, the experiences of individual members before and after their arrival in Canada, and what contact, if any, they have with different aspects of the diaspora now. I also needed to discover to what extent being Tibetan is a way in which individuals identify themselves and, if so, how important a role it plays for this sense of identity. All the while, of course, I would need to refer to theoretical literature to help shape and guide my research. My two tasks were, first, to read secondary literature while seeking empirical information by attending community activities and, second, speaking to members of the Tibetan community themselves.

The research method chosen for this task, therefore, is centred around the ethnographic approach. Such method allows for the collection of data in different but complementary ways. It encourages the researcher to participate in community events, to watch what is happening, to listen to what is being said, to ask questions; in fact, to collect whatever data are available to throw light on the question in hand [Hammersley, 1995:2]. Furthermore, the reflexive nature of the approach prompts researchers to consider not only the data being gathered in terms of the theoretical position being followed, but to think through the consequences of their own role in the research process [Okely, 1992:24]. Because of the importance of these two processes for ethnography, I think it appropriate here to say a few words about the reflexive character of the approach.

14

Reflexivity

Investigating the ways in which people think and feel, requires a methodology that allows the researcher to learn about participants' experiences and perspectives and then to reflect upon them in the light of the theoretical position being followed. This promotes an interplay between the empirical material and the theory: a form of unfolding praxis. The reflexive nature of ethnography allows the researcher to move back and forth between data collection and analysis at all stages of the research process in what Spradley refers to as the ethnographic research cycle [Spradley, 1980:29]. In this way, all phases of the research, from the pre-fieldwork stage, to the formulation and clarification of research problems, and continuing into the writing up of the material, become reflexive processes in which the researcher continually makes and remakes decisions in light of theoretical considerations [Hammersley, 1995:173].

With regard to the second point, if as valid a record of the research as possible is to be given, the focal role of the researcher in the study must be taken into account (Okely, 1992). Whether we acknowledge it or not, life experiences and ascriptive characteristics of the investigators crucially affect their research in a variety of ways from the selection of the topic to the formulation of questions, the choice of respondents, the relationship with them, and the collection and interpretation of the data, right through to the final writing up of the research [ibid: preface]. Hoodfar's (1994) personal account of ethnographic fieldwork, makes this point very clearly. The reflexive nature of the ethnographic approach, or self-conscious ethnography as Cohen (1992) calls it, encourages the researcher to think through the vital

implications of his or her presence in shaping the research. It is for this reason, then, that I have included my part in the research and have chosen to represent myself as 'I' throughout this paper.

Furthermore, reflecting on his or her role in the research process encourages the researcher to become more sensitive to the experience and consciousness of each respondent. As Cohen points out, it is often forgotten that the respondent, like the researcher, is a self-conscious individual trying to make sense of what is going on in the world around them [Cohen, 1994:228]. Indeed, as will be seen in the following chapters, it is obvious that the Tibetans have given considerable thought to what being a Tibetan in Canada means and have struggled to interpret what it means. Such an awareness should, in turn, influence the researcher's behaviour and attitude towards his or her respondents. The need for empathy in these circumstances seems so evident as not to require further elaboration. I have certainly gained a great deal personally as well as professionally from coming to know the people of the Montreal Tibetan community.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns are as relevant for someone undertaking social research as they are for any other form of human contact [Hammersley, 1995:261]. For me, it was a matter of treating the respondents as I, myself, would wish to be treated: that is, in a polite and thoughtful way - with respect. So, for example, when asking a possible respondent if they would be willing to talk to me, I took time to explain the nature of, and the reasons for, the research, and I informed them that an interview which would be at a time and place of their choice, would probably last for at least two hours. I also

assured them that, although the final study would be accessible to the public, anything they said would be kept confidential in that their names would not be disclosed. I did point out, however, that with so few Tibetans in Montreal, their identity might well be recognized within the community itself. I also told them that I would be giving a copy of the final report to the Tibetan community and, when asked, I agreed to provide a copy for the Temple.

Before starting each interview, I again reminded the respondents of the above points. In addition, I informed them that it was their complete right to decline to answer a particular question if they so wished and that they were free to discontinue their participation at any time. I then asked them to sign a form of consent. Where a member of the younger generation helped interpret for his or her parent, I emphasised the confidential nature of the interview. Also, before starting each interview, I asked if I might audio-tape the interview. At the end of the interview, I thanked the respondent and asked whether, if it became necessary, I might speak to her or him again.

At this point in the thesis, a profile of each individual participating in the research is often given. I am deliberately avoiding providing this information, however, because in a community of this size it would, more than likely, too-clearly identify the individual participants thus undermining my desire to maintain confidentiality. For the same reason, in the discussion and analysis, the real names of the participants have not been used. Instead, I have assigned a letter of the alphabet randomly to each individual.

Data Collection

The data collection for this study involved a number of research strategies; these included the reading of secondary literature, participant

observation and interviewing within the community.

Secondary Literature

I obtained theoretical material and material on the Tibetans from various libraries in Montreal and I acquired additional information regarding the Tibetans both from the National Archives in Ottawa and from the Tibetan community itself. I continued reading the secondary literature in tandem with my case study work throughout the whole research process. In the early stages this proved especially useful as a means of learning about Tibet and Tibetans, in helping with the initial formulation of the research problem, and in generating research questions. As the research progressed, I used my secondary reading to guide, inform and interact with the empirical research.

Participant Observation

Since 1993, I have been attending, and am still attending, a number of community events. I also participate in activities such as the visit of a government minister or a rally in support of the Panchen Lama, as they arise. As soon as possible after each event I make a record of my observations, including features of the physical environment and my own thoughts and impressions. My role, and therefore the degree to which I participate, varies according to the event [see Spradley, 1980:58]. At the various community celebrations, for example, I am a guest, eating, drinking and enjoying the entertainment, whereas at the March 10th National Day rally I am a supporter marching with the community members to the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa. Moreover, my level of participation has increased over time. For example, for the first year I attended the bazaar as a member of the public; now I act as a volunteer, helping out wherever I can.

18

My participation in these events has been invaluable to my research in several respects (and, I hope, useful to the community). First, I have gained a sense of what goes on at the different events, who attends them, and how different people interact with one another. Secondly, and in conjunction with the reading of secondary literature, my reflections on this information have assisted in clarifying the research problem, in formulating questions, in determining selection criteria, and in giving me a greater understanding of the interviews that followed. Thirdly, it has meant that I could more readily become acquainted with a number of the community members. Indeed, as I will discuss later, approaching the respondents was largely carried out in the context of participant observation. Moreover, and of particular relevance given the above, attending their functions and helping out, even in a small way, was important; it allowed me to feel much more at ease when approaching members of the community and asking them to talk with me. This sense of ease was probably facilitated on both sides by the community's long experience of transnational relationships. Most members had become used to the presence of non-Tibetans among them, so I am inclined to think that my research intervention may have had a rather less disruptive impact on my subjects than if I had entered a group not accustomed to dealing with outsiders. Finally, continuing to attend community events has permitted me to keep in touch with the respondents in case I might wish to speak to them further - as indeed I did. In view of the above, I agree with Amit-Talai (1989) that active participant observation is an invaluable component of social research.

Interviewing

The interviews I carried out for this research were of two types: preliminary and background interviews followed by indepth interviews.

Preliminary/Background Interviews

My first interviews with a member of the community provided me with valuable background information and led to wider access to the community. The next interviews were not held until a year later after I had attended several of the community events. By then, based on the information gathered from my participant observation, and from the secondary literature, I had prepared a draft interview guide and was ready to test it. I selected younger Tibetans for this task because they speak English more fluently than most of the adult Tibetans. I chose to speak to my first respondent because she was a fellow student and would, I hoped, be sympathetic to my request for an interview. I decided to hold another test interview with a second subject when I learned that she had just returned from a trip to India. The main purpose of these interviews was to help verify the appropriateness of my questionnaire [Singleton, 1988:109], and to ensure that the tone and content of the questions would be acceptable to members of the community. In addition to confirming these two points, the information gained from these interviews helped me amend and formulate my ideas further and it provided me with additional questions. After each interview, I modified the interview schedule slightly (see below).

At a later stage of the data collection process, towards the end of the indepth interviews, I met with one of the founding members of the Tibetan Temple (a non-Tibetan) and with the President of the Canada-Tibet

Committee, the political organization of the community. My purpose in holding these meetings was to obtain further information about the community and to help clarify a number of queries that had arisen from my interviews.

Indepth Interviews

i) Selection of Respondents

On the basis of the information gathered so far, I selected a range of respondents according to age, gender, arrival date in Canada, and the extent of their activity in and for the community. The age categories I employed were first generation or adult Tibetans (30+ years) and second generation or younger Tibetans (<30 years). I decided upon this cut-off point so that children who arrived with their parents in 1971/72 could be included in the latter category. Age seemed to be relevant here because the young Tibetans have spent their formative years in Canada, whereas adult Tibetans have spent them either in Tibet or in the Tibetan diaspora. I included gender to examine whether being male or female made any difference with respect to a feeling of Tibetan identity or of commitment to the Tibetan cause.

The "arrival in Canada" categories were divided into those Tibetans who came on the initial scheme in 1971/72 and those who have arrived since. I included this criterion as I felt that the length of time a person has lived in Canada may well affect his or her sense of ethnic identity. As far as possible within the above categories, I took into consideration how active a person was in the community. Here again, I felt that involvement in community events might well influence a person's feelings of ethnic identity.

I did not consider social class to be a critical issue in this study. Any class differences there may have been in Tibet seem to have been modified

strongly by their experience as homeless refugees in India. Most Tibetans, whether they arrived in Canada on the initial scheme or at a later date, arrived here with virtually nothing of a material nature. Furthermore, since then, their experiences of finding work and raising a family, have been of such a shared nature that there still seems little to be gained in using such a category.

ii) Contacting the Respondents

Contacting possible respondents took place either directly or indirectly within the context of finding my way into the community and engaging in a widening range of participant observation. I elected to approach potential respondents gradually, as I felt they would be more likely to respond in a positive way; I would be able to explain what I was doing more clearly and they could see what sort of a person I am. Their responses were, in the main, very positive. Based on my knowledge of the community and bearing in mind the selection criteria, I prepared a list of community members, then separated them into the various categories. After this, I endeavoured to speak to a certain number of people in each group. My approach, therefore, was based upon a type of quota sampling [Singleton et al, 1988:154]. Direct contact with over half of the respondents was made in this fashion. As it turned out, my first subjects were mainly young Tibetans as, generally speaking, their English was more fluent than that of their parents, and I felt more at ease approaching them. In one instance, a date and time for an interview resulted from this initial meeting but, in all other cases, we made arrangements at a later date. As mutual confidence grew, I found it easier to organize interviews.

22

I approached the remaining respondents indirectly through these initial contacts. In the two instances where the second respondent was one of the parents of the first, my contact asked their parent if they would be willing to speak to me; when they agreed, the younger person arranged a date and time for the interview. Where it was another relative or adult I wished to speak to, my contact asked them if they would be willing to speak to me; if they agreed, I telephoned them to arrange the interview. In the one or two instances where people were not able or did not wish to speak to me, I asked my contact to suggest someone else who might be willing to be interviewed. There was, then, an element of snowball sampling in my approach [Singleton et al, 1988:310].

iii) The Interview

I conducted indepth interviews with fourteen members of the Tibetan community, eight young members and six adults. The youngest of the youths was 17 years of age, the oldest was 29. The first interview took place in March 1995; while the remainder were held between October 1995 and February 1996. With one exception, which took place in the respondent's home, I held the interviews with the younger generation either in the Sociology Department of Concordia University (Loyola, NDG and Sir George Williams downtown campuses), or in a restaurant near the Sir George campus. Again, except for one, which took place at the respondent's place of work, I conducted interviews with the adult Tibetans in their homes. In two instances a member of the younger generation helped interpret for their parents and, in another, the husband was present to assist his wife when necessary. The interviews lasted not the two hours I had anticipated but, on

average, three hours. In several instances, because of other commitments on the part of the respondent, we had to hold the interview over the course of two, and occasionally three, meetings. All interviews were audio-taped, after I had received permission from the respondent.

The interview method used is known as reflexive interviewing [Hammersley, 1995:152]. I chose this approach because of its flexibility; it calls for no particular sequence of questions and no single mode of asking them. And, most importantly, it allows the questions to be guided by the responses [ibid:152]. For example, although I went into each interview with a list of issues I wanted to be covered (see Interview Guide), I never knew exactly which questions I was going to ask or in what sequence. I usually began by picking up on something I knew about the respondent - whether it was about their job, their family or something that had happened at the last community event - and then went on from there. If I required the respondent to clarify some point or to provide a specific piece of information I would ask a direct question; most of the time, though, my questions were non-directive so as to encourage the respondent to talk about a broader area of matters which concerned him or her. This was important as it gave the respondents the opportunity to bring the issues up of their own accord and to interpret and explain things from their perspective and in their own words [ibid].

iv) Interview Guide

I had developed an interview schedule which consisted of a range of questions covering five broad areas. A separate interview guide was prepared for each age category (see Appendix). For first generation Tibetans these areas were: Experiences in Tibet/India; Arrival in Canada; Community

Activities; Tibetan Beliefs and Values; and Communication with the Diaspora. For the younger generation, the first and second sections of the interview guide were replaced by questions regarding Family/Personal Background and Schooling respectively. I prepared a shorter version of each interview guide, consisting of key questions, in the event of a respondent not being able to spare the time necessary to complete the longer version. As it turned out, these were not required.

v) Analysis of the Interviews

As soon as possible after speaking with someone, I transcribed the interview verbatim. I did this for two reasons. First, especially at the beginning, I was not certain what was significant and what was not and I did not want to miss important data. Secondly, when it came to looking at the material at a later stage, I found it easier to deal with a written copy than with audio-tapes. In the event, this task of writing up proved very helpful in that it allowed me to become thoroughly familiar with the data. Indeed, once several interviews had been completed, I began to notice some patterns emerging and started developing ideas about the ways in which the information might connect with my theoretical framework. As each of these ideas came to me, I made a note of them. These reflections, in conjunction with those arising from a combination of my reading and participant observation, helped me identify other key points emerging from these interviews, as well as prompting further lines of inquiry.

Stresses and Strains of Field Research

As Hammersley points out, field research can at times be an emotionally stressful experience for the researcher [Hammersley, 1995:113].

In the early stages of my research, for example, I found attending an event at which the majority of people were from a different ethnic background and where I knew no-one, to be a fairly nerve-wracking undertaking. Later on, when I learned that most of the Tibetans either because of their jobs, their studies or other commitments, had limited amounts of time to spare, I was concerned both about imposing on them and also that my request to talk to them might be rejected. Indeed, even with those Tibetans who had already agreed to speak to me, I occasionally found myself postponing the telephone call to arrange a date and time for the interview in case they had changed their minds! This happened only once, however.

How much to disclose about oneself can also be a problem [Hammersley, 1995:91]. However, since interviews are social interactions which have meaning to the people involved (Oakley, 1981), I had already decided that, if the respondents asked me questions about myself, I would answer them openly. I had, after all, already met many of them at community events and had established a certain rapport with them. Moreover, although asking the Tibetans to tell me about their life experiences often involved much laughter, it also involved them recollecting painful events. In circumstances such as these it was hardly fitting to hold back about my own life and background.

Limitations of Study

No approach is without its critics and some researchers argue that, with the ethnographic approach, the data and findings are too subjective. I have found, in the course of my work, that it is through ethnography that the

meanings that give substance to the experiences of another life, can best be elicited and understood.

In undertaking this project, it has not been my intention at all to generalize my findings to all ethnic groups. Although the immigrant experiences of the Tibetans are similar in certain respects to those of others, the Tibetans are a quite special case - with the Dalai Lama and the well organized government-in-exile in India. And, within the community itself, its small size means that the situation can change profoundly - a few people leaving or joining the community can have a strong impact. Therefore, I am only claiming to look at this community at this time and my conclusions about identity will be primarily relevant to these two limited conditions.

Summary

To sum up, then, I believe that an ethnographic approach is particularly suitable for the type of individual and community-based research I have undertaken here. The multi-stranded and open-ended character of ethnography encourages the researcher to gain an integral sense of the subject under study. It also promotes the chances of a first-hand contact with the people and settings concerned and makes the respondents and their opinions and information the paramount ingredient. Most importantly, the reflexive nature of the approach enables the researcher to see himself or herself in action as listener, correspondent and interpreter as well as moving back and forth between data collection and analysis throughout every phase of the research.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

An Ethnography of Transnationalism

In the past, migration has been seen in terms of unilineal, and finite movements between a point of origin and a point of destination. Led by the Chicago School, under the leadership of Robert Park and Louis Wirth, the assumption was that ethnic distinctions had no logical place in industrial societies. Over time, a person's links with the home country, it was believed, would cease and the differences which arose out of the diverse origins and backgrounds of people would gradually disappear. These ideas about migration, in turn, have shaped the ways in which identity, ethnic and national, have been perceived and investigated with studies focusing on the activities of immigrants in the host country; culture was often seen as little more than lists of objective cultural traits by which researchers thought they could identify any particular group [Isajiw, 1979:14].

In Canada, this overly narrow definition of migration has dominated the field of Canadian ethnic studies until very recently with researchers focusing on the internal dynamics of ethnic communities and intergroup relations and concentrating on themes such as ethnic persistence, retention and incorporation (for example, Breton, 1964; Reitz, 1980; Driedger, 1989; Isajiw, 1990; Breton et al, 1990). According to Winland (1998) the multicultural ideology of Canada is partly responsible for the limited approach of the last two decades: initially it resulted in many studies focusing on the contribution that separate ethnic groups in Canada made to the overall enrichment of Canadian society while, later, studies often critiqued the policy [Winland, 1998:566].

28

Fredrik Barth has made a particularly influential contribution to the study of ethnicity. In his introductory essay in <u>Ethnic Groups and Boundaries</u>, he presented ethnicity as an aspect of social organization, rather than of culture [Barth, 1969:13]. To achieve this, he focused on the relationship or 'boundary' between groups. This was a significant step because Barth was attempting to depart from the dominant structural-functionalist thinking of the time. And, in fact, his model provided the starting point for much theoretically interesting work on ethnicity. One such example is that of Anthony Cohen (1985) who looks at the role of symbols in sustaining ethnic group boundaries. In turn, building on Cohen, Amit-Talai (1989), analyses how Armenians in London, England use symbols to construct a sense of 'Armenianness'. Following on from Barth, too, McLelland (1986), considers the role of Tibetan culture, especially Buddhism, in the ethnic boundary maintenance of the Tibetan community in Lindsay, Ontario. Barth's emphasis on the boundary, however, only went to stress the apparently bounded nature of ethnicity. Theories of the closely-related concepts of national identity and nationalism also emphasize the link between shared culture and a specific territory (for example, Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1991).

Over the past two decades, however, researchers have increasingly come to realize that these bounded concepts are no longer sufficient to explain the processes of mobility and consequent identity construction taking place in today's increasingly globalized world. In the current phase of globalization, defined as both 'the compression of the world into a single place and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole'

[Robertson, 1992:8], researchers are finding that a growing number of migrants are maintaining and deepening long-term links with both their communities and their countries of origin; and they are holding identities from these places (see for example, Sutton, 1987).

Such connections are not new, of course; in particular, there are many descriptions of the movement of labour in which ties have been maintained in two settings (for example, Piore, 1979; di Leonardi, 1984; Feldman-Bianco, 1992). What is different now, however, is that these links have increased in density and significance [Jones, 1992:219] and that new processes and dynamics are involved. (See Foner,1997 for a detailed discussion on the continuities and discontinuities between past and present immigrant links.) Advances in technology, especially in the area of transportation and communication, play a large part in changing the contours of migration in terms of both its origins and its processes [Foner, 1997:62]. Today, jumbo jets, television and videos, along with the telephone, fax, the internet and e-mail allow migrants to retain - and deepen - ties with their country of origin in increasingly complex ways. Most importantly, rapid communication makes it possible for migrants and their children to have simultaneous and on-going participation in more than one place. [Robertson, 1990:179]. It provides a sense of simultaneity which not only helps the world become a single place, but which is essential to the formation of community (Anderson, 1991). Rheingold (1993), for example, notes the assortment of new cultures that have evolved in the world's computer networks over the past decade. In the political arena, in particular, using computer mediated technology such as the internet and computer conferencing systems to create alternative global

networks, enables non-governmental organizations to challenge the government's monopoly on communications media [Rheingold, 1993:266; see also Anderson, 1994:327]

Associated with the realization that a more dynamic immigrant experience is emerging, has been a call for a shift in analytical levels away from bounded ethnic and national groupings to the study of these processes which are transcending, perhaps eroding, national boundaries and which are sustaining the increasingly complex movements and exchanges of people, goods, money, information and ideas [Featherston, 1990:1; Erikson, 1993:156; Amit-Talai, 1996:9]. We need a new level of conceptualization, that is, which better reflects the transnational nature of such mobile populations, especially when many of these people have migrated more than once [Bhachu, 1996:283]. An analytic framework, moreover, is needed that can address these increasingly global trends but without undermining the importance of the local and self-conscious individual [Anthony Cohen, 1996:280].

The situation with respect to refugee studies is very much a reflection of the work carried out on immigrant groups in general. Areas in which the refugee and/or the exile have been studied include international law, international studies, documentary production by United Nations and refugee agencies, development studies and literary studies [Malkki, 1995:497]. In this literature it is also assumed that to become uprooted and removed from a national community is to automatically lose one's identity, traditions and culture. Similarly, studies have tended to focus on the destination country and taken little account of connections with the country the refugee has left.

Some researchers, moreover, have argued that there is such a thing as "the refugee experience" which can be differentiated into characteristic 'stages' [Keller cited in Malkki, 1995:508]. The overall result of such categorizing studies is that the refugee movements become dehistoricized and depoliticized and refugees viewed, in large measure, as passive objects of humanitarian intervention.

Development studies in particular have promoted this. Instead of taking into consideration the unique political and historical processes that generate a given group of refugees in the first place, and that reach far beyond the country of asylum and the refugee camp, development projects tend to see a whole world in a refugee camp [ibid:507]. In the area of international studies, too, the explicitly nonpolitical role of international refugee agencies, helps erase the immediate political histories of mass displacement from their studies [ibid:505]. With much social scientific research conducted in association with international organizations this, not surprisingly, shapes the way in which we view displacement and refugee settlement. Recently, though, there has been a recognition that traditional theoretical frameworks are not sufficient to explain contemporary refugee experiences. In the field of refugee studies, then, there has also been a call for a broader framework - one which looks at the experience of living in exile in new ways and in particular takes into account refugees' histories and the multiple and continuing connections with the country from which they fled.

Returning to the issue of Canadian ethnic research for a moment, Winland (1998) argues that the relationships of ethnic groups to their countries of origin is also an underdeveloped area of analysis. While many

studies, such as Vasiliadis's study of Macedonians in Toronto (1994), incorporate sentimental, political, or material links between immigrant groups and homelands, these ties are subsumed within immigrant group histories and are often treated as a residual category of ethnic experience [Windland, 1998:564]. Paradoxically, however, where the doctrine of multiculturalism was, at one time, responsible for limiting the field of ethnic studies, it may now be responsible for encouraging a broader outlook. More specifically, the concept of multiculturalism has been politically appropriated by Canadian politicans and businessmen seeking to attract foreign investment from wealthy Pacific Rim countries [Mitchell, 1993:264]. Since the early 1980s in Vancouver, in particular, efforts have been made in the hope of enticing well-off Hong Kong elites to make investments in advance of the 1997 changeover to Chinese communist control [ibid:267]. These new migrants - well educated and highly trained with portable skills - are from a very different social category from those of the earlier waves of Chinese labour migration [Chan, 1997:203]. Mitchell describes them as 'living, travelling, and doing business in both Hong Kong and Vancouver' [Mitchell, 1993:268]. Parents and children, she notes, travel and communicate easily and on a frequent basis [ibid:269].

The phenomenon of new middle- or high-class migrant investors deserves more than a cursory look because, not only have they become a significant element in Vancouver society, but their multiple experiences lead to new and different forms of cultural and national identity [ibid:270]. Chan (1997), too, argues that the transnational links among family members provide the context within which a new type of Chinese identity - that of the

Chinese cosmopolitan - is emerging [Chan, 1997:196]. Some Canadian scholars have begun to turn their attention to migrants' links with the home country (for example, Windland, 1998; Aprahamian, 1999). But, perhaps the realities of the Hong Kong Chinese experience will raise questions and encourage a greater number of Canadian researchers to adjust their analytical focus so as to give greater attention to the transnational dimensions of diasporic experience.

There is clearly a need, then, for adaptation, and there have been many calls for a shift in analytical focus away from traditional localizing strategies of community, ethnicity and nation. Cultural studies have been at the forefront in the analysis of these transnational practices and processes (Appadurai, 1990, 1991; Hannerz, 1992, 1996). In his book Transnational Connections, for example, Hannerz uses the term 'global ecumene' - a region of persistent cultural interaction and exchange - to refer to the increasing interconnectedness of the world [Hannerz, 1996:7]. Within the 'global ecumene', culture - 'meanings and meaningful forms' [ibid:8] - flows mostly within a number of organizational frames, especially those of ordinary everyday lives, the corporate and institutional actors of the state such as schools and the media, and the market place [ibid:69]. Culture is produced and circulated in the continuously changing interrelationships among these four frames.

Two elements specifically affecting this cultural organization are the mobility of people and the mobility of meanings and meaningful forms through the media [ibid:19]. Cosmopolitans, especially intellectuals, bureaucrats, politicians, business people, journalists and diplomats, play an

34

important role here as cultural mediators. The majority of such mediators, though, are likely to be organization men [ibid:106] in that "their transnational cultures, networks and institutions provide them with a social framework and, wherever they travel, they find others who will interact with them in the terms of specialized but collectively held understandings" [ibid:107]. Cities, too, play a major part in ordering transnational connections. Indeed, because of the convergence in them of different categories of people - transnational businessmen, third world populations, people specializing in expressive activities and tourists - some cities become centres of the global ecumene [ibid:129].

Although Hannerz acknowledges the presence of an increasing number of Third World migrants in the cities of the First World, the transnational field that he describes looks mainly at occupational and corporate elites and he sees their movement in terms of cultural flows. In contrast, Basch et al (1992; 1994) take a different approach by linking their study of transnationalism to migration and rooting their analysis in social relations. They define transnationalism as "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" [Basch et al, 1994:7]. Immigrants become "transmigrants" when they develop and maintain multiple relationships - family, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political - that span state and other borders [ibid:7]. The major factors leading immigrants to live transnational lives are the difficult or deteriorating social and economic conditions in both the country of origin and the country of settlement, racism

in the receiving society, and the nation building projects of both home and host society [Glick Schiller et al, 1995:50].

Transnationalism, as such, is not a new phenomenon; what is new is that immigrants and their children are, to a considerable degree, organizing their lives around these links. Or, to be more precise, they "take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect them simultaneously to two or more nation-states" [Basch et al, 1994:7]. Indeed, a central element of Basch's definition of transnationalism incorporates the wide range of involvements that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies. Mexican immigrants living in California, for example, own houses and land back in their home towns, others contribute to businesses run by parents or siblings, and many of their children are sent back to the towns of origin for at least part of their education [Rouse, 1992:44]. Haitian immigrants in New York interact with household members living in Haiti as well as friends and other relatives in other parts of the United States and in Canada [Charles, 1992:110]. Communication here is by visit, letter, telephone conversation and remittances [ibid:111]. Similar links with the transmigrants' countries of origin have also been noted by other researchers (for example, Foner, 1987; Sutton, 1987; Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Western, 1992; Henry, 1994).

At the same time, recognizing the economic, social and political potential of their overseas migrant populations, political leaders from the home country are keen to encourage these relations. The Filipino Government, for example, has introduced a 'balikbayan' policy whereby transmigrants returning home for a visit are entitled to up to $1500 worth of

duty free purchases [Basch et al, 1994:257]. Vincentian and Grenadian transmigrants have been granted full citizenship rights at home, and Aristide has referred to Haitians living abroad as 'the 10th Department' (of a country with nine geographic divisions) to show that, not only do they continue to be part of Haiti, but they also have responsibilities to sustain their country [ibid:146]. And so, political leaders from all these countries periodically visit their dispersed populations to discuss development plans and solicit investment from them [ibid:247]. The immigrants often respond by joining in a range of activities and sponsoring community development projects back in their original homeland [ibid:193]. Basch et al (1994) refer to these attempts by the governments of the home country to claim their dispersed populations as 'citizens', as de-territorialized nation-state building. A deterritorialized nation-state, then, is one in which the nations' people may live anywhere in the world and yet, for many purposes, continue to be part of the state [ibid:269].

Theoretical Framework

Although addressing very different socio-economic conditions - those of the economically marginalized and those of the professional elites - both versions of transnationalism discussed above have at their heart engagement with a well organized transnational social network [Amit-Talai, 1997:319]. It is the type of network, moreover, which Amit-Talai considers essential for the successful production of, and participation in, a transnational community [ibid:323]. Since I argue that a well-established and dynamic transnational social network, the Tibet Movement, is the context within which Tibetan identity is constructed, in the following discussion I will look more closely at

37

these two models to see if, and to what extent, they can assist me in explaining what is happening in the Tibetan community in Montreal. Since Basch et al have linked their study of transnationalism to migration and rooted their analysis in social relations, I will start by looking at their model.

But writers have highlighted a number of limitations in the approach of Basch et al [Jones, 1992; Mahler, 1997:73ff]. Foremost is the fact that most of the case studies on which they, and many other studies of transnationalism, draw (for example, Sassen, 1988; Nagengast and Kearney, 1990; Rouse, 1991; Smith, 1996; Amit-Talai, 1997, 1998), focus almost exclusively on labour migrants. Their cases also focus on immigration from the postcolonial states of the Caribbean, Pacific Rim or Latin America to one country of settlement, namely the United States, and then only to very few large centres such as New York and Los Angeles [Lauria-Pirricelli, 1992:251; Amit-Talai, 1998:43]. As a result, much of what Basch et al describe as transnationalism consists, in fact, of bi-statal relationships, that is, movement between the migrants' countries of origin and one country of settlement only [Kearney, 1995:559].

As Guarnizo and Smith (1996) point out, however, the fit between specific kinds of migrants and specific local and national contexts abroad shapes not only the likelihood of developing and maintaining transnational ties, but also the nature of the ties themselves [Guarnizo and Smith, 1996:13]. Indeed, as Malkki (1995) points out with regard to forced population movements, such movements themselves have extraordinarily diverse historical and political causes [Malkii, 1995:498]. Such a narrow focus, then, is likely to prove of limited application when we look at populations

which have migrated from a variety of areas of the world each with their particular historical backgrounds and trajectories. And, in fact, this appears to be the case with the Tibetan diaspora. So that I can illustrate this more clearly, it is necessary now to provide some detailed information both on the refugee community as it is today and on the emergence of Tibetan nationalism. This apparent detour from the specifics of the theoretical examination which is the central theme of this chapter, is necessary for explaining why particular theoretical models have been selected to support and clarify the argument.

The Refugee Community Today

In the introductory chapter we saw how, after his flight from Tibet in 1959 and his arrival in India, the Dalai Lama re-established his government; then, with the help of the Government of India and international relief agencies, he began the difficult task of building a Tibetan community in exile. Once the immediate needs of the refugees were seen to, the Dalai Lama turned his attention to the issue of cultural reconstruction. Tibetan culture was divided into two categories: those aspects which are largely preserved in books and those of actual daily use to the Tibetans in exile. It was on this bilateral basis that cultural institutions were founded or re-established in exile [French, 1991:195]. In the four decades since then, the refugee community in India has grown in size and complexity and there has been a considerable further flow of Tibetans to other countries.

In 1994, the number of refugees living on the Indian subcontinent was just over 121,000 [PC, 1994:4]. Of these, almost 70,000 live in predominantly Tibetan settlements in India, Nepal and Bhutan while the

39

remaining 52,000 refugees are in scattered communities throughout India and Nepal [ibid:4]. Throughout the refugee community approximately two hundred monasteries and nunneries have been re-established, including the three great monastic universities of Drepung, Sera and Ganden in the more remote settlements of southern India [ibid:173]. Hospitals and a system of boarding and day schools for Tibetan children have also been built in different localities.[1]

Dharamsala, in northern India, is the headquarters of the exile community. The Dalai Lama resides here, together with the Government-in-Exile and many of the newly and re-established Tibetan institutions. Religious buildings include the Namgyal Monastery, the Dalai Lama's personal monastery, and the Jokhang Temple, Tibet's most holy Buddhist temple. Other cultural institutions include the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA), the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, and the Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute.[2] The main branch of one of the residential schools, the Tibetan Children's Village, is also situated here.

Over the years the government has expanded its services to suit the growing needs of the community and today it has departments dealing with rehabilitation, religious and cultural affairs, education, health, economic affairs, information and international relations, and security [PC, 1994:2]. The primary duty of the Department of Security is to ensure the personal security of the Dalai Lama. The Department of Information and International Relations monitors developments related to human rights in occupied Tibet, and deals with the international activities of the Tibetan Government through its network of offices abroad.[3] These offices maintain contact with

governments, parliamentarians, Tibet support groups, and other non-governmental organizations in their respective countries [PC, 1994:199]. Non-governmental organizations based in Dharamsala include the Tibetan Women's Association and the Tibetan Youth Congress.[4] The Government and other organizations in the refugee community publish a number of magazines and journals in several languages.[5]

Today, there are also over 5,000 Tibetan refugees living outside the Asian subcontinent. Approximately 2,400 live in Europe, including 2,000 in Switzerland, more than 2,000 live in the United States, approximately 600 in Canada, 120 in Australia and New Zealand and 40 in Japan. Many Tibetans migrated as part of special resettlement schemes organized between the Government-in-Exile and the government of the host or receiving countries. The most recent resettlement project involved the migration of a thousand Tibetan refugees to the United States between April 1992 and October 1993 [TRP, 1992].[6] Individuals, such as the High Lamas, have also travelled abroad to create or join centres for the teaching of Tibetan religion, meditation and language [French, 1991:196]. Many Tibetans migrated through private means such as sponsorship by universities to work on special research projects [McLagen, 1996:268; TCB, 1995:10] and yet others have travelled through family reunification schemes. A small number has migrated more than twice.

The Tibetan communities throughout the diaspora, as we shall see in greater detail later in the thesis, keep in close contact with one another in a variety of ways and on a number of different levels - personal, religious and political [McLelland, 1986; Dargyay, 1988; TCB, 1995; McLagen, 1996].

The majority and most frequent type of communication, though, is political. (But, given the central role that religion plays in Tibetan definitions of themselves as a people and a polity, religion and politics will be discussed together here and throughout the thesis.) Links of a political nature are maintained by computer, email and fax, through a variety of government and non-government publications, through the government offices and representatives abroad, through international conferences, and by means of constant visits among the various communities. As a result of these links, the refugee community, especially those Tibetans living in North America and Europe, undertakes a wide range of activities in support of the Tibetan cause.

But, not only do the refugee communities keep in contact and work together with one another, they are also in constant contact and work together with a range of Tibet Support Groups and other non-governmental organizations composed of non-Tibetans. To understand the nature and scope of these links and activities and especially the role played in them by non-Tibetans, we need to look briefly at the events which led to the emergence of Tibetan nationalism.

Tibetan Nationalism

Apart from the passage of three resolutions in the United Nations during the first few years of exile, little official support internationally has been forthcoming for Tibet for nearly thirty years. This state of affairs continued even through the Cultural Revolution in China (1966-76) when every aspect of Tibetan culture, especially religion, was targeted for systematic destruction under the guise of 'democratic reforms' [Smith, 1996:544]. During this period, in addition to intense ideological

42

indoctrination, Tibetans were organized into communes and individual property was confiscated. These changes contributed to the poverty and famine which wracked the country throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

In the late 1970s, however, the death of Mao and the toppling of the Gang of Four led to a period of liberalization in Chinese politics [ibid:563]. In the spirit of reform, a Tibetan delegation in exile was invited to Tibet to see how conditions had improved. During its visit in 1979, the delegation was received enthusiastically by Tibetans at every stop [ibid:565]. Profoundly shocked by this unexpected demonstration of support for the Dalai Lama, the Chinese sent a high-level fact-finding mission to Tibet [ibid:568]. The result was a radical reform programme including the decollectivization of agriculture and the general liberalization of economic policies [ibid:569]. Tibetan culture, including religion, was to be revived with the state financing the reconstruction of some religious monuments and monasteries. Tibetans were able to resume religious practices and privately began rebuilding some of the religious monuments destroyed by the Chinese [ibid:570]. As Smith points out, the reconstruction of religious monuments and monasteries which, in the beginning stages at least, was free of Chinese control and interference, was extraordinarily significant as it became a focus and centre for the revival of autonomous Tibetan social and political life [ibid: 577; see also Schwarz, 1994].

During the same period many exiles were allowed to visit Tibet and a few Tibetans were permitted to visit relatives in India and Nepal [ibid:579]. Tibet also opened up to foreign tourists - between 1980 and 1984 to highly restricted group tours and after 1985 to individual travellers [ibid:580]. As

McLagen points out, one of the effects of opening up Tibet to tourism was a sharp rise in the flow of information into Tibet on democracy, human rights and national struggles taking place elsewhere in the world. Ideas which, in turn, provided the Tibetans with an alternative vocabulary and interpretations which they have adopted and aligned with their own concepts drawn from Buddhism [McLagen, 1996:298]. These two factors, the creation of an alternative reality and the rebuilding of monasteries, created a climate conducive to dissent and the formation of resistance [ibid:299].

But, by 1987, negotiations with China had come to a halt, and the Tibetan government-in-exile now shifted its strategy to the international arena [Smith, 1996:597] In September of that year the Dalai Lama addressed the United States Congressional Human Rights Caucus in Washington with a proposed 'five-point peace plan' for Tibet [ibid:600].[7] Although his peaceful efforts on behalf of his country won the Dalai Lama international praise and led to his receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, within China and Chinese-controlled Tibet his speech was denounced as not representing the sentiments of the Tibetan people [ibid:602]. This denunciation, adding to already sharp tensions, resulted in riots breaking out in Lhasa in the days following the speech [McLagen, 1996:299]. The violent suppression of the demonstrations by the Chinese sparked a further series of protests. Of particular significance, however, was the fact that, for the first time, the violence against the demonstrators was witnessed by westerners [ibid:310].

According to McLagen, the Tibet Movement emerged out of the responses to these riots. As news of the protests spread across the Tibetan diaspora, refugee communities held demonstrations in support of their

compatriots in Tibet. In the West, a few Tibetan groups joined in these efforts as did many friends of Tibet who had previously not taken part in any organized Tibet activism. Over the next few months, new organizations began to spring up, most of them concentrated in the United States, Canada, Australia, England, Switzerland, Germany and Scandinavia [ibid:291]. In the following three years, a network of Tibet activists formed by Tibet support groups and Tibetan communities and organizations across the diaspora, began to emerge. By 1990 they began to refer to themselves as part of a 'movement' and recognized themselves as sharing the same political goals. The individual support groups started to co-operate more closely and to co-ordinate their efforts as they worked on a number of campaigns of a global nature [ibid:343].

Over the years the development and trajectory of this network has been influenced by a number of connected factors such as the involvement of young professionals, the reformulation of the Tibet issue to encompass the universal themes of human rights, democracy, environmentalism and development [ibid:328] and the activities of the various Tibet support groups themselves [ibid:339]. The International Campaign for Tibet based in Washington, DC, for example, plays a central role by getting the issue of Tibet onto the United States government's agenda. [ibid:337] and the Canada Tibet Committee's establishment of two computer systems vastly improved the international coordination of the Tibet Movement [ibid:339].

It is the ongoing development of this transnational network which best explains the links and activities taking place within the Tibetan diaspora today. Tibet nationalism, then, far transcends any attempts of the

45

government-in-exile to build a sense of national identity among the population within its territory. Rather, it is a form of long-distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992, 1994) wherein exiled Tibetans living in many different countries, especially in North America and Europe, and their non-Tibetan supporters, are trying to overturn the consequences of Chinese actions which have overthrown their government. Included in this long-distance nationalism, moreover, are the nation-building activities of the Tibetan government-in-exile which is also operating from outside Tibet.

From the above discussion it is very evident that the links we are looking at here go far beyond, and are much more complex, than those dealt with by Basch and her colleagues. There are, as we can see, several important ways in which the Tibetan situation differs from their model. First, the multi-stranded links described above are taking place within a diasporic community rather than a merely transnational one; secondly, they include the nation-building activities of a government based outside, rather than inside, its country of origin; and, thirdly, they involve the widespread participation of non-Tibetans. It is also within the wider and complex social field created by these networks that Tibetan identity is constructed. Nor is Basch et al's model suitable to take into consideration the role of a charismatic leader such as the Dalai Lama, both as a unifying leader and a respected international figure, within the Tibetan diaspora. Since attempting to explain the pivotal role the Dalai Lama plays is the subject of the following chapter, here I mention him only in terms of acting as a member, albeit an important one, of the Tibetan diaspora.

Diaspora Communities

The increasing interconnectedness of the world, particularly as it is described in the versions of transnationalism we have considered, has resulted in the term 'diaspora' or, more specifically, 'diaspora community' being used to describe the displacement of an increasingly wide category of people including immigrants, expatriates, political refugees, exile communities, as well as ethnic and racial minorities [Tololyan, 1991:30]. The growing use of the term has, in turn, been accompanied by attempts to come up with a definition which is more appropriate to the experiences of millions of people in the late twentieth century (Safran, 1991; Chaliand & Rageau, 1995; Clifford, 1994).

Safran, for example, comes up with a list of features with which he defines a 'diasporic community' by discussing a variety of collective experiences in terms of how they conform to the 'ideal type' of the Jewish diaspora. The main features of a diasporic community are: a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship [Safran, 1991:83-84]. Clifford, however, dislikes this definition, especially its association with a specific original 'centre' or territory [Clifford, 1994:306]. For him, a shared, ongoing experience of displacement and the decentred, partially overlapping networks of communication which sustain and connect a dispersed population, may be as important to diaspora communities as those formed around the idea of return [Clifford, 1994:306]. For him, the term diaspora is a sign, not only of transnationality and movement, but of political struggles to

define the local as a distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement [ibid:308]. Diaspora, therefore, involves both the creation of alternative public spheres and the maintenance of forms of ongoing community consciousness and solidarity through transnational links, in order to live in the country of settlement, with a difference. Clifford's notion of diaspora is more of people dwelling distinctly within their host countries, while retaining identities or lived experience which continue to be linked to the home country [ibid:311].

This type of definition may be useful for describing the bi-statal transnational networks of Mexican labour migrants living in Redwood City, California, but it does little to help our understanding of the Tibetan situation. The activity taking place within the various Tibetan refugee communities is considerably more varied and complex than the adaptive strategies necessary to enable them to create an alternative space for themselves in their respective host countries. In the Tibetan settlements in India, for example, the refugees have not merely created an alternative public space but have recreated a whole society in exile. Indeed, for many of the Tibetans who have migrated to other countries, the establishment of a Tibetan society on the Indian subcontinent, has resulted in India, and to a lesser extent, Nepal and Bhutan, standing in for Tibet as the 'country of origin'.

Likewise, the communication taking place within the diaspora is considerably more than is necessary to enable them to retain a sense of community consciousness whilst living in their new homes. By comparison, the Tibetan diaspora is very much defined by its spiritual and political leadership, to Tibet, and by what continues to take place there today. The

Tibetans are a diasporic community which has not only been dispersed from a specific original centre to a number of different countries, but which also maintains constant communications among its many parts. This communication is made all the more complicated because it incorporates non-Tibetans and because it involves the nation-building activities of a government-in-exile.

De-territorialized Nation-State Building

A government-in-exile is, by definition, an opposition group that struggles from outside its home territory to overturn and replace the regime in its independent, occupied, or claimed home country [Shain, 1991:2]. As Basch and her colleagues illustrate, political leaders from the home country undertake nation-building activities to foster the loyalty of their dispersed populations. The Tibetan Government attempts to do this by allowing Tibetans who have taken on the citizenship of another country, to keep their Tibetan citizenship and to vote in the elections of the government-in-exile. The Dalai Lama, government ministers and representatives of other Tibetan institutions and organizations throughout the diaspora also visit their dispersed populations to remind and update them about the situation in Tibet, to proffer religious teachings, to discuss future plans and to raise funds. Basch et al refer to such activities as de-territorialized nation-state building. The nation-state building activities of the Tibetan government, however, are different; they are taking place from outside Tibet. What we are discussing here, then, is de-territorialized nation-state building without a state.

Countries of Settlement

Basch et al note only too well the negative impact that the policies of

the host government often have on immigrants settling in their country. In the case of the tens of thousands of Tibetan refugees arriving in India, however, the positive reception given to them by the Government of India was a key factor in the successful establishment and growth of the community [French, 1991:192]. Indeed, not only was the Government of India willing to play an active role in the rehabilitation efforts for the refugees, but the ideological framework within which it believed rehabilitation should occur was compatible with the Dalai Lama's goal of cultural preservation [Goldstein, cited in McLagen, 1996:199]. Although the Indian government does not recognize the government-in-exile or its claim of sovereignty over Tibet, it deals with it as a de facto administrative unit and allows refugees to retain their Tibetan citizenship [French, 1991:193].

With the migration of Tibetan refugees to other countries, the Tibetans and their supporters have to deal with the nation-state building projects of a number of governments. How government policy influenced the development of the Tibetan communities in both Switzerland and the United States, is described by McLagen in her study of the Tibetan Movement (McLagen, 1996).

Incorporation of Non-Tibetans

A particularly interesting dimension of the diaspora is the extent to which westerners have been incorporated within it. Tibetan culture, particularly Tibetan Buddhism, opens the way to this incorporation. The exodus of religious figures from Tibet resulted in a diffusion of Tibetan Buddhism to non-Tibetans in many countries throughout the world [French, 1991:196]. High lamas who fled in 1959 travelled abroad and established

centres to teach the essential tenets of Tibetan Buddhism. Their success produced a core of Westerners committed both to supporting the continuation of Tibetan religion and to preserving Tibetan culture.

Buddhism's greatest influence has been in Europe and North America, which today have hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist centres and thousands of followers including celebrities such as actor Richard Gere. Books on Tibetan Buddhism are published in western languages and a few westerners have taken vows as monks and nuns. Tibetan lamas have appeared in television specials and movies and the Dalai Lama has become one of the most visible religious leaders in the world [Powers, 1995:186]. In 1985, a Spanish infant was even recognized as the reincarnation of a Tibetan Lama [Thomas, 1999:C1].

Through this diffusion of Tibetan Buddhism, the cause of Tibetan independence and its international situation became increasingly widely known [French, 1991:196]. Over the years this has resulted in extensive material support of the refugee community and the creation of a global political support movement. Since 1987, the inclusion of universal notions such as human rights in the Tibetan struggle has widened its appeal to different groups. In the United States, in particular, powerful friends in political, media as well as entertainment circles have given Tibetans a presence and profile in the west and in the international arena out of all proportion to their size [McLagen, 1996:281].

Cultural Flow and Identity

To understand the scope and dynamic nature of the transnational links emerging within the Tibetan diaspora, we need to turn to Hannerz's (1996)

model of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. Despite its abstract nature and its focus on occupational and corporate elites, it is this model more than Basch's that catches the essence of cultural flows and interchange and of the movement of people, information, ideas, money and goods taking place within the diaspora. Indeed, a great many individuals, Tibetan and non-Tibetan, and especially the Dalai Lama, might be considered cosmopolitans. In the course of their work for Tibet, they travel to many different countries where they feel almost as comfortable as they would at home. This is, in large measure, because they are members of or, in the case of the Dalai Lama, the head of, the Tibet Movement. Their movement is shaped and facilitated by its various institutions and organizations and wherever they travel they are in touch with other Tibetans and supporters of Tibet. As cosmopolitan figures, such individuals play an important role as cultural mediators because they have the ability to transform the perspectives of those around them. As leader of the Tibetan people, of course, the Dalai Lama's ability to transform lives is profound.

Hannerz's notion of culture being produced and circulated within the continuously changing interrelations among peoples' everyday lives, the state and the market place is also useful here as it is, of course, within the larger social field created by their transnational links that Tibetan identity is formed. It is only with Basch's more grounded approach, however, that we can examine and begin to comprehend the everyday processes of identity construction. Through constant social interaction with fellow Tibetans and with Tibet supporters, a feeling of community consciousness and solidarity is constructed both locally and with the larger transnational organization. New

friendships are made and old ones renewed, networks are built up and new affiliations are developed (Abner Cohen, 1993). More than this, even, by self-consciously selecting (Anthony Cohen, 1994, 1996) which aspects of their culture to reproduce and how to present themselves to the public, Tibetans are, to a considerable extent, able to play a part in the way they are perceived by outsiders [McLagen, 1996:353].

<u>Summary</u>

In the past, researchers and theorists tended to see migration - labour and forced population movement - as unidirectional. Over time, a person's links with the home country, they believed, would wither away and the differences which arose out of people's diverse origins and backgrounds would gradually disappear. Studies of identity, both ethnic and national, were focused on the activities of immigrants in the destination country. Over the past two decades though - and more recently in Canada - researchers have come to realize that these bounded concepts are no longer sufficient to explain the processes of mobility and consequent identity construction taking place among millions of migrants in today's increasingly globalized world. Advances in communications technology, in particular, are enabling a growing number of migrants to maintain and deepen long-term links with both their communities and their countries of origin and are allowing them to hold identities from both these places. Associated with the realization of this more dynamic immigrant experience, have been calls for a new level of theoretical conceptualization which better reflects the transnational nature of such mobile populations.

A number of models of transnationalism have been proposed with those of Hannerz and Basch et al offering two very different approaches. A close examination of these two models indicates how difficult it is to produce an analytical model capable of explaining the wide variety of transnational movements occurring in the world today. Tibetans have many of the multi-layered transnational links with their country of origin (mainly India) described by Basch et al, but the model's almost exclusive focus on labour migrants and on the two poles of the migration circuit severely limits its ability to encompass the scope and dynamic nature of the multiple interactions taking place within the Tibet Movement: interactions, that is, which very much revolve around the nation-building activities of the Tibetan government-in-exile. The increasingly complex institutional nature of the Tibetan links, moreover, takes them far beyond Clifford's notion of living in exile. Nor can Basch et al's model encompass critical elements in the Tibetan connections such as the incorporation of westerners and the role of a charismatic leader such as the Dalai Lama. Hannerz's model, on the other hand, despite its abstract nature and focus on occupational elites, does manage to catch more the sense of movement taking place within the diaspora and the important role of the cosmopolitans as cultural mediators.

To allow myself in part to explain what is going on in the Tibetan community in Montreal, I will therefore take elements from Basch et al and Hannerz; but I will also have to move beyond their models. In choosing this approach, I hope to show that the Tibetans in Montreal are not only elements within this larger transnational network of Tibet activism, but that they play important and active roles in promoting it. Their membership of the Tibet

Movement helps to explain both their wide range of links and participation in a variety of activities with other Tibetans and non-Tibetans at the local, national and international levels. These processes, in turn, underlie the development of a strong sense of community consciousness. The head and leader of the Tibet Movement, and critical to all the processes so far outlined, though, is the charismatic figure of the Dalai Lama and it is to his role that I now turn.

1.The first Tibetan school opened in the spring of 1960. Today there are over 85 Tibetan schools in India, Nepal and Bhutan with an enrolment of over 27,000 students at primary, middle and secondary levels. In addition, there are 55 pre-primary schools [PC, 1994:116]. Over ten thousand of these students attend schools run by the Tibetan Children's Village situated in different parts of India. In class students are inculcated with a sense of their own history and of their duty to work for the Tibetan people as they learn subjects from both the traditional Tibetan and the modern Indian syllabus [French, 1991:196].

2.Set up in 1959 to preserve the musical, dance and theatrical traditions from Tibet, the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts was the first new institution formed in exile. The Institute trains instructors who are sent out to teach music and the performing arts at schools and settlements throughout India and Nepal [PC, 1994:185]. It is also seen as a means of spreading positive propaganda [Nowak, 1984:115]. International tours have been made to Europe, North America, Southeast Asia and Australia in 1975-76; to Europe in 1986, to Europe and the United States in 1991; and to Italy and Germany in 1994 [McLagen, 1996:384].

The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives was established in 1971 as a repository for ancient cultural objects, books and manuscripts from Tibet. Over the years, the Library has acquired a reputation as an international centre for Tibetan studies. Today, its departments include research and translation; publications, oral history and film documentation; reference; Tibetan studies and Tibetan manuscripts.

Beginning with the establishment of a small dispensary in 1961, today the Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute is a huge complex where the fundamentals of traditional Tibetan medical practice are taught. The TMAI serves the Tibetan community with branch clinics throughout India and Nepal.

3.Tibetan government offices abroad, with dates established in brackets, include: the Bureau of H.H. the Dalai Lama, New Delhi (1959) and Offices of Tibet in Kathmandu (1962), Zurich (1964), New York (1964), Tokyo (1975), London (1982), Geneva (1991), Budapest (1992), Moscow (1992), Paris (1992), and Canberra (1992).

4.The Tibetan Women's Association works for the political freedom and social upliftment of Tibetan women and is also involved with the rehabilitation and education of nuns escaping from Tibet. The Tibetan Youth Congress supports complete independence for Tibet. Founded in 1970, it is a worldwide organization with over ten thousand members. It is the largest and one of the most politically active Tibetan organizations in exile. It also has the reputation for being one of the most radical [TR: June 1998].

5.The Department of Information and International Relations publishes Sheja (monthly in Tibetan), Tibetan Freedom (weekly in Tibetan) and Tibetan Bulletin (bi-monthly in English, Hindi and Chinese) all of which have sections on Tibet, international and Dharamsala news. The Department also produces books, booklets and pamphlets on a variety of Tibetan issues. The Tibet Journal, a scholarly and international journal on Tibetan culture, is published by the Tibetan

Library. Non-governmental publications such as Rangzen (Tibetan and English) published by the TYC and the Tibetan Review (monthly in English) are published from Delhi and provide an important alternative view to the government line [PC, 1994:199].

6.The Tibetan U.S. Resettlement Project for the immigration of 1,000 Tibetans to 15 cluster sites throughout the United States was organized between the Tibetan Resettlement Project Office in New York and the Tibetan government. The resettlement was accomplished through the voluntary efforts of local grassroots community organizations, without any federal financing [TRP, 1992].

7.The five points of the Dalai Lama's peace plan were:
1. Transformation of the whole of Tibet into a zone of peace;
2. Abandonment of China's population transfer policy which threatens the very existence of the Tibetans as a people;
3. Respect for the Tibetan people's fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms;
4. Restoration and protection of Tibet's natural environment and the abandonment of China's use of Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons and dumping of nuclear waste;
5. Commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and on relations between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples [Smith, 1996:601].

NOTE: In June 1988, in an address to the European Parliament at Strasbourg, France, the Dalai Lama attempted to revive negotiations with the PRC by formally accepting the Chinese governments precondition that he "give up the idea of Tibetan independence". This became known as the 'Strasbourg Proposal' [Smith, 1996:608].

THE DALAI LAMA

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Dalai Lama as both unifying leader and respected international figure has played and continues to play a key role in the refugees' ability to flourish in exile. It was largely due to his international stature as a religious leader, for example, that worldwide attention was directed to the plight of Tibetan refugees immediately after 1959 [Nowak, 1984]. And, over the years, the diffusion of Buddhism to the West, together with his growing reputation as a religious leader and man of peace, have been important factors in attracting both the financial and political support of westerners [McLagen, 1996].

In this chapter I focus on the Dalai Lama's unifying role within the Tibetan refugee community itself; on the influence he has on Tibetans in general and on the Tibetans living in Montreal in particular. As we saw in the previous chapter, with the ongoing development of the community, Tibetans now live in many countries throughout the world and the Tibet Movement relies increasingly on the participation of outsiders. There are, moreover, a growing number of factions within the Tibetan diaspora. Most Tibetans, however, have great faith and trust in the Dalai Lama and willingly follow his leadership.

The questions this raises, then, are why do Tibetans feel so strongly about the Dalai Lama and how does he manage to hold the refugee community together under these increasingly difficult conditions? In part, the answer lies with the Dalai Lama's nation-building policies and especially his role as cultural mediator. Indeed, through his openness to new ideas, his willingness to work together with people from many different groups and

nations, and in providing opportunities for Tibetans and Tibetan supporters to engage with one another, the Dalai Lama plays a central role in keeping the refugee community together. His countrymen's willingness to follow him, however, is also based on his spiritual persona and the respect and reverence they feel for him. Before looking at the Dalai Lama's role as a cultural mediator, then, I will attempt to explain what he means to Tibetans and particularly to the Tibetans in Montreal.

The Dalai Lama as a Symbol of Tibet

As spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama is the representative of the Institution of Dalai Lamas, which is unique to Tibet [Malik, 1984:xi]. The sacred continuity of this institution is rooted in the Buddhist belief in reincarnation, the doctrine that after a person dies their soul may return to life in a new body or form. In this cycle of rebirths the ultimate aim is to achieve Nirvana, and this can only be done by leading life after life in line with the high principles of the Buddhist religion [ibid:31]. According to Buddhist teachings, a Buddha is a being who has achieved enlightenment, but who has chosen, for motives of compassion, to postpone his final entry into Nirvana to help all other sentient beings along the path to liberation [ibid:1].

The Dalai Lama is considered to be an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of compassion, and the patron deity of Tibet who has, since mythical times, been reborn in the person of a series of culture heroes [Nowak, 1984:25]. The relatively modern succession of Dalai Lamas, in existence now for 600 years, continues this lineage in contemporary times. At one and the same time, therefore, the Dalai Lama is a direct reincarnation

of his immediate predecessor and an indirect incarnation of Avalokiteshvara. Once properly identified and legitimated as the true reincarnation, moreover, the Dalai Lama's institutionalized charisma is guaranteed [Nowak, 1984:26]. The Dalai Lama's power is not just linked to his being an emanation of Buddha, then; it is also tied to the previous system in Tibet. He is an emanation of Tibet's past whose charisma never dies but is constantly reincarnated and legitimated.

Whilst he lived in Tibet, the Dalai Lama was very rigidly and sacredly guarded. Everywhere he went he was accompanied by a retinue of servants and surrounded by government ministers and advisors; every time he left his palace, he was escorted by a procession of hundreds of people [Gyatso, 1990:2]. He would be seen by the public only at special times such as the occasions on which he presided over important ceremonies or when he moved from the winter to the summer palace [ibid:3]. Today, of course, the Dalai Lama is much more visible not only to Tibetans but to the world as a whole and, when he leaves his compound in Dharamsala, he is accompanied only by a small entourage.

The religious duties of the Dalai Lama include him taking part in the various ceremonies of the traditional Buddhist calendar, giving teachings and occasionally performing a Kalachakra initiation.[1] Over the years, however, and especially since the late 1980s when he took the Tibet issue into the political arena, the Dalai Lama's role has become increasingly political. Today, as head of the Tibet Movement, the organization composed of diasporic Tibetans and their non-Tibetan supporters around the world, he not only travels the world for religious purposes but to give public lectures, to

attend conferences, to take part in discussions on human rights issues, and to discuss the current situation in Tibet with parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations, and government leaders in Washington and Europe [Tibetan Review, July 1998].

As spiritual and political leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama's role is extremely ambiguous. As Nowak points out, his power is both sacred and profane: he is neither wholly out of this world nor wholly enmeshed in it but appears as an ambiguous symbol imbued with the qualities of both [Nowak, 1984:30]. On the one hand he meets presidents and addresses the Congress of the United States, on the other hand he is a Buddhist teacher. As a result, there is always a tension between the two roles: between the constant demand for more decisive action and a concern for preserving intact the central aspects of the Buddhist tradition [McLagen, 1996:394].

For Anthony Cohen (1985), the contradictory nature of the Dalai Lama's role is not a problem. Indeed, for him, an important dimension of a symbol is that it allows for individual interpretation. In being able to attribute different meanings to a symbol, individuals can experience and express their attachment to it without compromising their individuality [Cohen, 1985:15] and the internal diversity of the community is preserved [ibid:18]. As will be evident from the quotes below, however, the Tibetans in Montreal see no ambiguity in the Dalai Lama's dual role. Indeed, to them, he stands for a whole set of relationships. For example, one adult Montreal Tibetan said:

> "The Dalai Lama is not only a person, our teacher in our faith, a guru who plays a very important role in our life as a Buddhist; not only that,

the Dalai Lama as we know him is an institution in the Tibetan nation and it represents the whole of Tibet, it represents our common aspirations."

Another adult Tibetan, for whom her daughter provided translation, said:

"First, I consider him a lama, a god, and I worship him in that sense. Since we lost Tibet I see him as a hope to help free Tibet eventually. He is the only leader Tibet has that most Tibetans revere and will listen to. And he is working hard travelling around the world trying to free Tibet. Essentially in those two ways I regard him. Whether he lives or dies he will continue to be an important thing in my life because of religion and what he represents to me."

Among the younger groups, one youth explained:

"I can't separate him from the Tibetan cause. It seems like he embodies everything about Tibet that I believe in. He's the only, I guess, role model that I look up to because he is so, I think he is close to perfection. Well, because of his ideas on compassion and selflessness and devotion to Buddhism and everything. He touches me in a way that no one else does."

To another youth the Dalai Lama represented:

"A soldier of peace, a man of peace who I have the utmost respect for, a living Buddha, our source of inspiration and our hope that one day Tibet will be a free country."

And for another youth, "he is wisdom personified. That's what I think he is. I'm speechless, I don't know what to say." For the youth who is studying Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama was:

"an example of what all Buddhists should try to achieve, the way to a virtuous life, giving, simple mental tranquility, and wanting to share this with everyone."

Another young Tibetan put it this way:

> "To me, he's like what I want to be, what I try hard to be, the ideal human being, the idea of compassion ... To me he is a teacher, he's our political leader and he, I think, embodies like the whole struggle ... But I don't know if I would say that he is Buddha or I don't know if I would say he was the reincarnation. That I have always had problems with. We either got lucky when we found him or he is (the reincarnation)."

One young man said:

> "He's our leader, the leader of the Tibetan nation, Tibetan people. He represents hope that one day our greatest wish will happen - the liberation of Tibet.".

To the Tibetans in Montreal, then, the Dalai Lama represents many things. He is both human and a god, he is a teacher, he is a world-renouncing monk and a political leader. He is also a divine living symbol of their history and their aspirations for the future. The Dalai Lama is not the first example of a symbol which embodies so much to so many, however. For an earlier interpretation see Eric Wolf's (1958) article on a Mexican national symbol 'The Virgin of Guadalupe'.

If there can be said to be any difference in the way he is regarded within the Tibetan community it is generational or, more specifically, in the very subtle shift in the way in which the youth perceive the relationship between the sacred and profane aspects of the Dalai Lama's role. While still recognizing that there is a relationship between the two, the Dalai Lama is sometimes perceived as more of a symbol of profound wisdom and compassion than as a god. In fact, the distinction is more of a subtle nuance

63

than a change, as although the youth may be less sure than the adult Tibetans about the Dalai Lama being a god, they all recognize the sacred aspect of his character and are willing to leave open the possibility of him being a deity.

We can now understand why the Dalai Lama means so much to Tibetans and, certainly, there is no denying the respect and reverence in which he is held by Tibetans in Montreal nor that he plays a central role in their lives. All community members have at least one picture of him in their home. This takes the place of his presence and gives the house a blessing. A large picture of the Dalai Lama is also put up at many of the community events. At the New Year celebrations, for example, a shrine, complete with offering bowls, a picture of the Dalai Lama, incense, candles and prayer flags, is erected at one end of the hall. Before festivities begin many Tibetans prostrate themselves three times before the shrine and present white scarves as symbols of their respect and devotion. The Dalai Lama's birthday is a national holiday for all Tibetans. Community members celebrate the day by getting together and having a picnic on Ile St Helene. Beforehand a short prayer ceremony for his long life is held in one of their houses in Longueuil. Many Tibetans also awaken before sunset to celebrate the day with special long life prayers and offerings in front of their shrine at home. Indeed, prayers for the Dalai Lama's welfare are a constant aspect of regular worship.

What also comes across in the above quotes is the important role of the Dalai Lama as a unifying force. To Tibetans in Montreal he is a role model, a source of inspiration, the basis for their hopes and, indeed, the only person most Tibetans will listen to. The sentiment of profound respect noted above, may be typical of the special regard Tibetans have for the Dalai Lama; the

question is how does he inspire such ongoing loyalty and commitment in his countrymen after all they have been through and especially in those Tibetans who have established themselves in other countries? To attempt to explain this I will now look at his nation-building activities and particularly his role as a cultural mediator. Since this aspect of his role is based on the Dalai Lama being what Hannerz refers to as a "cosmopolitan", it is to this concept that I will turn first.

The Dalai Lama as Cultural Mediator

Cosmopolitans are defined as individuals who travel the world and who are comfortable in other peoples' cultures as well as in their own They feel like this because they are likely to be 'organization men' [Hannerz, 1996:106] which means that, wherever they travel, their transnational networks and institutions tend to be organized so as to make them feel as much at home as possible [ibid:107]. To be a cosmopolitan, however, it is not enough just to travel. A cosmopolitan must show a willingness and ability to be immersed in alien cultures and this requires a certain level of competence or personal ability [ibid:103]. It also implies personal autonomy with their own culture. The role of cosmopolitans as cultural mediators now becomes clear. Insofar as they have greater access to other cultures than many of their countrymen, they are their informants about the world. Indeed, in this role, they are both a gatekeeper, deciding what gets in and what does not, and an interpreter accepting cultural forms because they realize that, applied to another situation, they may be useful. [Hannerz, 1992:258]. At the same time as being open to new ideas, however, they do not necessarily become committed to them [ibid:259].

From this description it is clear that the Dalai Lama is a prime example of the type of person Hannerz refers to as cosmopolitan. As head of the Tibet Movement he visits many different countries and feels as much at home in London or New York as he does in India. He does this because he is a member of the Tibet Movement and its transnational institutions and networks provide him with a social framework. Indeed, as head of the diaspora, every aspect of his itinerary is arranged for him.

During his travels, the Dalai Lama is willing and more than capable of immersing himself in other cultures and unquestionably he has great competence in his own. Indeed, on these trips, he meets with many different people - scholars, religious heads, intellectuals, government leaders, parliamentarians, the media, human rights and other activists - and speaks about and exchanges views on many different subjects. In Dharamsala, too, foreigners from all walks of life - intellectuals, those interested in studying or practising Buddhism, and the media - come to speak with him. The Dalai Lama's perspective is changed by his many encounters and he draws on those aspects which he thinks may be of use to him as leader of Tibet. At the same time, however, he holds on to those aspects of Tibetan culture which he knows to be beneficial.

The Dalai Lama is a cultural mediator, then, because he has the ability to transform or mediate the views of those around him. As leader of the Tibetan people, of course, his ability to transform their lives is considerable. As he entered exile, for example, aspects of Tibetan culture that the Dalai Lama realized would be useful to the refugees included the performing arts, literature, science and religion as well as crafts from which the refugees could

earn a living [Avedon, 1984:92]. As McLagen notes, the fact that religious preservation received the highest priority is a reflection of its centrality in Tibetan life and the Dalai Lama's recognition that it formed a basis for recreating a collective Tibetan identity in exile [McLagen, 1996:205]. And, indeed, over the years the Dalai Lama's and his government's emphasis on cultural and religious reconstruction has contributed to the emergence of a self-consciousness about Tibetan culture as a potential resource in their struggle to regain their country [ibid:213].

Also recognizing the importance of education for identity, the Dalai Lama asked Tibetan intellectuals for a programme of Tibetan education to be devised [French, 1991:196]. This work laid the foundation for the elaborate system of boarding and day schools that exist on the subcontinent today. (See Chapter 2, note 1). As will be seen later in this thesis, virtually all the adult Tibetans now living in Montreal were part of the refugee community for many years. Many attended the Tibetan schools and a number of them were members of the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts.

The Dalai Lama's attempts to transform the Tibetan Assembly into a more modern, democratic form of government also shapes the lives of Tibetans throughout the diaspora [Nowak, 1984:139]. Today, the government-in-exile is composed of elected members and a democratic constitution is now in place [ibid:140]. For the first time, the Assembly includes two elected members from the Tibetan community in Europe and one from the Tibetan community in North America. Indeed, between 1990 and 1995, the North American Representative was from the Tibetan community in Montreal. Possibly the most radical change the Dalai Lama made in this

respect, though, relates to his own role as political leader. In 1961, in A Draft Constitution for a Future Tibet, he stated that if and when Tibet regains its independence, he will willingly relinguish power to a popularly elected leader [Avedon, 1984:109]. Many Tibetans were extremely unhappy about this and the Dalai Lama had to convince them that it was absolutely necessary not only for the present but also for the future of all the Tibetan people [ibid:109]. More recently, in 1992, the Dalai Lama stated that he would not play any role in the future government of Tibet [DIIR, 1993:38].

Since coming into exile, too, the Dalai Lama has been aware of the importance of establishing connections and working together with different people and organizations throughout the world. His visit to Taiwan in March 1997 and activities such as attending a ceremony at a Chinese Temple in Carmel, upstate New York, are indications of his own efforts in this respect. Whenever he speaks to Tibetans, moreover, he encourages them to do the same (see discussion below). And, as McLagen notes, recasting the Tibet issue to include human rights, environmental and development issues as well as independence, not only increases its visibility, but gives Tibet activists access to international forums from which they would otherwise be excluded [McLagen, 1996:330].

The Dalai Lama's nation-building policy, then, is not limited to the introduction of new ideas. He also provides many opportunities for Tibetans and supporters of Tibet to get together. Other examples include declaring a new national holiday to celebrate the introduction of democracy to the exile community and announcing the 1991/92 Tibetan year to be the 'International Year of Tibet'. Although the stated aim of the latter event was to promote an

understanding and appreciation of Tibetan culture and create widespread awareness of the situation in Tibet, the Dalai Lama realized that the co-ordination of activities throughout the year would bring Tibetans and Tibet supporters together. These groups also come together when the Dalai Lama, government ministers, high lamas and other representatives of Tibetan institutions visit the Tibetan communities throughout the diaspora. Indeed, when these representatives, especially the Dalai Lama, are invited abroad to attend a particular event, the Tibetan community in that country takes advantage of their presence to organize additional activities. To illustrate what this involved during one of the Dalai Lama's trips to Canada, I look briefly at his trip to Montreal in 1993.

In June 1993, the Dalai Lama was invited to Montreal to take part in a three-day international symposium on Suffering and Death [CTCNL: Winter 1992]. When the Tibetan community was informed of this, an Organizing Committee comprising community members, Canada-Tibet Committee members, Buddhist organizations and individual volunteers was formed to prepare for the visit. Prior to the Dalai Lama's arrival, the Committee's duties included planning a programme of activities to fit around the Dalai Lama's official engagements, arranging accommodation, and organizing fund-raising and publicity [CTCNL: Spring 1993; Fall 1993]. A thirty-page document, Tibet Brief: Background Information about Tibet, was published for the visit.

A Tibet supporter told me what happened while the Dalai Lama was in Montreal. During the visit itself, members of the Committee were involved in preparing food, and providing security and transport. The Dalai Lama and his

69

entourage (about eight individuals) stayed at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel. A kitchen was set up in an adjacent room and the Tibetan community prepared food for the Dalai Lama, his entourage and all volunteers. Security duties included guarding the Dalai Lama's suite throughout the night, manning hotel lobbies, and controlling crowds at the various events. Two cars transported the Dalai Lama and his entourage from one engagement to another. In addition to the official symposium, these included conducting an interfaith service, giving public teachings on Tibetan Buddhist traditions, speaking to the Vietnamese community, attending meetings with Canadian non-governmental organizations and holding a private audience for Tibetans [ibid:21].

Indeed, because of what he represents to them, Tibetans will travel hundreds of miles to see the Dalai Lama. Tibetans from Montreal, for example, tell me that they have travelled to New York and New Jersey on several occasions, as well as to Indiana, Middlebury, Vermont, and Boston. When he held an audience for Tibetans in Boston in 1995, approximately 500 Tibetans from all parts of the United States and Canada attended (McLelland, 1985; Darguay, 1989). Events taking place on the Asian subcontinent naturally attract larger numbers of Tibetans. Any teaching given by the Dalai Lama, especially the Kalachakra, for example, is considered to be highly auspicious. In 1994, when he performed a Kalachakra initiation in Mundgod, a Tibetan settlement in South India, 50,000 Tibetans were present [McLagen, 1996:471]. A six-day teaching at Bodh Gaya, northern India, in January 1998 was attended by fifteen thousand Tibetans, some coming from Tibet, and hundreds of western students [TFNL: March 1998]. When

70

community members visit family members on the Indian subcontinent, they often attend one of the Dalai Lama's teachings.

As McLagen notes, these, and indeed any event which brings Tibetans and Tibet supporters together, are significant because they are social occasions [McLagen, 1996:470; see also French, 1991:194]. By attending a Kalachakra or an audience with the Dalai Lama, not only do Tibetans and Tibet supporters see the Dalai Lama, they also meet up with old friends. As one young community member, Miss H, explained to me after listening to the Dalai Lama at Boston in 1995:

> "Everybody goes off in their own direction, everybody talks, stands around. You see all these people you haven't seen, that you wouldn't see otherwise, unless it was for an event like this."

And when she went to see the Dalai Lama in upstate New York in 1997, Mrs A told me that she met two friends from Ontario, a cousin from Boston and a lady she originally knew in India but who is now living in Boston. Such social engagement is important as, through it, a sense of community consciousness and affiliation with the larger organization is formed. The implications of social engagement for identity will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

In addition to the mediating strategies discussed above, whenever the Dalai Lama speaks to Tibetans, he reminds them of their responsibilities and encourages them to develop links with other groups. He also endeavours to address matters of concern to them. To illustrate this, I look briefly at an audience the Dalai Lama gave for Tibetans in 1997. In May 1997, approximately eighteen community members, eight adults and ten youths,

travelled to Carmel in upstate New York to see the Dalai Lama who was attending the inauguration of a Chinese Buddhist Temple and giving a three-day teaching. After the inauguration ceremony he held an audience for Tibetans. About 500 Tibetans were present. The meeting lasted for about an hour and the Dalai Lama spoke in Tibetan. I asked two individuals, one adult and one youth, what the Dalai Lama said. According to Mrs A, the Dalai Lama began by addressing the younger generation and saying how important it was for them to practise their religion and help preserve the Tibetan culture. Apparently, so Miss P told me, the Dalai Lama always reminds the younger Tibetans of this:

> "He always talks about it to the younger ones - how important it is to maintain our language. He always says that because without our language and our culture then there's no point in returning to Tibet."

The Dalai Lama then spoke about his trip to Taiwan and the situation with regard to the Panchen Lama. Recently returned from his first visit to Taiwan[2], he told the Tibetans that the trip had been a great success. He explained that although the visit had been essentially for religious purposes he had met with the Taiwanese Minister and that they were hoping to establish friendly ties. Still referring to this visit, Miss P told me that the Dalai Lama went on to say:

> ".... how that a decade ago nobody would have thought of going to Taiwan and trying to create links with them but now, with globalization, things have changed so drastically and it's important to keep these links."

And that is why, according to Miss P, the Dalai Lama explained his presence at the Chinese Temple. He said:

"I've been surrounded by all of these Chinese for a couple of days but you have to do it, you have to maintain ties with them because it's not the Chinese people that we dislike, it's the government. I want you all to follow that example."

With regard to the Panchen Lama situation,[3] the Dalai Lama told the Tibetans that although the matter was receiving a lot of international support there was little they could do at the moment. He said that he was working hard to find the Panchen Lama's whereabouts and was praying for him and that all Tibetans could do at the moment was hope for his safety. The Dalai Lama then went on to reassure the Tibetans that if the situation in Tibet had not improved by the time he dies, the next Dalai Lama would be an even stronger advocate for Tibet. He reassured them that he would not be reincarnated in Chinese-occupied Tibet and that, therefore, there would not be a Panchen Lama situation.[4] At this point, Mrs A told me, everyone cried as they were so relieved. (For a report on this speech see TFNL: July 1998).

Miss P said that the Dalai Lama also spoke at length about the forthcoming referendum[5] and the different opinions that were circulating in the Tibetan community about it. According to her the Dalai Lama:

"made his point very clear that when it comes down to it he's not asking for independence. And he says he knows people who are upset about this but he feels that at this point in time there is no other option but to ask for autonomy not complete independence or else we'll have no chance at all."

The Dalai Lama ended his talk by asking Tibetans to "continue with their religion, to continue treating people with kindness and compassion and not to forget the suffering and hardship in Tibet". In Mrs A's words, he said: "Wherever you happen to be living try to be good citizens and live co-

73

operatively with people. Do not forget the kindness of governments helping us." The Dalai Lama's views and sentiments are echoed by government ministers as well as other representatives of Tibetan institutions when they visit Tibetan communities throughout the diaspora. His speeches and statements are also published in Tibetan government publications and in a wide range of non-governmental publications throughout the diaspora.

Summary

The Dalai Lama plays a pivotal role in holding the refugee community together. It is a community which, over the years, has become increasingly dispersed and heavily reliant on the participation of westerners and in which there are a growing number of factions. He is able to do this because of what he represents to Tibetans and through his nation-building activities, especially in his role as a cultural mediator.

As religious and political leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama sums up and expresses for Tibetans the meaning of 'Tibetanness' in a powerfully affective way. At one and the same time he may be a god and a human being, a simple monk and their political leader, their link to the past as well as their hopes for the future. As a result, Tibetans have profound respect for, and trust in, the Dalai Lama and are willing to follow his lead. And indeed, through his mediating activities, he is able to influence them in a number of ways. By retaining the central aspects of Tibetan culture, through his openness to new ideas, and with his willingness and ability to work with others, the Dalai Lama has not only been extremely successful in making many friends and attracting western support to the Tibetan cause, but in creating a positive image for Tibetans throughout the diaspora.

Through his mediating activities, the Dalai Lama is.also setting the terms of reference for being Tibetan in the contemporary world; and, in particular, with respect to this study, he is showing community members how to be Tibetan in Montreal. This is achieved not only by Tibetans retaining a clear sense of their cultural identity but through working together with other individuals and organizations and making use of modern technology. Given the dispersed nature of the diaspora, moreover, providing Tibetans with the opportunity of getting together with other Tibetans and Tibet supporters, the Dalai Lama is giving them the opportunity to establish and maintain relationships with one another and with the larger organization.

Finally, whenever the Dalai Lama speaks to Tibetans, he reminds them of their responsibilities and encourages them to follow his lead. He also tries to address their concerns. At the present time this includes assuaging their increasing frustration over the lack of progress in the Tibet issue and disagreement with his decision to seek autonomy rather than complete independence for their country. Through his various activities, the Dalai Lama thus mediates Tibetans' engagement with one another and with the west. How this has affected the Tibetan community in Montreal is the subject of the next chapter.

1.An elaborate spiritual ritual and a powerful force for the realization of world peace, the Kalachakra initiation is the most sacred of all Tibetan teachings and can only be performed by a Dalai Lama [Kenadi, 1995:67]. Over the years the Dalai Lama has performed Kalachakra initiations on the Indian subcontinent at Bodh Gaya (1974 and 1985), Sarnath (1990), Sikkim (1993), Mundgod, South India (1994), and Tavo, near the Tibetan border (1996), and abroad in Switzerland (1985), the United States (1981, 1989, 1991) and Taiwan (1997).

2.In March 1997 the Dalai Lama made a six-day visit to Taiwan. Although he claimed that it was primarily of a religious nature, the Chinese authorities were extremely displeased accusing the Dalai Lama of actively working for Tibetan independence [Tibetan Review, August 1998]. (Historically Taiwan, like China, has claimed that Tibet is a part of China. China would, therefore, have been concerned at the possible undermining of this commonly held position.) Tibetans throughout the diaspora were concerned for the welfare of the Dalai Lama during the trip.

3.The 10th Panchen Lama, besides being Tibet's second most senior religious leader, became the most important Tibetan leader after the Dalai Lama fled to exile in 1959, and was the intermediary on whom the Chinese authorities most relied to obtain the support of the Tibetan people. When he died in January, 1989, the Chinese authorities began the process to find his successor. At one stage they even allowed a request to be sent to the Dalai Lama for his 'guidance' in the search but when in May 1995, the Dalai Lama recognized five-year old Gendhun Choekyi Nyima as the rightful successor, the Chinese authorities reacted with profound hostility including the arrests of Gendhun Choekyi Nyima and his family. In November 1995, a child recognized by the Chinese authorities was enthroned as the next Panchen Lama. Since 1995, although the Chinese government has admitted taking the boy, his whereabouts remain unknown.

4.Traditionally, since the 17th century, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama have played a role in confirming the selection of each other's successor. If the Panchen Lama is still in Chinese hands when the present Dalai Lama passes away, this would give the Chinese authorities control over the selection of his incarnation.

5.Many Tibetans are not happy with the Dalai Lama's proposal for autonomy instead of full independence for Tibet and there is also a growing frustration among the exile community, particularly the youth, at the deteriorating situation in their country and lack of progress toward resolving the issue. In 1988, this sense of frustration led the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) to launch a hunger-strike-till-death which only came to a halt when the Dalai Lama personally wrote (unknown to the TYC leaders) to each of the 16 hunger strikers, directing them to give up their fast [Tibetan Review, August 1998]. Indeed, aware that some of his people see his offer for autonomy as unacceptable, the Dalai Lama proposed that a referendum to determine the basic aim of the Tibetan struggle and the means to achieve it should be held.

In the event, however, the referendum which was due to take place in the latter part of 1997, was cancelled. Tibetans in exile would have been asked to choose between four options:
- independence;
- self-determination according to guidelines to be set by United Nations organizations;
- genuine autonomy for a united Tibet with China maintaining responsibility for defence and foreign affairs. This is the Dalai Lama's middle-way approach;
- satyagraha - a Gandhian-style, peaceful resistance whereby Tibetans will enter Tibet and carry out peaceful protests demanding rights such as the right to education, removal of racial discrimination and the teaching of the Tibetan language.

NOTE: In March 1998 the TYC launched another unto-death hunger strike. This time, the TYC asked the Dalai Lama not to intervene [Tibetan Review, June 1998]. The fast was forcefully stopped by the Indian police on its 48th day.

TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

As I noted in the Introduction, Tibetan refugees first arrived in Quebec as part of a negotiated resettlement scheme in the early 1970s. After some months at the Centre D'Orientation et de Formation des Immigrants at Lapraire they were found accommodation and placed in textile and service sector jobs, some in Montreal and a few in the Eastern Townships. In time, most of the families sent to the Eastern Townships moved back to Montreal to join the other Tibetans. Since then, the Tibetans have built themselves a life in the city, establishing homes and raising families. Many have brought family members over to join them, while a number of other families have also joined the community.

What we also saw in the introductory chapter is that the Tibetans in Montreal retain a strong sense of community consciousness and an on-going commitment to the Tibetan struggle. Beyond this, their efforts on behalf of Tibet have led directly to their participation in a wide range of activities not only in Montreal but throughout the Tibetan diaspora. A number of questions arise here - above all, why, after all they have been through, and especially now that they have made their lives in Canada, do the Tibetans in Montreal maintain such a strong commitment to their country? And, moreover, given the small size of the community, how are they able to undertake such a varied range of activities?

The answer to both questions can be explained by the fact that the community in Montreal forms an integral part of this large transnational organization, the Tibet Movement, an organization which, as we have seen, is

headed by the Dalai Lama and composed of diasporic Tibetans and their non-Tibetan supporters around the world (McLagen, 1996). As part of this, the Tibetans in Montreal are in constant communication with the other members; they share information, contacts, and expertise, plan joint strategies and work together on activities of a national and global nature.

In this chapter, I examine the wide range of links the Tibetan community in Montreal has with the Tibet Movement and the effect of these connections on the social organization of the community. The ways in which they manage to participate in such a wide range of activities will then become clear, while the question of why they sustain their commitment is addressed in the following chapter. To place the community in the wider context, I also look at the migration experiences of some community members. Before doing so, however, let us look at the composition of the community itself.

Demographic Factors

The Tibetan community in Montreal has approximately ninety members, comprising 21 families and a number of other individuals. More than half are over thirty years of age, nineteen are between 18 and 30 and 22 are eighteen and under. Eleven of the 21 families form part of the original group; of the remainder, the majority arrived through family reunification programmes in the early 1980s. One exception is a Tibetan who was sponsored by the Rigpe Dorje Centre, a Buddhist centre in Montreal, so that his daughter could receive medical treatment. They arrived in 1990 and his wife and four remaining children joined them in 1995. Another is the dancing instructor and his family who decided to settle in Montreal because of family friends in the city (see below). Indeed, with individuals moving to and from

Montreal to take up jobs or go to university, together with movement among the Tibetan communities in Canada and the United States, there is constant change within the community.

The majority of Tibetans initially arriving in Quebec were already married to other Tibetans. At least two community members have since married Tibetans from the refugee community on the Indian subcontinent. Several others, including one who arrived on the initial scheme and some youths who arrived here in their teens, have since married non-Tibetans of Lebanese, Indian and French Canadian descent. One member, who joined the community in the 1980s, came to Montreal with his Canadian wife whom he met in Dharamsala.

Over half the community (15 families), including all but one of the families arriving on the original scheme, now live in Longueuil. This is the area where several Tibetan families were housed when they first left the Centre D'Orientation et de Formation des Immigrants (COFI), and where the Tibetans moving to Montreal from the Eastern Townships and sponsored family members have come to live since. The remaining families live on the island of Montreal, three in Outremont, three in Notre-Dame-de-Grace (NDG), and a number of single Tibetans live in the city centre. Several families own their own homes.

When the Tibetans left COFI, they were placed in entry-level jobs in the textile and service industries. As further family members arrived they were often found jobs within the same company. Today, several adult Tibetans are now retired but many still work in the same or similar types of jobs. Mrs A, for example, told me that she worked in a clothing factory for

seven and a half years and when it closed found a similar job in another factory. Seven Tibetans work for this latter company today. Mr E has worked at the same factory since he arrived in Montreal over twenty years ago. When I was speaking with Mr B, however, he told me that he had just lost his job at a hat company. Two of the adult Tibetans I spoke with arrived in Montreal with some qualifications, Ms F is a manager in an import company and Mr D runs his own restaurant.

Some of the young Tibetans also work in the service industry, mainly in restaurants and hotels but several have attended or are attending college or university and now work in a number of diverse areas. Of the younger people I spoke with, Ms G and Ms H are at university, Mr J works as a researcher and editorial assistant, Ms P is an on-call nurse, Mr L is a computer programmer, Ms M works part-time as a video store supervisor, and Mr K is a banquet porter in a hotel. The youngest Tibetan I spoke with, Mr N, has just dropped out of his courses at Champlain College, but he tells me that he is thinking of going to nightschool to get the prerequisites for a computer science course.

From the above we can gain some sense of the community and its varied life activities in Montreal. Now, to place community members into a wider context and so expand our understanding of their transnational links, I will consider their migration experiences.

Migration Experiences and Family Connections

As I noted in Chapter One, when the Dalai Lama was forced to flee Tibet in 1959, thousands of Tibetans followed him into exile. Most of the adult Tibetans now living in Montreal were part of that exodus. Mrs A, for

81

example, was just 14 when she left Tibet in 1960. With her daughter providing the translation, she recounted to me how she, her mother and three younger siblings fled from one end of their village as the Chinese approached firing their guns at the other:

> "It was getting dark and everyone was running in every direction. There was a lot of confusion. A lot of people were shot. My house was one of the few on the outer edge so we already had an advantage. A lot of people drowned, they fell in the river. It was because they were crossing a bridge and there wasn't enough space on the bridge for everyone so some people jumped off. They attempted to swim but they couldn't, some drowned. Some were children."

Mrs A and her family then walked for four and a half days over the Himalayas. They travelled by night and slept in the day, when they would hide in caves and behind big rocks. Her two older brothers who were monks, and her father, an ex-monk, had already left in fear of their lives. Again, in her own words translated by her daughter, she recalled how she felt:

> "My father wasn't there and everything, we were all crying, we were really sad. I don't remember much but I remember a lot of worry and I remember not being able to eat or sleep properly and thinking that I won't get reunited with my father and brothers.... I remember a lot of frostbite and blisters. We didn't have any mitts or hats so we tore cloth off our shirts to cover our heads and hands. A lot of snow I remember. We didn't have any water so we would take snow, and mix it with the tsampa (Tibetan barley) and eat it."

She was lucky; unlike many others, all her family survived the crossing and were reunited in Nepal where they lived in a tent refugee camp for eighteen months. But, as there was no work there, they then walked to Katmandu where they spent a few months before joining a group of Tibetans from their village and travelling to Dharamsala. By this time the Tibetan

82

government-in-exile had founded the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) (see Chapter 2, note 1). She and one of her sisters were sent to a branch of the TCV in Mussorie, a brother went to a branch in Simla and her two youngest siblings to the main branch in Dharamsala. When I asked her how she felt at the school, Mrs A said that she had been "really relieved and happy there because they provided beds and food". Her parents had no money and they and her two older brothers who were considered too old for school, were sent to join road construction gangs in northern India.

After six and a half years in Mussorie, Mrs A was sent to Simla where she trained to be a nanny. She then followed a friend to Delhi where she found a job working for an American family. Here she met her husband who was working for a neighbouring family. While visiting her parents in Dharamsala they heard about the Canadian Resettlement Scheme. The immigration process took two years and she and her husband finally arrived in Canada in March 1971.

Four of the six adult Tibetans I spoke with had arrived in India as young children and the experience of spending several years in refugee camps, of families being split up with children sent to Tibetan schools and parents to work on road construction, was a common one. What they did after leaving Tibetan school varies, however. When he left school, for example, Mr D attended a special Tibetan administration training school in Delhi. After two years' intensive training he went to South India to work in a Tibetan settlement which was just being established. Two years later he moved to a settlement near Dharamsala where he stayed for three years. In 1971, at the invitation of friends, Mr D travelled to the United States where

83

he worked on an English-Tibetan language project for four years and became a U.S. citizen. But, wishing to join family members, Mr D applied to come to Canada. The immigration process took several years and he eventually arrived in Quebec in 1981. He then lived with family members in the Eastern Townships for ten years before moving with some of them to Montreal in 1991.

When Mrs C left school in 1970 she joined the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) (see Chapter 2, note 2). During her ten years with the group she travelled extensively around India giving performances. While in Dharamsala she met her husband who was working for an eminent lama. Sponsored by his sister, he came to Montreal in 1980 and Mrs C and their children joined him a year later. In fact, several of the Tibetans now living in Montreal were members of the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts.

Mr B, for example, told me that he was one of the founding members of TIPA. During his nearly thirty years with the group he travelled extensively around India and abroad to Europe, North America, Australia and Singapore teaching and giving performances. While with TIPA he met his wife who was also a member of the group. Mr B first arrived in Canada in 1989. Funded by the Department of Multiculturalism, he came here to teach Tibetan dance and music to the Tibetan communities in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. He also gave performances in Canada and the United States. While travelling across the country, Mr B met up with a lot of friends, ex-members of TIPA and at their suggestion applied for Canadian citizenship. His papers came through in 1993 and his wife and four children joined him in 1994.

Although many of the adult Tibetans in Montreal left Tibet as children, others were already adults when the uprising occurred. Mr E, for example, was in his late twenties and he had been a monk for seventeen years, but disrobed to marry and had a wife and child. He arrived in India with no money, nothing. When I asked if he remembered how he felt at that time he said that he recalled feeling, "totally lost but relieved that we (his family) had escaped, that we had been able to save ourselves. Not having any money was nothing compared to being alive". Living with his sister in India at first, he supported his family in any way he could. After several years as a trader selling butter, meat and Chinese radishes, he and some Tibetan friends formed a song and dance troupe and travelled around the country giving performances. When this did not work out he became a trader once more. The majority of Mr E's time was spent in Mussorie where there was a branch of the TCV. Two of his children were born here. He told me that he heard about the Resettlement Scheme from a friend and he, his wife and children came to Canada in 1971.

Having studied background information on the occupation of Tibet and a range of literature on the refugee situation, I had assumed that all the original Tibetans in Montreal had arrived as part of the resettlement scheme. And, indeed, nothing I had been told about the community had suggested anything different. I was therefore surprised when I discovered that one of the Tibetans I spoke with did not come to Canada in this manner. Ms F was born in India and has Indian citizenship. Her mother was a second-generation Tibetan born in India. her father was a monk from Tibet before he disrobed to marry. Keen to join her sister who was living in Montreal, Ms F asked for

her sponsorship. At the time she was in college but she discontinued her studies while waiting for her papers. The process took so long, however, that she then spent one and a half years taking a secretarial course and learning some French and then worked in Katmandu for three years. She finally arrived in Montreal in 1984.

As a result of their migration experiences, many community members now have relatives living in a number of different countries throughout the world. Many of their relatives live in the exile community in India and the neighbouring countries of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, and some have families living in countries such as Switzerland, Holland, Japan, China and the United States. Indeed, several community members have relatives and friends who came to the United States on the recent Tibetan U.S. Resettlement Project (see Chapter 2, note 6).

As with the immigrants studied by Basch and her colleagues, the Tibetans in Montreal are in touch with many of these relatives (Basch et al, 1994; also Glick Schiller et al, 1992). Their connections are sustained by letters, telephone calls, remittances and visits. Letters are the most common form of communication, especially with family members in India, the majority of whom do not own a telephone. Remittances are sent for living expenses as well as to support relatives studying in monasteries. Although they do not make the frequent trips of many of the transmigrants referred to by Basch, all the adult Tibetans I spoke with have been back to India at least once since they arrived in Canada and two have made a return trip to Tibet. Of the younger people, five have been to India and one has travelled within Tibet. These visits will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Occasionally, family members from other countries also come to stay with community members in Montreal.

Political Connections

As I noted earlier, in contrast to the immigrants studied in much transnational research to date (Rouse, 1991; Feldman-Bianco, 1992; Basch et al 1994; Amit-Talai, 1998; Sassen, 1988), the Tibetans in Montreal are not labour migrants so much as political refugees who have been forced to leave their country as a result of its occupation by a foreign power. Consequently, while they do maintain links with their families, the majority of their connections are maintained less to support family members or to provide a safety net for themselves in their new home (Canada), than as part of their long-distance nationalism (see Anderson, 1994) in support of their government's attempt to regain the independence of their country.

As we have seen, as religious and political leader of Tibet and head of the Tibet Movement, the Dalai Lama and his nation-building policies are key to explaining what is going on here. As with the political leaders discussed by Basch et al (1994), the Dalai Lama keeps in touch with his dispersed populations in a variety of ways including via a computer network, through his visits and those of government ministers and representatives of other Tibetan institutions, through government offices and representatives abroad, and through conferences and government publications.

The Dalai Lama has visited Canada three times - Vancouver (1980), Toronto and Ottawa (1990) and Montreal (1993) and the local community members saw him when he visited Montreal and Ottawa. Since the arrival of a large number of Tibetans in the United States in the early 1990s, the number

87

of Tibet-related groups has proliferated [McLagen, 1996:272]. With many influential non-governmental organizations and especially with the presence of Congress in Washington, DC, the Dalai Lama is periodically invited to the United States and, as we saw in Chapter 3, whenever possible Montreal community members also travel to see him there.

The last visit by a minister of the Tibetan government-in-exile was that of Professor Samdhong Rinpoche in 1997 who visited Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver to discuss his campaign proposal for a 'Non-violent Satyagraha Movement' [CTCNL: Fall 1997]. In 1993 Chief Cabinet Minister, Tenzin N Tethon came to Montreal to announce the establishment of a New Tibet Fund to aid newly-arrived Tibetan refugees in India [CTCNL: Winter 1994] while in 1991, Gyalo Dhondup, Chief Cabinet Minister and older brother of the Dalai Lama, visited Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto [CTCNL: Fall 1991].

Individuals and representatives from other Tibetan institutions and non-governmental organizations also pass through Montreal. From time to time, for example, an eminent Lama visits to give a teaching or a group of monks or nuns come to give performances to raise funds for their monastery. Previous fund-raising and/or awareness raising visits include those of the President of the Tibetan Youth Congress (1990), the President of the Tibetan's Women's Association (1993), and a number of nuns who have escaped from Tibet, including one who is now co-ordinator of the Tibetan Nun's Project (1993 and 1998). In May 1996 the Venerable Palden Gyatso, a 65 year-old Tibetan monk imprisoned by the Chinese for 33 years, visited Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto as part of a North American speaking tour [CTCNL: Fall 1996].

Two years later he returned to Montreal to receive the 1998 John Humphries Freedom Award presented by the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development at a special ceremony to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [CTCNL: Fall 1998].

The Tibetan Government has offices in several different countries [PC, 1994: 212a] and the Tibetan community in Montreal is in regular contact with the one based in New York (see below). For the past five years, moreover, a member of the community has been the North American Representative of the Tibetan Assembly of People's Deputies (government-in-exile) [CTCNL: Spring 1991]. As such, he told me that his responsibilities include travelling to Dharamsala to attend government meetings and visiting his constituents, the various Tibetan communities throughout North America, to keep them informed about government activities. As with other immigrant groups, holding such a position is not seen as contradicting the individual's status as a citizen of the host country [Basch, 1994:125; Foner, 1997].

A number of Tibet conferences have also been held over the years. These include several International Conferences of Tibet Support Groups as well as conferences organized for Tibetans and Tibet supporters in particular areas of the world. Government ministers usually attend these meetings and the Dalai Lama is often the keynote speaker [for example, see CTCNL: Fall 1996]. The President of the Canada-Tibet Committee (see below), who is also the North American Government Representative mentioned above, has participated in Tibet Support Group Conferences in Dharamsala (1990), San Francisco (1992) and Germany (1996). He and other members of the

community including one adult and five of the youths I spoke to, have attended Tibet Conferences in the United States. In addition, every community member I spoke to said that they or a family member receive at least one Tibetan Government publication while some individuals also subscribe to publications put out by Tibetan non-governmental organizations such as the Tibetan Womens' Association or to a publication such as Tibet Press Watch published by the Indiana-based 'International Campaign of Tibet'.

The purpose of these connections, of course, is to foster the loyalty and continuing support of the dispersed community (Glick Schiller et al, 1992; Basch et al, 1994:270). Through these various links community members and their supporters are kept up-to-date with government plans and events taking place throughout the Tibet Movement as well as being reminded of the central role of Tibetan culture in the struggle. And, like the Haitians in New York City [Basch et al, 1994; Foner, 1997], community members and their supporters in Montreal respond to these nation-building policies by engaging in a wide range of supporting activities. They attend meetings, hold demonstrations and prayer vigils, give public lectures on the situation in Tibet, organize public talks by visiting Tibetans, give Tibetan song and dance performances, and organize and attend religious teachings. They also organize letter writing and boycott campaigns and meet with officials in Federal Government departments such as External Affairs and the Human Rights Section in particular.

Demonstrations I have attended over the years, for example, include one protesting the treatment of Tibetan Women at the Beijing NGO Forum

(1995), and another outside the Holiday Inn protesting against its partnership with the Chinese Government in the ownership of a hotel in Lhasa (1997). I have also participated in a prayer vigil for the missing Panchen Lama (1995) (see Chapter 3, note 3). The community organizes demonstrations when Chinese government officials visit Montreal as well as prayer vigils for imprisoned Tibetans and similar activities often take place simultaneously in other cities across Canada and the United States.

Indeed, with the relative proximity of Montreal to the United States, community members and Tibet supporters occasionally attend or assist at events organized by Tibetan communities and Tibet support groups in the United States. In 1997 and 1998, for example, Tibet supporters and youths from the community travelled to New York and Washington, DC to work as volunteers at Tibetan Freedom Concerts.[1] In 1997, a member of the community took part in 'A March for Freedom', an eight-hundred mile Toronto to New York walkathon organized by the Indiana-based International Tibet Independence Movement.[2]

Tibetans in Montreal regularly celebrate the principal Tibetan national holidays - Losar (Tibetan New Year), the March 10th anniversary of the Lhasa Uprising (see Introduction), the Dalai Lama's birthday (July 6), and Democracy Day (2 September) which marks the anniversary of the introduction of democracy into the exile community. I have attended the first three events, the first two several times. To celebrate the Tibetan New Year (February/March - date varies) the community hires a hall in Longueuil and organizes a party to which non-Tibetan supporters may attend - tickets are sold to cover the cost of food - and to which special guests are invited.

Guests may include representatives from the Canadian and Provincial governments (Heritage Canada and the Department of Multiculturalism), representatives from any organization which has helped the community during the past year and Canada-Tibet Committee officers (see below). A short prayer service opens the event and is followed by traditional singing and dancing and finally by a delicious Tibetan meal, to which every Tibetan family contributes. To celebrate the Dalai Lama's birthday and Democracy Day, the Tibetans hold a picnic on Ile St Helene in Montreal to which members of the Canada-Tibet Committee are also invited.

Community Associations

Again, like many of the transmigrants studied by Basch et al (1994), the Tibetans in Montreal can call upon several associations to help them organize their activities. These are the Cultural Association (CA), a Dance Group, the Tibetan Temple and the Canada-Tibet Committee (CTC), the political organization of the community. There is also a branch of the Tibetan Women's Association, the headquarters of which is in Dharamsala. With the small size of the community in Montreal, however, this organization is not active because the women already help out with the other activities.

Although similar groups exist in other Tibetan communities across Canada, the Tibetan Cultural Association of Quebec is an independent association which was founded in 1976 by western students studying Tibetan Buddhism and handed over to the community in the same year.[3] Entirely self-funded, the Association is responsible for dealing with all issues concerning the community. In the mid-1970s, for example, concerned that the younger Tibetans would grow up knowing little about their culture, the CA organized

a weekly school for them.[4] Whenever necessary, and certainly before the major community events, members meet to discuss strategy. Although every Tibetan is automatically a member of the Association, I have been told that because of past disagreements, not all attend. It is mainly the older Tibetans who attend these meetings, moreover, as the younger people find them too long winded - a fact also noted by McLagen [1996:264]. The youths are encouraged to participate, however, and it is they who help with arrangements such as organizing the travelling arrangements for the March 10th rally, trips to see the Dalai Lama, and renting space for the New Year celebrations.

The Association is also the contact point for the community. If the Office of Tibet in New York has information for the community or a request they wish to make of it, they contact the President or Vice President who in turn passes it on to community members. Similarly, the President of the Canada-Tibet Committee told me that, if he has information for, or needs the assistance of, community members, he contacts the President of the Cultural Association. The CA is also responsible for collecting the 'voluntary tax' from community members and sending it to the Office of Tibet in New York. Some families prefer to send their payment direct to the New York Office, however.

It also co-ordinates the activities of the Tibetan Dance Group established in 1976 with the opening of the Tibetan school. With the arrival of several ex-TIPA members in Montreal and the younger children now growing up, the Dance Group currently has three levels - adults, youths and children. Three of the adults and five of the youths I interviewed are members of this

group. In addition to community events, the Dance Group performs at a number of cultural and fund-raising events throughout the year, sometimes alongside the activities of visiting Tibetans. In the past, these performances have taken them to Vermont and as far south as Boston and New York. When community members gather for Cultural Association meetings, to meet visiting ministers and lamas, for dance practice, or even religious ceremonies, they use the basement of one of their member's houses in Longueuil which the Association rents.

The **Tibetan Temple** is now situated in Verdun on the Island of Montreal. For the first fourteen years after the arrival of the Tibetans in Montreal, however, Geishe Kenhrab, the lama who accompanied them, lived in Longueuil where many of them were resident. In 1986, mainly for financial reasons, the Temple moved to Verdun and in 1993 Geishe Kenhrab died.[5] Today, the Temple is run by western students and serves mainly a western congregation, although some from the Tibetan community still attend as do members of the Vietnamese community. The Temple celebrates the principal Buddhist festivals and organizes a variety of events including special meditation sessions, retreats and teachings. From time to time, and for a special occasion, the Temple invites a lama from India or from a Buddhist Centre elsewhere in Canada or the United States to offer a teaching.

The **Canada-Tibet Committee** (CTC) was formed in 1987 to create a structure within which Canadians could work together with their Tibetan friends on behalf of the cause [Samdup, 1996: 20]. When Bill - not his real name, a Canadian, saw what was happening in Tibet, he realized that the issues - cultural genocide, human rights abuses, environmental destruction -

94

were so clear cut that starting a group to respond to them just seemed the most appropriate action.

Based in Montreal and with branches in St John's (Newfoundland), Ottawa, Toronto, Sarnia (Ontario), Calgary, Edmonton (Alberta), Regina (Saskatchewan), Vancouver, Victoria and Golden (British Columbia), the CTC is a voluntary organization sustained by donations, grants, fundraising and membership campaigns. Fundraising events include film festivals and comedy shows and the annual Tibetan Bazaar. To publicize the situation in Tibet, the CTC publishes a variety of leaflets on different aspects of Tibet as well as putting out its own quarterly newsletter, the Canada-Tibet Newsletter.

At present (1999) the CTC has approximately three hundred members throughout Canada. Every Tibetan family is represented, in many cases by more than one family member. As they are more comfortable speaking English or French and dealing in the Canadian political arena, it is the younger people who help out with many of the activities, whose objectives are to stop the ongoing destruction of the Tibetan culture, to end human rights abuse in Tibet and to restore Tibet to its status as an independent state [Samdup, 1998:16]. Although the Committee recognizes the government-in-exile as the legitimate representative of the Tibetan people, it functions as an independent non-governmental organization [ibid:16].

To organize and sponsor its political activities, the CTC works closely with community associations and Tibet supporters both in Montreal and across Canada. Its branches, in conjunction with the Tibetan communities across Canada, also sponsor and play host to visitors from the diaspora - the CTC President explained to me that when a government minister or other

95

representative from the refugee community in India is to tour the United States, the CTC also invites them to visit the Tibetan communities in Canada. While in Montreal, the CTC in Montreal is responsible for all arrangements such as accommodation, transport and arranging the visitor's itinerary. In addition to his meeting with the Tibetan community (see Introduction), for example, Professor Samdhong Rinpoche, gave a public lecture on his campaign proposal, held meetings with government officials in Ottawa, met with the Chief of the First Nations, and was interviewed by the media [CTCNL: Fall 1997]. Visitors such as these usually stay in the homes of community members. When Palden Gyatso, a former Amnesty International prisoner of conscience, visited Montreal in 1996, one of the youths I spoke to had arranged his itinerary - a public talk on his experiences as a prisoner of the Chinese, a meeting with representatives from the Department of External Affairs and the 'Parliamentary Friends of Tibet', an interview with the 'Gazette' and a meeting with the local Tibetan community - and he stayed at her house [CTCNL: Fall 1996]. On his return to Montreal in 1998, the same young woman accompanied him on a public speaking tour across Canada as his interpreter.

To help them work together, the CTC organizes conferences to which representatives from the Tibetan communities, religious centres and support groups from across Canada are invited. In 1991, 1992 and 1994, for example, conferences were held in Montreal, Belleville, Ontario and Calgary. These are discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Indeed, following the Dalai Lama's lead, CTC members also work closely with a wide range of non-governmental organizations: Amnesty International, the

International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, the Network on International Human Rights (a coalition of 46 human rights NGOs in Canada), the Chinese Democracy Movement, the Campaign for Nuclear Phaseout, the Halifax Initiative (economic justice) and the Canada Asia Working Group (a coalition of Canadian churches). They also co-sponsor local events with these organizations. Under the auspices of the CTC, too, a Tibet support group within the Canadian parliament has established the 'Parliamentary Friends of Tibet'.

On campaigns of an international nature, the CTC works with a broad selection of Tibet Support Groups and other non governmental-organizations. One outcome was the 1991/92 'International Year of Tibet' campaign. Teachings by eminent lamas, lectures, a photo exhibit, a concert for Tibetan Liberation and World Peace, a flag day, and a visit by Chaksampa, the San Francisco-based Tibetan Dance and Opera Company made up the Montreal programme [CTCNL: Winter 1991; Fall 1991; Winter 1992]. Several community members also took part in the making of the film 'A Song for Tibet' which was released during the year.[6]

Still in the international arena, in 1992 the CTC established a United Nations Working Group with the goal of demystifying the UN process and lobbying the UN Commission on Human Rights [Samdup, 1996:20]. At the request of the Tibetan Women's Association in Dharamsala, the CTC agreed to act as regional coordinator for, and participate in, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women which was held in Beijing in September 1995. In June 1996, CTC representatives attended the UN World Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul, Turkey [CTCNL: Fall 1996]. CTC members,

including three of the youths I spoke with, have also attended non-governmental conferences at APEC Conferences held in the United States (1994), in the Phillipines (1996), and in Vancouver, Canada, (1998). Community members and Tibet supporters travelling on CTC business always do so under the umbrella of the Tibet Movement.

Wisely, the CTC has developed a generally good rapport with the media. Prior to a specific event, it sends information to media representatives who are also invited to attend. Whenever necessary, too, the CTC sends out press releases and, in return, the press usually contacts the CTC on Tibet-related queries. The destruction of Tibetan culture and the role of the Dalai Lama as both leader of Tibet and a respected religious figure are usually invoked as focal to most stories on Tibet. As a result of this constant effort, and as McLagen (1996) found with the Tibetan groups in the United States, the community probably receives more attention than its size would otherwise warrant. (For example, see Abley 1994, 1996, 1999; Kozinska, 1996; MacDonnell, 1997; Radz, 1999; Roy, 1998; and Wong 1995.)

Rheingold's (1993) comments on the suitability and benefits of computer-mediated technology for non-governmental organizations are particularly relevant here. Initially conducted by telephone, fax and post, communications within the Tibet Movement were vastly improved in the early 1990s with the introduction of two computer systems: first, an on-line multidirectional communication e-mail system for communication between Tibet support groups and, secondly, "Dharamsala on-line", a system which links the Tibetan government in Dharamsala to Tibetan offices and settlements across India and to refugee organizations and individuals around

the world. There is also the daily electronic news which I referred to in the Introduction and a Discussion List which stimulates public discussion on issues relating to Tibet. It opened the link to India in 1993 with a grant from the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development in Montreal. In fact, the CTC established and continues to manage all these systems [CTCNL: Winter 1994]. As Rheingold points out, not only do these networks allow for the rapid and wide dissemination of information so necessary for the successful running of such organizations [Rheingold, 1993:265] but they also provide public access to information which may not otherwise be accessible (ibid:268; see also Anderson, 1994). Indeed, these computer networks, more than anything, allow community members to engage in simultaneous and on-going participation with the global Tibet Movement.

So far in this chapter, we have looked at the composition of the community and at the migratory experiences of many of its members. We have also examined the links between the community and the Tibet Movement as well as the complex range of activities that result from them. One last aspect remains to be discussed - the tremendous pressure placed on those community members who participate in so many activities.

Demands of Participation

In their research, Basch and her colleagues note the social cost to immigrants of living transnational lives (Basch et al, 1994:241). The Tibetans in Montreal are no exception to this. The community is not a wealthy one. Not only did the original Tibetans arrive with virtually nothing - Mrs A tells me she arrived with a small suitcase and $8.00 - but over the years they have

sponsored family members, sent remittances back to India and raised families, and all while working at entry-level jobs. Today, although the majority of families are well-established in Montreal, they still receive numerous requests for donations from various organizations in the refugee community on the Asian subcontinent. One young Tibetan told me that, " there is never an end to raising funds. In the community, whenever we get together, we are always collecting funds for something". There is also the cost of membership and participation in the various community associations, not to mention the expenses involved in making a visit to the refugee community in India.

In addition to these financial pressures, taking part in these activities puts a heavy pressure on the Tibetans in Montreal in terms of time and energy. As one youth puts it, "time is what they spare the most of, because everything is done on a voluntary basis". As most community members work or attend school they can only take part in activities in their spare time. In fact, as many activities as possible are arranged to take place in the evenings and at weekends to enable as many people as possible - Tibetans and Tibet supporters alike - to attend. Even national holiday celebrations (except March 10th) are put off to the weekend! Even then, with family and other commitments and especially with many Tibetans engaged in shiftwork, there is always someone who cannot attend a particular event. As with any community, too, for one reason or another, some individuals prefer not to participate. Reasons community members gave me for not taking part include lack of interest in the more political activities, a dislike of petty personal politics and weariness at repeating the same thing time and again. Being such a small group, this puts pressure on those who are willing and able to

participate and results in them constantly having to juggle their time and other responsibilities to be able to do so.

To illustrate: Mrs A works from 8.00 am to 4.00 pm in a factory in the north east of Montreal. Taking part in an evening activity in the centre of Montreal usually means going there straight from work. After the event she then has to travel to her South Shore home in Longueuil. It makes for a long and tiring day. Parents often take young children with them on demonstrations. The North American Representative of the Tibetan government-in-exile attends government meetings in Dharamsala and visits his North American constituencies during his annual holidays and at weekends. The Tibetan youths who attended the Beijing NGO Forum and two of the APEC conferences, took time off work without pay and time off from school. And, as we saw with the Dalai Lama's visit to Montreal in 1993, a great deal of background work is involved in organizing many of these activities. Preparations for the Beijing NGO Forum, for example, took many months and included reading lengthy United Nations documents and attendance at numerous meetings including a ten-day preparatory conference in Vienna. Indeed, many activities involve community members spending nights away from home. Ironically, some activists are able to take advantage of being laid off work to help out more or to visit family members in India!

Activities, such as meeting government ministers and representatives of other non-governmental organizations, have to be carried out during the day and in these cases individuals must, again, take time off work or school. For example, the March 10th rally is always held on that day and, because of its significance, most Tibetans make a special effort to attend. Even so, with

only being paid for the hours they work and with little or no holiday allowance, some still cannot attend. Like the Chilean youths studied by Grmela (1991), some young Tibetans think in terms of their education providing them with knowledge which will be useful in the struggle for Tibet. As one Tibetan youth explained, being asked to participate brings its own pressure:

> "... We have the fate of our country on our backs. .... Especially if you are a student it takes a toll on your studies. ... There is a lot of pressure to work in the community and do things, to create more awareness, but then you have to think about your education because you wonder should I help my country in the short-term for the smaller events ... or should I think about it in the long-term and get a good education, a good job ... and really be able to help my people in Tibet."

Summary

Tibetans first came to Montreal as part of a special refugee programme in the early 1970s. Prior to their arrival in Canada, they spent many years, a minimum of ten and in one case as many as thirty, living as exiles in the refugee community on the Indian subcontinent. Despite establishing a home for themselves in Canada, however, the Tibetans in Montreal continue to retain a strong sense of their Tibetan identity and they engage in a wide range of activities to support the Tibetan struggle. They can do this even from such a small local base because they are members of the Tibet Movement, a large transnational organization headed by the Dalai Lama and composed of diasporic Tibetans and their non-Tibetan supporters around the world.

Through family contacts, but especially through the nation-building activities of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetans in Montreal thus sustain a wide range of links globally with the other members of the Tibet Movement.

These connections are ensured through computer networking, visits from representatives of the diaspora, especially from India, contact with Tibetan government offices, attending conferences and receiving government and non-government diaspora publications. As a result of these links, community members can, to a considerable extent, overcome the limitations of their small size and geographical separation. They live both locally and internationally.

Access to information resources and the expertise of other members, together with the ability to work together on activities of a national and global nature, moreover, enables the community to participate in an impressive array of activities. At the same time, involvement in so much activity lays a tremendous burden on community members. Participation is voluntary and has to take place in people's spare time or by them taking time off work or school. With family and other commitments and especially with some individuals not able or not wishing to engage in this work, community members who can are constantly caught up in trying to balance their different roles.

Beyond this, membership in the Tibet Movement provides community members with opportunities for getting together with other Tibetans and Tibet supporters. This social engagement and its implications for the development of a sense of community consciousness, forms the subject of the next chapter.

1.The Tibetan Freedom Concerts are organized by the San Francisco based Milarepa Fund, a non-profit organization co-founded in 1994 by Adam Yauch of the Beastie Boys, which supports human rights and independence for Tibet. The first concert was held in San Francisco in June 1996 [CTCNL: Fall 1996; Fall 1997].

2.The 600-mile, three month-long "March for Tibet's Independence" began on March 10th, the day which commemorates the 1959 Lhasa Uprising against the Chinese occupation and ended with a demonstration at the United Nations in New York City on 14 June 1997 [CTCNL: Fall 1997].

3.For the first few years after his arrival in Montreal in 1972, Geishe Kenrab lived with a Tibetan family and then, because of shortage of space, he was moved into his own apartment. By this time, in addition to serving the Tibetan community, he was teaching a small number of western Buddhists and in 1976 the Atisha Dharma Centre was established. Space was still a problem and, in an effort to alleviate this situation, the students applied for and received a local initiative grant from the provincial government to form a Tibetan Cultural Association of which Geishe Kenhrab was to be the Director and would receive a salary.

4.The school, funded by the federal and provincial governments, opened in 1977 and was held for one and a half hours every Sunday for approximately ten years. On alternate weeks the youths were taught about Buddhism, the Tibetan language, and Tibetan songs and dances.

5.(See note 3.) By 1980, the money received from the provincial government, together with offerings and contributions from the Tibetan community, enabled them to purchase a bungalow which was more suitable for use as a temple. Despite all these efforts, however, the mortgage payments proved difficult to meet each month. One solution put forward was that the bungalow be sold and a property with apartments, which could be let to provide an income, be purchased. A suitable property was found in Verdun and, in 1985, the Temple moved to these premises. The move provoked some friction within the Tibetan community, with some individuals unhappy at the idea of Geishe Kenhrab moving away from the Tibetan community in Longueuil [Interview with member of Temple].

Geishe Kenhrab, passed away in October 1993 and the Temple has had problems finding a replacement. One did arrive in 1995 but was found to be ill and had to return to India. As a result, the Temple is still without a resident teacher.

6.A Song for Tibet, filmed in Dharamsala and Montreal, is a documentary about the Tibetan situation and the involvement of Tibetan Canadians in the preservation of their people and culture. Co-produced by the National Film Board and Anne Henderson, the film won a Canadian Genie Award for best documentary film [CTCNL: Winter 1992].

SOCIAL PRACTICE AND IDENTIY

From the previous chapter we see that the Tibetan community in Montreal is an integral part of the widespread, transnational organization, the Tibet Movement. We also observe that being part of this global network puts a tremendous pressure on community members. Tibetans in Montreal invest a great deal, in terms of financial cost and time and effort, in their participation in the voluntary associations and the activities which they sponsor. The question arises: why, after all they have been through and particularly now that they are well established in Canada, do they continue to do this? Indicating belief in, and showing support for, the Tibetan cause are, clearly, crucial factors. More than this, though, membership in the Tibet Movement provides community members with meaning and purpose to their lives in Montreal. In this chapter, I will attempt to show how, through their involvement in the Tibet Movement, they achieve this. Before we can discuss this further, however, we need to examine the relationship between the formation of a Tibetan identity and the notion of exile on which it is based.

Changing Perceptions of Identity

In her study of the approximately 10,000 Armenians living in Greater London, England, Amit-Talai (1989) found that individuals had undergone a variety of experiences as Armenian emigres before arriving in London. Most of them originated in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Cyprus but others also came from Ethiopia, India, Egypt and Palestine. Not surprisingly, with such diverse backgrounds, these Armenians did not share a uniform sense of what it meant to be Armenian [Amit-Talai, 1989:1]. What they did share, however, was the view of themselves as exiles, brutally expelled from their

105

homeland in Eastern Turkey [ibid:2]. And, according to Amit-Talai, the concepts of exile and past suffering formed part of a symbolic framework which the Armenians manipulated to make sense of their ethnic identity and community membership [ibid:5]. As will become clear in the discussion below, a similar notion of Tibetans in exile from their homeland - although the result of a different historical trajectory and time span - forms a critical part of the symbolic framework within which Tibetans in Montreal make sense of their ethnic identity and community membership.

After all they have been through, and especially with them migrating to third and fourth countries - together with an increasing number of Tibetans being born in mixed families - the perception of what it means to be Tibetan is changing (Nowak, 1984; Wangyal, 1998). Retaining a sense of 'Tibetanness' is not as much of a problem for the older generation of Tibetans who grew up in Tibet and in India and, who, in contrast to the Armenians, have experienced a relatively similar migration pattern. The adult Tibetans in Montreal, for example, still speak Tibetan - indeed many feel most at ease speaking Tibetan - they cook Tibetan food and for most of them religious practice, including praying, prostrations, making offerings, and reciting mantras, is still an integral part of their everyday life.[1]

For the younger generation, however, even for those living in the refugee community in India (Nowak, 1984), ascertaining the meaning of 'Tibetanness' is becoming increasingly difficult. For the younger generation in Montreal, this is also brought home during their visits to the Tibetan community in India where they are perceived to be more western than Tibetan. This is an experience shared by many immigrant children [for

example, Pessar, 1995:89]. In contrast to their parents, the youths in Montreal have not grown up completely surrounded by their culture nor have they received a Tibetan education. As I noted in the previous chapter, at one time classes were held every Sunday in an attempt to teach the children something of their culture but they did not learn as much as they should because as one youth explains " my mind was more on play than studying".

With respect to their religion, Dargyay (1988) puts it well when he says, "the youths have to learn about Buddhism, while their parents absorbed it through everyday life" [Dargyay, 1988:120]. Indeed, not only have the youths had to learn about Buddhism and their culture in general, but they have had to do it in a society with different beliefs and values and which has many distractions. Moreover, they are Canadian citizens, this is their home, and they must learn and adapt to this environment in order to be successful.

The youths I spoke with told me that, "speaking Tibetan and having an interest in Buddhism" are important aspects of their Tibetan identity. But by being immersed in a totally western education, as well as living in such a small community they have relatively little opportunity to learn about or experience their culture. Although they speak Tibetan to their parents, they speak English to their siblings and peers; in fact, most told me that they feel more comfortable speaking English or French. As one young man explained:

> "What we lack is just basically practice and for practice you need a lot of people because you are not at home most of the time. For example where I work there are a lot of Italians, third and fourth generation Italians, and when they're amongst themselves they speak Italian so then they're able to preserve their language. They even find it easier speaking Italian. There are a lot of Italians but we don't have that advantage, it's harder."

And with respect to their religion, one of the youths told me that she is interested in Buddhism and has been studying it for a number of years. For most, though, although Buddhism is important to them, one young man summed up how they feel when he said, "it's not about a religion, its more about a way of thinking, a philosophy, a different outlook on life". Similar notions of the changing perception of identity have been noted in other immigrant groups (for examples in Canada, see Grmela, 1991:280; Henry, 1994:251).

But, as we saw in Chapter 3, all Tibetans, including the Tibetans in Montreal, retain a strong sense of identification with the Dalai Lama. Indeed, as noted by Nowak, the institution and figure of the Dalai Lama serves to sum up and express for Tibetans the meaning of 'Tibetanness' in a powerfully affective way [Nowak, 1984:164]. What Tibetans also have in common, however, is the view of themselves as exiles from their homeland. This is a view made all the more significant now by Tibetans' fear for the continuity of even their culture in Tibet [Nowak, 1984:24]. Together, these symbols - the Dalai Lama and the notion of exile - form part of a symbolic framework which Tibetans manipulate to provide meaning for both their current situation within the diaspora, and their sense of mission for the perpetuation of Tibetanness.

As we saw in Chapter 2, central to the perception of the Tibet Movement is the idea of a return to Tibet. This is the homeland, moreover, which comprises the three provinces of U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo and not just the area referred to by the Chinese as the Tibet Autonomous Region

(central and western Tibet) [Gyatso, 1991: 302]. Although some Tibetans and Tibet supporters see the return in terms of regaining total independence for their country, the Dalai Lama envisages it more in terms of regaining a form of autonomy in which the government of Tibet will have the right to decide on all affairs relating to Tibet and Tibetans but with China remaining responsible for its foreign policy [ibid:302]. For all Tibetans, however, a return to Tibet would entail the end of what they see as China's illegal occupation of their country, the restoration of human rights and democratic freedoms and the abandonment of the policy of population transfers.

Indeed, since coming into exile it is to this end that the Tibetan government under the leadership of the Dalai Lama has been working. For thirty years, they worked virtually alone to come to some agreement with the Chinese government over the future of Tibet. Since 1987, the Dalai Lama has made his appeals for support from the international community in an attempt to persuade China to reopen negotiations after breaking them off in the late 1980s. Implementation of The Draft Constitution for a Future Tibet (1963) and The Guidelines for Future Tibet's Polity and Basic Features of its Constitution (1992) have been prepared not only to provide democratic representation in the refugee community but also in readiness for a return to Tibet. And since 1987, of course, a wide range of Tibet support groups throughout the world have become involved in the Tibet struggle.

At the same time as they work towards a return to Tibet, however, the Dalai Lama, and the Tibet Movement as a whole, are pursuing policies that are clearly geared to the fact of a continuing Tibetan diaspora [Nowak, 1984: 136]. The increasing size and complexity of the Tibetan administration and

ongoing construction of Tibetan institutions, the migration of Tibetans to other countries, the discovery of reincarnated lamas within the diaspora [Nowak, 1984:95], the re-definition of Buddhism to include westerners, and especially their recognition as reincarnated lamas (Thomas, 1999), the growing incorporation of non-Tibetans in the diaspora, the increasingly cosmopolitan role of the Dalai Lama and the development and maintenance of a complex set of relationships within and outside the Tibet Movement, all seem to suggest that a majority of exiled Tibetans may well not return to Tibet should it regain its independence.

And to some extent what the Tibetans in Montreal, particularly the young people, say reflects this contradiction. When I asked whether they would consider living in an independent Tibet, four of six adults replied that if the political situation changed, they would consider going back. The two adults with children in school, however, added that they would have to think about their children first. But for Miss F, since Tibet has never been her home, returning there was not an issue. Of the youths I spoke with, two would consider living in a free Tibet and two said they would not. Mr K, for example, admitted, "No, honestly, I don't think I'd be able to live in Tibet. I'd go visit but I'm pretty used to the Canadian way". Miss G stated that she would like to help in some way in reconstruction but doesn't know about going there. In contrast Mr L argued, "I would (go there) because one more Tibetan in Tibet is better because we're outnumbered in Tibet." And Miss H offered "I would definitely go there to help rebuild". When asked whether she would go temporarily or permanently she responded that she would live "wherever I am more useful". Another young Tibetan replied:

"I would consider living there and living here - double citizenship. I'm sure the Tibetan Government wouldn't mind because they've set up such a great community in exile anyway, a great network. We wouldn't want to lose that. We'd probably need an ambassador, an embassy and all that".

As Amit-Talai found with the Armenians in London, however, whether the Tibetans plan to return or not is less important than the fact that the 'myth of return' (Safran, 1991; see also Anwar, 1978) as such feelings have been called, motivates them into current action.

The nationalist ideology that has developed around the idea of return is, of course, shared by most Tibetans throughout the diaspora. Tibetan nationalism also shapes the specific ethnic identity of Tibetans in Montreal by forming a framework within which they are able to develop a deeper sense of their lives in Montreal; and this arises from their membership of the Tibet Movement. Their participation in the voluntary associations and the wide range of activities they sponsor provides community members with the opportunity of getting together as a group. Not only do these activities bring them together with other Tibetans and Tibet supporters in Montreal but also more widely across Canada and throughout the Tibet Movement. Through this social engagement, a sense of community consciousness and solidarity, both local and with the larger group is developed and sustained. By their participation in the various activities, moreover, both the notion of Tibetans as exiles from their homeland and the imminent threat to their culture are kept alive. In turn, this instills in the community a stronger sense of moral responsibility. Together, these factors, a meaningful identity and feelings of

obligation, fill community members with a sense of purpose and ensures their ongoing commitment to, and participation in, the Tibetan cause.

To illustrate the ways in which this momentum occurs, I will now look more closely at activities which involve community members' participation in three different contexts, local, national and international. Since I have volunteered at the Tibetan Bazaar for a number of years, I will take it as one example of local level activism. Tibet conferences which occur across Canada and community members' trips to the refugee community on the Indian subcontinent form the other levels of involvement. First, then, let us see what these activities involve.

Social Practice - Local

Advertised as 'A Day in Tibet', the Bazaar takes place in the first week of November. Now in its eleventh year (1998), it is a popular event attended by hundreds of Montrealers. Over the years the Bazaar has taken place at a number of different venues but, for several years now, it has been held in a large church hall in Notre-Dame-de-Grace. Between 11.00 am and 5.00 pm the public strolls around stalls displaying Tibetan handicrafts - clothing, carpets, bags, jewellery, incense and religious artifacts as well as books on all aspects of Tibet. One stall offers to write their name in Tibetan. The Canada-Tibet Committee (CTC) table provides information on issues related to Tibet and sells items such as books, badges, buttons, t-shirts, calendars, prayer flags and katas (white silk scarves). At another CTC table, children (and adults) are invited to draw and colour a 'hand for Tibet' which will later be attached to a petition and handed in to Canadian government officials. Amnesty International also has a table at the Bazaar. Visitors eat

Tibetan food and watch traditional Tibetan song and dance performances which take place at set times throughout the day. During the day, the President of the CTC and younger members of the community answer queries from visitors, and those of the media representatives who attend, on a variety of Tibetan questions.

This is what the public experience but for the participants, of course, much more is involved. When I arrived at the hall at 8.00 am to help set up the Bazaar, for example, a group of Tibetans had already arrived from Longueuil and were unloading boxes and other items from a van and cars. Those in charge of the food went straight to the kitchen where they spent the whole day preparing and cooking Tibetan style. Other CTC members began preparing the hall - placing the tables and putting up decorations - pictures of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan flag, banners, prayer flags, information pillars and direction signs - and setting up the CTC table. Stallholders started to arrive around 10.00 am and set out the items for sale on their tables. Three community members I spoke with, two adults and one youth, together with family members had rented a table at the Bazaar. Members of the dance group, not already helping with other activities, arrived with their costumes a little later. At the end of the day - sometime after 5.00 pm - when the crowd began to thin out, everyone started clearing up - packing up the stalls, cleaning and tidying the kitchen and taking down the decorations. The Tibetans working in the kitchen and those clearing up the hall were the last to leave at the end of a long day, finishing between 7.00 and 7.30 pm.

It had been a day of intense activity, showing the Montreal public something of Tibetan culture which included the rhythmic dances and music

of the country. The bright colours of Tibetan traditional dress and the energy of the dancers provided a stimulating centrepiece to the artefacts on display, the savoury food and the discussions about the Tibetan situation.

Social Practice - National

Three national Tibet Conferences have been held in Canada: in Montreal, in Calgary, and a Youth Conference in Belleville, Ontario. The first two were funded by a grant from the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and the last by the Department of Heritage Canada [CTC, 1991: Conference Report:1; CTCNL: Fall 1992; Poster for 1994 CTC Conference]; each grant covered all costs including transportation, room rental, refreshments and administrative costs.

In 1991, in recognition of the Year of Tibet, the Canada-Tibet Committee organized a conference in Montreal which was attended by representatives of the various Tibetan cultural and community organizations, religious centres and support groups from across Canada. The conference was conducted mostly in English with some translation into Tibetan for clarification. Guest speakers included the North American representative of the Dalai Lama based in New York, the North American representative of the government-in-exile (then also the CTC President), the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism, Anne Henderson from the National Film Board of Canada, a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Friends of Tibet and a representative from the Federation for a Democratic China [CTC Conference Report, 1991; CTCNL: Summer 1991]. Seventy-six individuals participated in the conference; twenty were from Montreal including five of the young Tibetans I had interviewed.

The theme for the conference was 'A Unified Effort for Tibet' and the delegates discussed immigration, democracy-in-exile, networking within Canada, access to project funding, political initiatives, and sharing of resources. It was at this meeting, for example, that the proposal for developing a communications system, initially among the various Tibet groups within Canada, was put forward [ibid:19]. This, of course, was the beginning of the widespread computer network systems which exists today.

In July 1994, the CTC held a follow-up conference in Calgary - the North American Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, a member of the Parliamentary Friends of Tibet, and the North American Representative of the Tibetan exile government came as guest speakers. The theme of this conference, 'From Unity to Action' had as its objective to set a course of action for the coming years. Agenda items included preservation of Tibetan culture, the nature of political initiatives in Canada, and communications [CTC Poster for 1994 Conference]. Three or four CTC members including the President and one of the youths I spoke with attended from the Montreal community.

Between these two meetings, in 1992, the Tibetan Youth Congress of Belleville had organized a Youth Conference in Belleville. Among the special guests were Thubten Jigme Norbu, the Dalai Lama's brother, the North American representative of the Dalai Lama, Lama Geshe Kalden, the former General Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs in the Tibetan Government, the Tibetan opera master Phurbu Tsering (at that time applying for Canadian citizenship), and the North American Representative to the Government-in-Exile and CTC President [CTCNL, Fall:1992]. Seventy-five

young Tibetans attended, twenty-one coming from Quebec including four of the youths I spoke with. The theme of the conference was 'Involved Canadians - Proud Tibetans' and the programme was discussed by two levels of delegates, those 12-15 years of age and those 16-25 years of age. The young people held workshops on Tibetan history and current governmental structure, as well as on the problems of life in exile such as integration into Canadian lifestyles, cultural concessions and conflicts for first generation immigrants and practical advice on educational opportunities. At this meeting, the youths agreed to work together to organize a large demonstration on Parliament Hill on March 10th the following year to mark the 35th year of Chinese occupation of Tibet. As a result of this conference, too, an informal youth association was formed and youth from Montreal and Ontario get together from time-to-time.

Social Practice - International

All the adult Tibetans I have spoken with during my research have visited the refugee community on the Indian subcontinent at least once since arriving in Canada and two have also been to Tibet. Of the eight youths I interviewed, five have been in the Indian subcontinent and one has also been in Tibet. Since the changing perception of what it means to be Tibetan is largely a concern of the younger generation, it is on their activities that I focus in this discussion. These are not the frequent trips of some immigrants discussed by Basch et al (1994; see also Glick Schiller et al, 1992) and no cheap flights are available at certain times of the year. The youths have to work hard to save for these trips and therefore stay for as long as possible. Mr L, for example, visited India and Nepal with his parents and younger

brother for four months in 1990 while Miss M went to India to study Buddhism for two years in 1991. Miss H, who travelled to India for four months in 1992 did so between college and university studies. Others, like Mr J, who travelled around India, Nepal and Tibet for six months in 1995 and Miss P who spent five weeks in India and Nepal on her way back from Beijing in 1995, could only make the visits by taking time off work.

Although the young people told me that the main reason for their trips was to visit family members, they took advantage of them for many other activities as well. When Mr L visited the refugee community with his family in 1990, for example, they also went on a pilgrimage to holy sites in northern India and Nepal, attended a Kalachakra Initiation and had a personal audience with the Dalai Lama. During her trip in 1992, Miss H toured the holy sites in northern India and spent eleven days in south India staying at her father's monastery. While there, she visited the nearby monastic universities of Ganden and Sera and attended a Kalachakra Initiation given by the Dalai Lama. Miss M spent most of her two years studying Buddhism in a monastery in southern India where two of her uncles are monks. Whilst there she also attended a Kalachakra Initiation given by His Holiness. During his time in Tibet, Mr J visited many holy sites as well as seeing family members.

Three of the youths spent most of their time in Dharamsala. During her two and a half months there, Miss H took language and philosophy courses at the Library of Tibetan Works, engaged in voluntary work teaching English and helped to classify articles in the Department of International Relations and Information. Over a period of three months in Dharamsala, Mr J attended a teaching by the Dalai Lama and other religious teachings at

117

the Library of Tibetan Works and participated in a 'Writers for Tibet Conference'. Miss P spent nearly four of her five weeks in Dharamsala. She told me that she was planning to look around while on holiday but, when the Tibetan Women's Association found out that she was on her way back from the non-governmental forum at the Womens' Conference, they arranged a variety of activities for her. These included giving lectures on the conference, holding interviews with refugee community media, attending fund-raising activities, being taken on an official tour of the government offices and having an audience with the Dalai Lama.[2]

Discussion

The small number of Tibetans in Canada has always been of concern to the Tibetan communities in this country. Indeed, at the 1991 Tibetan Conference, immigration was identified as a primary concern and, in 1993, the communities approached the Canadian Government with a proposal for the establishment of a Tibetan immigration programme to Canada [Samdup, 1993].[3] The following appeared in the section headed 'The Tibetan Community in Canada Today':

> "The size of the community is a handicap in efforts to maintain and develop our language and traditions within the dominant North American culture. It is a particular strain on Tibetan youth who have a very limited number of peers within their own community." [Samdup, 1993:6].

And certainly, as I noted earlier, if we limit ourselves to just looking at the Tibetan community in Montreal, only one of the communities referred to in Samdup's quote, without taking into consideration the links discussed in the previous chapter, we could not begin to explain why they have such a strong

sense of community consciousness. In contrast to earlier bounded models of identity, however, the central premise of Basch et al's model is the fact that transmigrants take actions and develop identities within a new social field created by their transnational links. The widening circle of activities discussed above is important because their involvement encourages community members to engage with a growing number of other Tibetans and Tibet supporters and with their culture as a whole. And, through this social interaction, which far transcends their own small group, a sense of community consciousness is created (Cohen, 1991).

And, even within the Montreal group, because the Bazaar is an all-day event and because it offers a variety of activities in which community members may participate - preparing food, dancing, manning a stall, helping set up the hall, selling tickets at the door - it provides an opportunity for a large proportion of the community to come together, including those who do not often attend such events. Two people I spoke with, for example, one adult and one youth, told me that they only came along because of the opportunity to sell their merchandise. And, although Mr C had to be at work in the afternoon, he found time to drive family members to the hall in the morning and stay for a few hours. Likewise, although Mr D was working in his restaurant all day, he was still able to drop in to the Bazaar for a short while towards the end of the afternoon.

As I saw and, indeed, as I did myself, throughout the day everyone wandered around the hall and chatted with friends; not so much before the Bazaar, perhaps, when everyone was busy getting ready, and less so for the Tibetans working in the kitchen but certainly, once everything had been set

up, those helping were able to walk around and greet their friends. This was important for, in some cases, people had not seen one another for quite a long time. Because the Bazaar is known to be a regular event, many people return year after year. In fact, as one community member told me, because the Bazaar is so well known, Tibetans and non-Tibetans from Chicoutimi, Quebec City, Ottawa, Toronto, Vermont and even New York attend. For my part, I saw a lot of people, Tibetans and non-Tibetans, whom I had not seen for some time and was therefore able to chat with them and catch up on their news. I also had the chance to speak to people I had not met before.

As Cohen (1993) clearly shows, moreover, it is not only the day itself that brings people together but also the organization of the event. Generally speaking, for the Bazaar, this begins a month or two beforehand. Having attended a number of CTC meetings I have some idea of what is involved. Committee members send out letters and make telephone calls to book the hall, to arrange publicity, to find out who would like to rent a table, to round up volunteers, and to organize the food and entertainment. Any Tibetan family, or an individual or group associated with the community such as the Tibetan Temple and the Rigpe Dorje Buddhist Centre, may rent a table from which to sell their goods - handicrafts which the stallholders obtain from India and Nepal. Community members told me that they either purchase items during a visit to the refugee community or they order them through a distributor. Volunteers set up the hall, work at the CTC table, and serve the food. Preparation of the food and organization of the dance performances is the domain of the Cultural Association. One of the younger women asked her mother what preparing the food involved. She was told that the day before

the Bazaar, two members of the Cultural Association buy the ingredients and, in the evening, about twelve community members meet at one of their houses in Longueuil to prepare and cook the food. I had been told previously that preparing Tibetan food takes a long time and on this occasion they spent over five hours getting everything ready. Miss G explained that the dance troupe, of which she is a member, held several dance practices before the Bazaar. The CTC, aware of the importance of publicity, sends out information to local newspapers, radio and TV stations.

At the national level, community members use the Canadian conferences as a forum in which to meet and interact with other Tibetans and Tibet supporters from across the country as well as Tibetan representatives from elsewhere in the diaspora, Canadian government ministers and representatives of other non-governmental organizations. Indeed this - and formulating strategies for further co-operation - is the main purpose of these events. The local Tibetan community billets delegates thus providing a further opportunity for social exchange. Organization of the conferences again takes place over several months and involves a good deal of interaction by fax, letter, telephone and e-mail, once the system was set up, to organize financing, the conference location, invitations to Tibetan communities, support groups and the guest speakers, arranging the agenda for the conference, and preparing refreshments, entertainment and accommodation.

During visits to the refugee community on the Indian subcontinent, as we have seen, community members meet up with family members and friends. But interaction is far more complex than that: Tibetans throughout the diaspora often arrange these trips so as to meet with those from other

communities. During part of her trip to India, for example, Miss H told me that she met and travelled around with a cousin from Switzerland; she also met an aunt who normally lives in Nepal. While in India, another youth met her uncle from Vermont and the two of them stayed with relatives in Nepal where they met her grandmother and uncle who had travelled from Tibet.

Although we are looking at three specific levels of activism undertaken by community members, the same general principle applies to all. The purpose of, and organization necessary for the event, be it fundraising, working out strategy, or visiting family members, is important but what is equally significant is the fact that participation in them provides community members with the opportunity for wideranging social interaction. The spread of activities is crucial because it allows a greater number of community members to connect with a diversity of people from other groups and cultures [Amit-Talai, 1989:12].

While participating in the various activities, community members meet and catch up with family and friends. If, at the local level, this involves meeting others they have not seen or spoken to for some time, it is much more the case at the national and international levels. At the 1997 Freedom Concert in New York, for example, Miss P told me that the youths from her community spent much of their time bumping into and rekindling friendships with people from all over the United States they had not seen for a long time. Often the same individuals attend these events and so new friendships are developed. As Mr J stated, "it's a very obvious bond, you know, when you're Tibetan and you're born in exile. You don't have to say much and already you're connected". Several of the young people for example, have

developed friendships with others from Ontario as a result of attending the Youth Conference together with different informal activities and occasions such as audiences with the Dalai Lama. Two of the youths, moreover, unexpectedly met with friends from Ontario when they were in Dharamsala.

During their trips to the refugee community in India, the young people meet and become friends with many young Tibetans. Indeed, as with the Armenian youths cited by Amit-Talai [1989:137], part of the attraction of taking part in the various activities is the opportunity of socializing with Tibetans of their own age - with their friends in Montreal and Tibetan youths elsewhere in the diaspora. In fact, one young woman mentioned above met and has since married a Tibetan whom she first met during a visit to Dharamsala. In a community of this size, of course, the availability of Tibetan marriage partners is a problem and, as I noted in the previous chapter, several community members have returned to the South Asian diaspora to find a suitable partner. Mr D, one of the adult Tibetans I interviewed, is such an individual.

The essentially social nature of such activities has been noted by other researchers. McLelland (1986), French (1991:194) and McLagen (1996:470), for example, refer to the social aspects of attending religious ceremonies, government meetings and a Kalachakra Initiation respectively. Nor should we forget the role of the Dalai Lama in providing many opportunities for Tibetans and Tibet supporters to interact. As Abner Cohen found with the West Indian community in London, England [1993:104], and as community members themselves told me, when they get together with one another and with other Tibetans, they not only talk about the activity in hand

but about many other questions of concern to them as Tibetans - stories of family members, the latest gossip from Dharamsala, happenings and who was seen at the most recent event, the Dalai Lama's movements, the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama, or the problems of being a Tibetan in Canada. And, as Feldman-Bianco (1992:158) points out, such discussions bring Tibet into the everyday life of community members.

An important consequence of participating in these activities, too, is the many cross-connections they generate [Cohen, 1993:87]. During his trip to India, for example, Mr J met members of the Dalai Lama's entourage whom he had first encountered in Montreal in 1993 while working on security for the Dalai Lama's visit. Miss P, who first saw Palden Gyatso in Montreal in 1996, also met him during a trip to India later that year, at the 1997 Tibetan Freedom Concert in New York, and again in Montreal in 1998. There are many such examples of deepening ties among Tibetans throughout the diaspora. Through constantly meeting and keeping in touch with the people they meet at these activities, community members develop a whole range of valuable networks. These are communication networks, moreover, which will doubtless assist them in the future in their work for the Tibetan cause [ibid:88].

When taking part in the various activities, in Montreal or elsewhere in the diaspora, community members also see other individuals and groups undertaking similar actions. This confirms the fact that they are not alone but part of a larger organization of likeminded people working towards the common goal of liberating their homeland (Cohen, 1993; Basch et al, 1994). A sense of affiliation with the larger international group, the Tibet Movement,

is therefore reinforced. In this discussion I have emphasized face-to-face interaction between individuals. But the same general principle applies to an individual sitting in front of his or her computer sending a message - local or global - or working on a particular project. I have already noted that, given the small size of the Tibetan community in Montreal as well as the dispersed nature of the Tibet Movement, this type of communication is critical to successful collaboration. These activities, too, involve social interaction; friendships are made and networks of ideas, proposals and actions developed. Indeed, Rheingold (1993) clearly shows the potential of computer-mediated communication for creating a sense of community at several different levels.

At the same time as interacting with one another, of course, participating in these activities opens the way for community members to engage with their culture as a whole. In Montreal, for example, when community members get together, the adults speak Tibetan and the youths respond in Tibetan to their elders. Tibetan visitors, especially those from the refugee community in India, invariably speak Tibetan in the community. At many activities such as the Bazaar, receptions for visitors, and during national holiday celebrations, Tibetan food is served and cultural performances are given; such performances are often, in fact, part of fund-raising events. And as I have seen, for many of these events, community members, especially the women, wear Tibetan dress. Taking part in these and other activities such as religious ceremonies, showing a film on Tibet, giving a lecture on the current situation in their country, or taking part in a demonstration clearly raises the national consciousness of community members (Nowak, 1994; Cohen, 1993).

And, for the younger generation in particular, these activities provide an opportunity to deepen their understanding of their customs and traditions.

There is more to it than this, though. Through participation in these activities, community members not only develop a sense of group consciousness for themselves but, to a certain extent, influence the way they are perceived by others. As Anthony Cohen observes (1992, 1994), people are not unthinking individuals. In working for the return of their homeland, community members are far from passive participants, rather, they are self-consciously presenting themselves, their history and their culture to the public. As far as they can, they decide what aspect of Tibetan culture to present or talk about and how to reproduce it. Indeed, Tibetans throughout the diaspora as well as in Canada work hard to present a positive image of themselves and of the Tibet struggle to the public. As I noted earlier, the Dalai Lama as a respected religious leader and international figure, and the fear of a possible loss of their culture, both figure prominently in their efforts to sustain their identity. And today, facilitated by technology, they mediate their identity in ever more sophisticated ways. There is no space to develop this theme further here, but for a discussion on the ways in which the Tibetans presented themselves at certain activities taking place in New York City during the 1991/92 'International Year of Tibet' see McLagen (1996).

Continuing with the subject of engagement with their culture, it seems to me that the visits to the refugee community in India are particularly significant in this regard as, during this time, community members can immerse themselves far more profoundly in their Tibetan culture than in their daily lives in Montreal. As we have seen, not only do they stay with family

126

and friends, but they visit temples and other Tibetan institutions, they go on pilgrimages, attend religious teachings, arrange for personal audiences with the Dalai Lama and participate in Tibetan festivals and ceremonies. And this, of course, is why Tibetan parents in Montreal, as with many other immigrant parents (see Amit-Talai, 1989:140; Rouse, 1992) are keen that their children should visit the home country (here, as we know, the Indian subcontinent and especially India, stands in for the country of origin). Above all, they want their children to establish a connection, a link with their families and with the larger community. At the very first Tibetan event I attended, I remember the Tibetan man sitting next to me proudly telling me that one of his daughters was working for the Tibetan Government in India. I did not understand the deeper implications of this at the time but now, of course, it is very clear to me.

The young, too, are aware of the significance of these trips. As Miss G pointed out, visiting the refugee community is also about, "going back to our cultural roots which are very much more alive there than anywhere else". And Mr J likened visiting Dharamsala to making a pilgrimage. "For us, you know, it's like our trip to Mecca. Most of them (Muslims) have their holy trip to Mecca. We have to make our trip to Dharamsala. As long as Tibet is not free..... to discover what our culture is really about." A visit to Dharamsala or anywhere else on the Indian subcontinent does not necessarily mean that the young people agree with everything they see or that they find all the answers they are looking for, however. Before her first trip to Dharamsala, for example, Miss P told me that she really felt she should go because:

"when I'm working for the CTC, just once in a while I kind of lose a sense of direction: I lose a sense of the bigger picture, you know, of Tibetans and Tibet and the Tibetan cause. And just being in India I'm hoping, you know, will give me a new sense of direction. Because I haven't really experienced Tibetan culture per se, here it's nothing, you know, its a very small amount ..."

When she returned to Montreal, I asked her whether her life had in fact become clearer and she answered:

"No it hasn't, things haven't, except that I know I won't be religious, I can't be religious. I mean I believe in the philosophies and I try to practise that. Not by praying but just in everyday life, but no, not religious in the manner of like praying or going to the temple. But there was an overwhelming sense of finally feeling at home when I was in Dharamsala. Because there were so many Tibetans and for once in my life I was a majority, we were a majority ...."

And with respect to gaining a sense of direction, she answered:

"I don't think anything has changed, I just wanted to get a better picture of what to do, where I'm going to go in the future but I didn't get that. But nothing has changed in the sense of my motivation to work for the cause; that has remained the same, my respect for His Holiness has remained the same. I feel a little better because I saw all those office workers and their interest and I saw the daily function of the government-in-exile. So I felt a little better knowing that...."

Adult Tibetans additionally have memories of Tibet and some lived in the refugee community for many years. When they hear about events taking place in Tibet and in the refugee community they understand better what is involved or what such events signify. Indeed, with respect to activities in the refugee community in India, they often personally know many of the people involved. For the younger generation it is different. Visiting the refugee

128

community on the Indian subcontinent may not answer all their questions, but seeing things for themselves, visiting the various institutions, and generally taking part in the everyday life of the larger community, does enable them to develop a sense of connection not only with family members but with the larger community. In turn, as Miss P showed, it further helps them make a connection with the older members of their own community:

> "All the Tibetans in Montreal know what Dharamsala is like, the older Tibetans, you know, so having been to Dharamsala I know what they are talking about sometimes. …. knowing what TIPA (the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts) is, and knowing where the Namgyl (the Dalai Lama's) monastery is, where the government offices are, knowing what offices they're talking about. These little things, you know, give me more of a connection with the elders".

What all the younger people mentioned in particular was the improvement in their spoken Tibetan. Miss H took grammar lessons while she was in Dharamsala and Miss P attended lessons when she visited Dharamsala for the second time, but, generally speaking, most put the improvement down to speaking Tibetan all the time. As Mr J said, "It's something that I've never done in my life, speak it every day, every minute of every day". Given that Buddhism and the ability to speak Tibetan is important for the youths' sense of identity, the opportunity of immersing themselves in their culture in this manner, is clearly important.

Throughout this chapter, I have shown how participation in the various activities gives community members a chance to engage socially, and how through that social interaction a sense of community consciousness and affiliation is developed and maintained not only at local level but with the larger movement. One last link remains to be made, however, and that is to

explain the ongoing participation of community members in these activities. Through their links and the social interaction which arises from them, not only do they develop a more explicit sense of ethnic identity but community members are kept up-to-date on all aspects of a changing Tibetan situation. As Mr D confirmed:

> "It (the Tibetan diaspora) is a very close-knit society. Scattered as we are all over the world, people are quite informed in terms of what is going on in Dharamsala, and anywhere else in the major settlements, including events in Lhasa."

In particular, community members are constantly reminded about the conditions for people in Tibet. Being well informed, in turn, keeps the notion of Tibetans as exiles from their homeland constantly in their consciousness. As with the Armenians this, together with the fear of the imminent disappearance of their culture in their homeland, imparts the clear moral obligation to continue the struggle and to perpetuate a sense of 'Tibetanness' [Amit-Talai, 1989:5]. When one youth heard about the atrocities in Tibet, she said that, "she feels obliged to do things not in a negative way, but because people are dying in Tibet." This sense of moral responsibility, together with the restatement of a meaningful identity and a feeling of affiliation with the larger group, imbues community members with a sense of purpose which then provides the impetus for their ongoing commitment to, and participation in, the Tibetan cause.

Summary

The number of Tibetans living in the Montreal community is very small. Membership in the Tibet Movement allows them to overcome this limitation to a certain extent but, at the same time, maintaining the wide range

of links and activities that result from their membership, places a tremendous burden on each of them. Community members continue to participate in these activities, however, because doing so lends a deeper meaning and vitality to their lives as Tibetans in Montreal. At the heart of this process lies the notion of Tibetans as exiles from their homeland.

The perception of what it means to be Tibetan continues to change. For some Tibetans, especially the younger generation, their conception of Buddhism is different from that of their parents; they also feel more comfortable speaking the language of their new country, and they are less aware of, or involved in, many Tibetan customs and traditions. What all Tibetans have in common, however, is a strong identification with the Dalai Lama. They also share the notion of themselves as exiles from their homeland. This, together with the figure of the Dalai Lama, forms a framework within which Tibetans are enabled to make greater sense of their contemporary situation within the diaspora.

For Tibetans in Montreal, the Tibet Movement provides the context in which this occurs. At the heart of the Tibet Movement's philosophy is the idea of a return to Tibet. Whether Tibetans plan to return or not is of less import than that they are doing something which, in the case of the Tibetans in Montreal, is participating in the many activities we have discussed throughout this thesis. In turn, taking part in these activities provides community members with the opportunity for getting together with Tibetans and Tibet supporters in Montreal and throughout the global diaspora. Coming together in this manner also means deepening their engagement with their culture. Indeed, in mobilising for Tibet, community members are self-

consciously presenting themselves and their culture to the outside world. In so doing they are, to a certain extent, affecting the way in which they are perceived by others.

Through this social engagement the Tibetans of Montreal both develop and sustain a sense of community consciousness not only at the local level but with the Tibetan Movement at the national and international scales. Through this social interaction, too, community members are kept up-to-date with all aspects of the Tibetan situation and hence the notion of themselves as exiles in a broad network of diasporic communities is kept constantly in the forefront of their minds. The sense of moral obligation this imparts, together with the sense of community consciousness and affiliation with the larger organization, in turn, provides the momentum for their ongoing commitment to, and participation in, the struggle for Tibet.

1.Every Tibetan family has a shrine in their home. Depending on the space available, it may be a complete room or it may be set up in part of a room. Items on the altar may include a picture of the Dalai Lama and his teachers, statues of deities and bowls for offerings. Hanging above the altar there may be some tankas (religious paintings).

2.The Tibetan Womens' Association were a major co-ordinator of the non-governmental conference held in conjunction with the United Nations Womens' Conference in Beijing. They arranged for Miss P to give lectures to the Tibetan Womens' Association, the Tibetan Youth Congress, to government office workers, to the Tibetan Children's Village and to the general public.

3.Based on the U.S. Resettlement Project, the scheme asked for a federal programme which would provide landed immigrant status to a designated number of Tibetans from India and Nepal based on humanitarian grounds.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have examined the processes through which Tibetans in Montreal construct a sense of community identity in exile and the ways in which that identity in turn contributes to their ongoing commitment to the Tibetan cause. Over the past two decades, and still more recently in Canada, researchers have come to realize that traditional bounded concepts such as ethnicity and nationalism are no longer sufficient to explain the processes of identity construction taking place in today's increasingly globalized world. Instead, some researchers have proposed the concept of transnationalism which broadens the field of study to encompass the interactions arising from the increasingly complex movements and exchange of people, goods, money, information and ideas taking place in the contemporary world: the wider field of social relations, that is, in which identity is constructed.

The construction of Tibetan identity in Montreal is far from exhausted by the small size of the local community. Membership in the large, transnational organization, the Tibet Movement, makes available to Tibetans a wide range of resources; most importantly, it provides community members with access to a far wider field of social interaction. As a result, being Tibetan today, especially for the young, depends not so much on carrying out Buddhist ritual and speaking the language, as on participating in social, cultural and political activities for the liberation of their homeland. Indeed, maintaining some knowledge of their cultural heritage is important for the youths, but making sense of their lives in Montreal today also involves new levels of sophistication. Being Tibetan, then, implies a form of social engagement with particular networks of people as well as the varied means

necessary to carry that out: a willingness to engage with others, the application of modern technology, the creative use of publicity, and linking with the cosmopolitan role of the Dalai Lama. The younger generation will still be Tibetan but undoubtedly in a more political and functionally-orientated way than their parents were.

Critical factors in this process of identity construction are the increasing incorporation and participation of westerners in the movement, the fact that the Tibetan government is obliged to operate from outside its country and the potent mediating activities of the Dalai Lama. As we have seen, the Tibet Movement relies on the financial and political involvement and support of westerners. In Montreal, as with the diaspora worldwide, Tibetan culture provides the means for this incorporation. In the early years, western students studying Tibetan Buddhism provided financial support for their teacher. Then, in the late 1980s, when the Dalai Lama took the Tibet issue to the international community, non-Tibetans in Montreal were attracted by his campaign to support the Tibetan struggle, a central aspect of which is the continuation of Tibetan culture - language, religion and customs. As McLagen points out, more recent supporters of Tibet have tended to be more professional and better placed to deal with politicians and the media and more skilled in the use of communications technology so necessary for the successful running of a global organization.

At the same time as the increasing opening to non-Tibetan support taking place within the Tibet Movement, however, there is also a restatement of Tibetanness. Now, with the ongoing construction of Tibetan institutions on the Indian subcontinent and throughout the diaspora, the expansion of the

government-in-exile's administrative and community development roles and the forging of relationships with other nations, the operations of the government are becoming increasingly elaborate. So much so, in fact, that even though the Tibetan government functions without its own state, it is increasingly taking on the trappings and some of the powers of a state. As we have seen, the larger Tibetan society on the Indian subcontinent represents an important focus of 'Tibetanness' for community members, while the intricate network of transnational links to the diaspora communities looking to Dharamsala are constantly being strengthened.

The Dalai Lama stands at the head of the Tibet Movement, and is therefore responsible for much of the above activity. As guardian of the key elements of Tibetan Buddhist culture, together with his own incorporation of new ideas and his willingness and ability to work with others, the Dalai Lama has played a central guiding role in the successful recreation of an evolving Tibetan society in exile. Through his actions and leadership, moreover, he provides an example and a positive profile for his countrymen, so indicating new ways of being Tibetan. Tibetans are willing to follow the Dalai Lama because of what he means to them; at one and the same time he is a human being and a god, a highly trained monk and a political leader, their link with the past and their personification of aspirations for the future. And, indeed, he operates at all these levels. At the same time, however, his political role is complicated by what he represents to his countrymen. As a person he can - and does - make decisions that not everyone may agree with, but as a symbol of Tibet most Tibetans are hesitant about disagreeing with him, or his decisions.

The anomalies and complexities running throughout this study are what have made it so personally compelling for me, but what of the academic implications for theory? First, the thesis contributes to the literature on transnationalism by extending the range of case studies to include a particularly complex example. Secondly, it moves beyond the previously narrow focus of earlier theoretical constructs: on immigration from neocolonial countries to the United States - much of which is bi-statal - as well as on the particular focus on labour migrants. As Guarnizo and Smith point out, the fit between different kinds of migrants and their distinct locations affects not only whether they are likely to develop transnational links but is significant for the very nature of the links themselves [Guarnizo and Smith, 1998:13]. Such has been the case here. In looking at a refugee community, too, this thesis adds to and broadens the range of refugee studies; while, at the same time, it draws attention to the importance of studying the everyday lives of the actors at the centre of the study. In addition to contributing to the literature, however, I believe that the thesis also challenges our notions of migration, critical mass, community, transnationalism and diaspora.

Thirdly, this research project questions some of the traditional ways of looking at international migration, which have hitherto been viewed largely in terms of unilinear and finite movements between points of origin and destination; it also has implications for our understanding of community membership, which has usually focused on the point of destination. But as this case shows, migration is not unilinear: the Tibetan community maintains a wide range of increasingly sophisticated cross-border links with the whole of

137

the Tibet Movement. Key factors here include the use of technology and the role of the leadership, in this case that of the government-in-exile. Advances in technology, especially computer-mediated communication, play a big role in enabling the Tibetans in Montreal and in other communities of the diaspora, to maintain simultaneous, ongoing engagement in a variety of places so necessary to the construction of a vibrant community life. The involvement of the Tibetan government, in particular the nation-building activities of the Dalai Lama, in encouraging these global relationships also promotes this transnational community formation.

Fourthly, underlying the conventional conception of community has been the assumption that migrants are largely passive individuals. Rarely have they been seen as active agents who can significantly shape their own identity and destiny (Barth, 1969; Cohen, 1985, 1994, 1996). Yet, as this study shows, the Tibetans in Montreal are not only self-consciously participating in the reproduction of their culture but are, to a considerable extent, able to influence the ways in which they are perceived by others. If, as Smith (1998) suggests, it is not necessary to abandon the concept of community altogether, we nevertheless need to consider it in more flexible ways. We need, at the very least, to take into account both the historical contexts within which particular communities were established and are now evolving as well as the active and formative role played by the migrants themselves in the process. The notion of critical mass - the need for a minimum number of individuals to allow community formation to take place - has also underlain earlier theoretical conceptions of community. But the evidence that such a small number of Tibetans have been able to reproduce a

sense of community in Montreal, obviously challenges this. Here again, the role of technology - linked to a political and culture purpose - has proven to be a crucial element in helping to maintain the connections which permit this small group to transcend its small size.

This study, then, supports the call for new levels of conceptualization which take account of the increasingly complex relationships occurring within and across state borders in the contemporary world: new concepts, that is, such as those of transnationalism and diaspora which are at issue here. As we see from the thesis, some of the more recent theoretical models cannot readily explain the kind of processes that are taking place within the Tibet Movement. The Tibetans enjoy many of the multi-layered transnational connections with the country of origin (mainly India) described by Basch et al; nevertheless, the almost exclusive focus on the two poles of the migration circuit by Basch and her fellow countributors would severely limit their ability to encompass the scope, complexities, and dynamic nature of the interactions taking place, for instance, within the Tibet Movement. Many of the Tibetans in Montreal are, as it were, twice migrated, there are still flows of people among the communities within Canada and the United States; furthermore, community members not only maintain but are expanding a wide range of complex, multilateral relations with the country of origin as well as with the entire Tibet Movement. Hannerz's model, on the other hand, while catching both the sense of constant change and adaptation taking place within a network such as the Tibet Movement and also the important role of the cosmopolitan figure as a leader and cultural mediator, is too abstract to

examine, and provide us with an understanding of, the everyday lives of people who are the central actors in this drama.

The increasingly complex and institutional nature of the Tibetans' links, moreover, takes them far beyond Clifford's rather more circumscribed notion of living in exile. In addition, although the context of the Tibetan diaspora is very much defined by a specific original territory and the idea of return to a homeland, it does not fit within the classic definition of diaspora. As we have seen, the Tibetans have managed to recreate a whole society in their many places of exile. They form, therefore, not so much a diffuse network as a diasporic transnational community with strong functioning connections among the parts. Indeed, just as the notion of exile provides a new rationale and means for the reproduction of community in Montreal, so it does for the construction of the diaspora as a whole. With the dynamic nature and broad scope of the multiple links evolving within the Tibet Movement, moreover, the diaspora is still unfolding.

This thesis shows the difficulty of producing an analytical model capable of explaining the wide variety of transnational movements taking place in a constantly changing contemporary world. None of the theoretical models I have looked at over the course of my research can adequately explain what I am witnessing on the ground and I have had to draw on elements from several of them. I think it is fair to say that the Tibet situation is a particularly complex one, but with the unprecedented breadth and intricacy of population movements - including many involuntary ones - taking place in the world today, it is likely that such complexity will become more rather than less common. There will, therefore, continue to be a need for still

more flexible, open and dynamic concepts about what constitutes the complicated and many-sided phenomenon of transnational migration and community formation.

Suggestions for Further Study

In this study I have focused on the links between the Tibetan community in Montreal and the Tibet Movement, the effect of these links on the social organization of the community and their implications for the construction of identity. For this I have touched on a range of aspects such as the historical background to contemporaryTibetan nationalism, the make up of the refugee community on the Indian subcontinent, the story of the migration of Tibetans to the west and the critical leadership role of the Dalai Lama. As I have already stated, the Tibetan case is a particularly unusual and interesting one and any of these aspects alone could be of interest to a researcher.

With respect to the Tibetan community in Montreal, aspects I would have wished to address in more detail include the role of Buddhism and language in identity formation among the younger generation. Of particular use, moreover, might be a longitudinal study of the community to try to determine how far these links can be sustained over time. To what extent will later generations experience similar processes of self-identification? Will circumstances change so that Tibetan identity formation fades away gradually with the second and later generations? How will changes in the circumstances of the government-in-exile affect its relationships with constituent parts of the diasporic Tibetan community around the world? With immigrants organizing their own and their children's lives around cultural,

141

linguistic and political links, Basch and her colleagues have suggested that the effects may be permanent. Smith (1998) also reports on continuing second generation participation. It seems most likely that, as long as the younger members gain something positive from their efforts such as a sense of meaningful identity for young Tibetans, these connections stand a good chance of continuing among the new generations.

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDE - FIRST GENERATION

SECTION I - TIBET/INDIA

Where did you live in Tibet?
With whom did you live?
What education did you receive?
Why did you leave Tibet?
When did you leave Tibet and how old were you?
How did you leave Tibet?
Were you able to take any possessions with you?
Where did you go when you left Tibet?
What did you/your family do there?
How long did you stay there?
Why did you come to Canada?

SECTION II - ARRIVAL IN CANADA/FAMILY BACKGROUND

When did you arrive in Canada?
Where did you go when you first arrived in Canada?
Who lived with you at that time?
How long did you stay there?
What was your employment?
What assistance did you receive from the Federal Government?
Did you bring any possessions with you to Canada?
Before you left India, did you know any of the Tibetans who came over
on the Resettlement Scheme with you?
Did you have any friends or relations already living in Canada?
How did you feel when you first arrived in Canada?
What was the most difficult aspect of adapting to life in Canada?
How did you come to live in Montreal?
Where do you live now?
Have you always lived in your present house (rent/own)?
Who lives with you now?
What is your occupation?
How long have you had this job?

Do other Tibetans work there?
What is your spouse/family members' occupation?
What language is spoken at home?
What language do you use to speak with non-Tibetans?
What type of food do you eat at home?

SECTION III - COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES
(New Year, March 10th rally, Dalai Lama's birthday and Democracy Day)

Do you participate in community events?
If yes, which events and what does your participation involve?
  Do you celebrate these events in any other way?
  Why is a picture of the Dalai Lama displayed at community events?
If no, how do you celebrate these events?
How did you celebrate national holidays in Tibet/India?
Are there many events that were celebrated in Tibet/India that you do not celebrate here?
Have you/your family seen the Dalai Lama on his visits to Canada and the United States?
If yes, where/when/with whom/how did you travel?
Are you able to speak to the Dalai Lama during these visits?
Do you/your family go to see visitors from the diaspora when they visit Montreal?
If yes, who/where/when/with whom?
Are you able to speak to them on these occasions?
Have you been involved with the arrangements for any of these visits?
Have you attended a Tibetan conference?
If yes, where, when, with whom?
Do you wear Tibetan dress in Canada?
If yes, on what occasions?
Do you get together with community members apart from these events?
If yes, what do you do when you get together with them?
Do you have friends outside the Tibetan community?
If yes, what do you do when you get together with them?
Do you know any people who work for the Government in Dharamsala?
As a Tibetan living in Canada, do you feel you have any influence with the Tibetan Government in Dharamsala?

If you were unhappy about something the government was doing would you do anything about it such as speak to the North American representative or write to the Government?

Have you ever done any of these things?

Do you contribute to the Tibetan Government's programme of voluntary taxes?

If yes, how do you make your payment?

Are you a member of any Canadian associations?

Do you vote in Canadian elections - local/national?

SECTION IV - TIBETAN BELIEFS AND VALUES

What does being a Buddhist mean to you?

How do your beliefs affect your everyday life in Canada?

Has living in Canada changed the way in which you are able to practise your Buddhism?

Do you visit the Tibetan Temple in Verdun?

If yes, how often and for what occasions?

Do you have a shrine room in your house?

If yes, who uses it and for what?

Do you attend events at other Buddhist Centres in Montreal?

What does the Dalai Lama mean to you?

When you arrived in Canada you became a Canadian citizen/landed immigrant. How do you think of yourself now, Canadian, Tibetan, both, neither?

What makes you a Tibetan?

The experience of growing up for your children is obviously very different from yours - do you have any comments about this?

Have any of your children visited Tibet/India?

If yes, were you pleased?

If no, would you like them to?

SECTION V - COMMUNICATION WITH TIBETAN DIASPORA

Do you have relatives living in the United States?

Are you in contact with them - how?

Do you have relatives living in Tibet/India or other countries?

Are you in contact with them - how?
- letter
- telephone
- fax/e-mail
- visits from them
- visits to (where/who visited/length of visit/what did you do)
How did you feel when you returned to Tibet/India?
Do you take money/gifts when you visit family/friends?
Do you bring anything back to Canada from your trips?
Do you have any items sent to you from India?
Do you support relatives in Tibet/India in any way?
Do you send remittances to Tibet/India for other reasons?
Have you sponsored any relatives to come to Canada?
Do you keep up-to-date with what is happening in Tibet/India - how?
- family/friends
- Office of Tibet in New York/North American Representative
- diaspora publications
- International newspapers
- TV/radio
- videos
Do you discuss the situation in Tibet/India with your friends and family?
Which country do you regard as home now, Tibet, India, Canada?
Would you consider returning to Tibet if the political situation changed?

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW GUIDE - SECOND GENERATION

SECTION I - PERSONAL/FAMILY BACKGROUND

Where were you born?
What age are you?
Where do you live?
Have you always lived there?
Who lives with you?
What is your occupation - work/student?
How long have you worked there/been a student?
What is your parents/siblings occupation?
Have they always worked in this job?
Do they work with other Tibetans?
What language do you speak at home?
What language do you speak with the Tibetan youths?
What food is eaten at home?
Did you attend the Tibetan School?
Do you have relatives in Montreal/rest of Canada?
Are you in contact with them - how?

SECTION II - SCHOOLING

Where did you go to school?
What language did you speak at school?
Did any other Tibetan children attend the same school?
Were any of them in your class?
What language did you use to speak to them?
Did you have any non-Tibetan friends in school?
Did you ever visit their houses or have them visit your house?

SECTION III - COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES
(New Year, March 10th rally, Dalai Lama's birthday and Democracy Day)

Do you/family members participate in community events?
If yes, which events and what does your participation involve?

Do you celebrate these events in any other way?

Why is a picture of the Dalai Lama displayed at community events?

If no, how do you/family members celebrate these events?

Have you/your family seen the Dalai Lama on his visits to Canada and the United States?

If yes, where/when/with whom/ how did you travel?

Are you able to speak to the Dalai Lama during these visits?

Do you/your family go to see visitors from the diaspora when they visit Montreal?

If yes, who/where/when/with whom?

Are you able to speak to them on these occasions?

Have you been involved with the arrangements for any of these visits?

Have you attended a Tibetan conference?

If yes, where/when/with whom?

Are you a member of the Canada-Tibet Committee?

If yes, what does this involve?

Do you ever wear Tibetan dress?

If yes, on what occasions?

Do you get together with other Tibetans apart from these community events?

If yes, what do you do when you get together with them?

Do you have friends outside the Tibetan community?

If yes, what do you do when you get together with them?

Do you know any people who work for the Government in Dharamsala?

As a Tibetan living in Canada, do you feel you have any influence with the Tibetan Government in Dharamsala?

If you were unhappy about something the Government was doing would you do anything about it such as speak to the North American representative or write to the Government?

Have you ever done any of these things?

Do you contribute to the Tibetan Government's programme of voluntary taxes?

If yes, how do you make your payments?

Do you celebrate occasions such as birthdays, Thanksgiving, Christmas?

Are you a member of any Canadian associations?

Do you vote in Canadian elections - local/national?

SECTION IV - TIBETAN VALUES

What does being a Buddhist mean to you?
How does being Buddhist affect your everyday life?
Do you/your family visit the Tibetan Temple in Verdun?
If yes, how often and for what occasions?
Do you/your family attend events at other Buddhist Centres in Montreal?
Do you have a shrine room in your house?
If yes, who uses it and for what?
What does the Dalai Lama mean to you?
How well do you speak Tibetan?
You were born in Canada/arrived in Canada very young but your parents are
  Tibetan, how do you usually think of yourself? Do you feel Canadian,
  Tibetan, other?
What is important for your Tibetan identity?
What is important for your Canadian identity?

SECTION V - COMMUNICATION WITH TIBETAN DIASPORA

Do you have any relatives living in the United States?
If yes, are you in contact with them - how?
Do you have any relatives living in Tibet/India/other country?
If yes, are you/family members in touch with them - how?
  - letter
  - telephone
  - fax/e-mail
  - visits from them
Do you/family members support relatives in Tibet/India?
Do you/family members send remittances for any other reason?
Have your parents sponsored relatives to come to Canada?
Have you visited Tibet/India?
  If yes, specify: when, where, why, duration, activities?
  How did you feel when you were there?
  How did you feel when you returned to Canada?
  Did you bring anything back with you?
  Were your family pleased for you to go?
If no, would you like to visit India/Tibet?

Would your parents like you to visit India/Tibet?

Have your siblings visited India/Tibet?

Do you/family members take money/gifts when you visit relatives/friends?

Do you/family members have items sent to you from India?

Do you keep up-to-date with what is happening in Tibet/India - how?
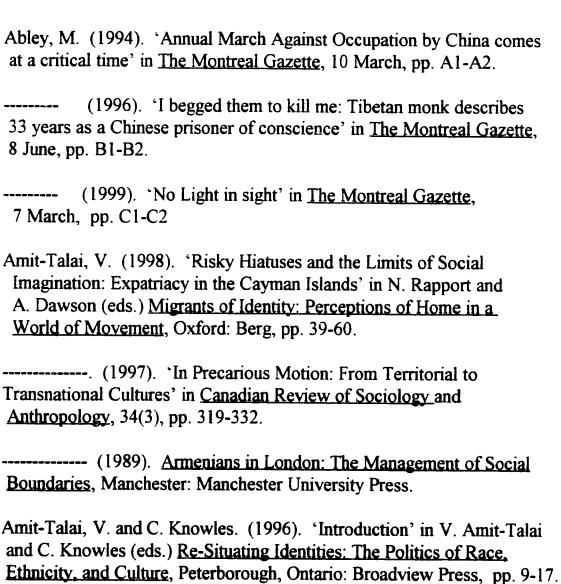 - family/friends
  - Office of Tibet in New York/North American representative
  - diaspora publications
  - International newspapers
  - TV/radio
  - videos

Do you discuss the situation in Tibet/India with your friends and family?

Would you consider living in Tibet if the political situation changed?

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<u>Archival Material</u>
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1.   Memorandum from Office of Tibet, New York, October 1966, sent to
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      Memorandum from Department of Manpower & Immigration to the
      Regional Directors, 1/4/69

      Memorandum from Department of Manpower & Immigration to
      Deputy Minister, 26/6/69.

2.   Letters from His Holiness the Dalai Lama to the Prime Minister of
      Canada:
                        2/11/66
                        23/12/68

3.   Letters from the Prime Minister of Canada to His Holiness the
      Dalai Lama:
                        21/12/66
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4. Record of Cabinet Decision - Meeting of June 18th, 1970

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7. Article for May 1972 Issue of Manpower & Immigration Digest.

8. Letter to Minister of Immigration from Bryce Mackasey, 19/7/72.