Tibetan Peregri-nations: Mobility, Nationalism and Belonging Athwart the Himalayas

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Abstract: Via a contextualization of the sentiment expressed by Tibetans on both sides of the Himalayas that true Tibet is located elsewhere, this essay focuses on an under-commented-upon consequence of Tibetan trans-Himalayan mobilities since 1959: the creation of two incommensurable modes of nationalism, one territorial, the other embodied in the form of the Dalai Lama himself. The result of this dual nationalism has not been mutual compatibility and an increase in potential modes of Tibetan belonging but mutual interference and a broadened scope for *un*belonging. As such the dispersed spatiality of community it enacts is reminiscent not so much of the romantic, organic unity of Herderian modes of methodological nationalism as it is of Heine's experiences of manifold unbelonging and contemporary German-Jewish articulations of a 'portable homeland'. Ultimately, I suggest that to reckon with such originary unbelonging, theories of Diaspora and mobility must treat concepts of both home and mobility as mixtures of stability and unstability, movement and stasis.

Keywords: Tibet, Nationalism, Belonging, Portable Homeland, Diaspora

Introduction: Scattered Belongings

Since the flight into exile in India of the fourteenth Dalai Lama and much of the religious and cultural elite of old Tibet in 1959, Tibetans living on both sides of the Himalayas have traced a complex skein of journeying practices across that range's high passes. In the west, understandings of such movements have been dominated by the figure of the refugee. And indeed the first wave of Tibetans moving south across the ranges was composed largely of

refugees from the region of Ü-Tsang in central Tibet. Especially since the 1980s, however, a second wave of migrants, hailing mostly from the eastern regions of Kham and Amdo[1], has made the arduous journey across the mountains to north India. Prior to 2008 when Tibetan unrest across the PRC led to a clamp down on trans-border flows, upwards of several thousand migrants a year traveled to[2] (and in many cases from) Dharamsala and other refugee Tibetan centers on the subcontinent.

The effects of such peregrinations have been manifold. Notions of national belonging in the exile community have been complicated by the ambivalent reception of 'sinicised' Tibetans fresh off the path, as it were, from Tibet itself (see Diehl 2002, Falcone and Tsering Wangchuk 2008; on broader circuits of Tibetan travel see Yeh 2007, Hess 2009). Many of these 'new arrivals' ultimately return to China, bringing with them both a critical consciousness of the blandishments of Chinese nationalism and English-language skills that enable them to get ahead in the rapidly developing (again, prior to 2008) tourism industry back 'home'. In any event, Tibetans on both sides of the Himalayas are acutely aware of how the other half lives; despite the fraught nature of the illicit border crossings and recrossings involved, there has been significant cultural and affective cross-pollination. Ideas of Tibetan nation, culture and community are the move.

This paper proposes to address some significant aspects of this movement by tracing the links between migration, nationalism and a widespread sense of homelessness amongst Tibetans on both sides of the Himalayas. In the course of conducting ethnographic research amongst Tibetans and their neighbors—in China from 2002 with shorter stays in Dharamsala in 2006 and 2007—with a special focus on the place of Tibetan returnees from India in larger schemes of national and trans-national belonging, I was surprised to discover that in both places, many Tibetans I talked to felt out of place. In both Amdo and amongst mostly Amdowas in Dharamsala, I was struck by the degree to which Tibetans in both places thought of the true Tibet as a keenly felt, but absent, elsewhere, existing at spatial or

ethical remove from the contexts of our interactions. Three brief ethnographic examples can serve to highlight the tenor of these conversations.

Visiting a friend's house near the town of Xiahe in Gansu Province's Gannan Autonomous Prefecture over Tibetan New Year 2004, I met Phuntsok, a monk at one of Labrang monastery's satellite monasteries in the Daxia river valley. As we relaxed on the *kang* (raised, heated seating area common in rural Chinese houses) enjoying the abundance of the holiday season he passionately described (in Chinese) the plight of his people:

> On the outside, Tibetans look happy and beautiful, but inside, in their hearts, their situation is very difficult. All our best people (*women zui hao de ren*) have gone: to India, or America or England, and the only ones who are left are stupid (*naozi ben de ren*) like me. The best folks have all gone or been forced out, and those who are left have no solution to our problems (*xiang buchu yige banfa*). In China today, people's brains are good, but their hearts are bad. If a Tibetan person makes friends with you, they will give you their whole heart, but our brains are not good. The current situation of the Tibetans is so different than it was in the past. We used to have gold and nice things, but they were all spoiled (*nongzaole*) by the Chinese and today even rich people have things like this [points to a plastic fruit bowl on the *kang* table]. Tibetans have to stay well behaved. Otherwise it will cause problems for the monastery and for the Living Buddha. We are constrained [he makes a ring with his hands]. We have to live within this [ring]: if we go outside of it we'll be shot.

Phuntsok (who it should be noted had not been to India; 'I want to go, but it would cause too much trouble') locates the true Tibet, or at the very least the best Tibetans, in places outside of Tibet itself. While, according to Phuntsok, the situation in Xiahe is much better than it once was, he still maps it primarily in terms of absence: of important personages, of the dead, of looted treasures and of the ability of Tibetans to make futures on their own terms.

By contrast my conversations with a young migrant Amdowa poet named Dhonjub and his friends in India highlighted what one might call the perils of freedom. One evening at Nick's Italian Café in the Tibetan center of McLeod Ganj, I was talking with Dhonjub and his friend Tsering Dawa when the latter remarked that in his opinion people are much more religious in Amdo than in India. There the percentage of believers might reach 90% while in India it's more like 10%. Tibetans in China, even though they may drink and play

cards and hang out in bars and play video games, in their hearts are religious—'more simple and innocent'—a friend is a friend, they give from the heart. 'Here', he says, 'religion is moving away from us'. In Tibet, the Chinese have introduced bars, computer games and other distractions, but because people are 'somewhat trapped', this keeps their thinking similarly constrained so there hasn't been much change. In India, people aren't forced to imitate the Chinese so they imitate Indian things or American things. They have access to a much broader scope of ideas so religion might not seem so appealing in light of more modern alternatives. In contrast to Phuntsok's pessimistic assessment of the claustrophobic restrictions of Tibetan life in the PRC, Tsering Dawa cites constraint itself as productive of religious Tibetan subjects. Yet he too locates true Tibet somewhere other than his current location.

This sense of the elsewhere-ness of proper Tibetan-ness in India cropped in up in many other conversations (on both sides of the border) with Tibetans who had been to Dharamsala. When I mentioned to Pema, another friend of Dhonjub's, that a returnee monk I knew in Xiahe who had studied in Dharamsala had told me that the quality of religious instruction is better in China, to my surprise he agreed. He said, 'Well, here you can see several famous personages – the Dalai Lama, the Karmapa and some others—but the rest of the religious practitioners are all surface'. They are always proclaiming their own skills a little too loudly and trying to convince or seduce folks regarding their abilities. 'I mean here you even have [monks as] Tibetan Massage and Tibetan Kung Fu teachers – how can they teach that'? In China religious teachers are more 'sincere' and less self-aggrandizing; they're not always singing their own praises. Even if they are greatly skilled, they keep it to themselves (i.e., are properly humble). He also has similar complaints about the Tibetan education system in India. The teachers today are not of that high a quality. Life in Dharamsala is hard away from family what with the angry and discriminatory locals, strange food, awful weather and other problems. In response to all this, I asked what he would say to a young Amdowa who was thinking about coming to India. He replied that if

they were poor he would tell them to come because here at the TCV (Tibetan Children's Villages) for example, food, lodging, clothing, etc. is all taken care of by the Dalai Lama. But if they were reasonably well off, he would tell them to stay home.

We can see from these examples, that there is a strange sort of bifocality that colors perceptions of Tibetan-ness that itself seems to be conditioned by the possibility of movement between communities on both sides of the Himalayas. Life inside China is alternately perceived as repressive and spiritually stifling or as productive of simplicity and religious commitment (another alternative unmentioned in this paper is envisioning China as a land of both personal risk and economic opportunity). Life in India by contrast is mapped as alternately a fondly hoped for release from political and spiritual repression (or at least a place one could study and stay for free if one arrived at the proper age) or as a context for (negatively) secular distractions and cultural dissolution or (positively) the cultivation of emergent modes of Tibetan-ness not tied to the constraints of religion or traditional culture. In both cases, actual understandings of place were considerably more ambivalent than the received scheme that maps China as a negative space, repressive of Tibetan culture and India, by contrast as the locus of freedom, religiosity and true Tibetanness. In both cases, the real Tibet is thought to be elsewhere.

A particularly surprising consequence of the movements of exile, migration and return has been a proliferation of modes of imagining what it means to be Tibetan that has produced not so much an augmented sense of Tibetan belonging but a generalised sense of unbelonging. This widespread sense of alienation from true Tibet is, I submit, less a phenomenon readily intelligible in terms of a general notion of 'nostalgia' (Stewart 1988, Boym 1996, Smith 2000) that accompanies all would-be national imaginings of communities, than it is one specific to the particular historical and spatial vicissitudes of what for lack of a better term one might call the Tibetan Diaspora. In turn, I suggest that the particularities of the Tibetan case proffer potential ways of deepening the critical force of recent work on both mobilities.

New Mobilities, New Impediments

Over the last two decades or so, anthropologists and practitioners of sociology, critical human geography and other allied disciplines have become increasingly cognizant of the crucial role played by migration and other journeying practices in the creation of even the most apparently sedentarist formations of nation and community. From Benedict Anderson's (1991 [1983]) discussion of the crucial role of 'administrative pilgrimages' in the inculcation of a sense of national identity in the functionaries of the state to Lisa Malkki's (1997 [1992]) famous and influential discussion of the simultaneous importance of both sides of the roots/routes dialectic, to recent advances in the geography of 'new mobilities', the movement (no pun intended) in social theory has been decidedly away from imaginaries of fixed, rooted or isolated communities and towards what has become almost an ethos of interconnection, mobility and routedness. It is a mark of the growing maturity of work in this vein that early appeals to mobility as an always already liberatory domain of freedom and cultural creativity (e.g. Appadurai 1991) have been superseded by a chastened awareness that even in motion some people and some communities are more equal than others and that the mere fact of movement itself does not spirit one away from the reach of existing structures of power.

Yet, despite this necessary and on the whole salutary move towards mobility, towards putting routes alongside roots in the theoretical pantheon, there has arguably also been a creeping and more insidious move toward a kind of reification of the border between the mobile and the immobile where, as in an older anthropological model of clearly bounded cultural forms, difference between the categories is heightened or intensified while internal difference is elided. In this older anthropology, the result was a map of cultures and nations with the clear boundaries and tile-like color scheme of a child's atlas[3] that did little justice to the complex interconnections and intra-alterities of the realities on the ground. In work on mobilities at present, it results in a focus that while helpfully acknowledging the interdependence of the mobile and the immobile (usually in a vaguely structural Marxian

sort of allusion to an immobile infrastructure serving as the basic 'moorings' (Hannam et. al., 2006) of an implicitly superstructural set of mobilities), treats both these two terms and the boundary between them as relatively commonsensical.

This is to say, recent and justly influential work such as that of Cresswell's (e.g., 2010) on the relationship between raw movement and what one might term cultural constructions of mobility placed thereupon, doesn't really grapple with the idea that, for example, the boundary between mobility and immobility and the cultural sense placed upon that boundary might differ radically from context to context. The analysis of mobility and its opposite(s) are thus are treated as proceeding from the level of a human universal, 'the fact of physical movement', (Cresswell 2010: 19) akin, perhaps to the way Kinship was thought of by anthropologists before David Schneider (1984) revealed it to be a western folk theory. Strangely, perhaps as a result, there is a relative lack of attention to 'where'?[4] in much of the 'new mobilities' work even as there is an almost super abundance of attention to 'how'?

While the focus of the new mobilities turn on 'the fact of physical movement', the 'representations that give it meaning', and its embodied practice (19), has been productive of fascinating and innovative work on the unexpected symbolic lives of modes of moving as unexpectedly provocative as 'aerostatic flight' (McCormack 2009) or the banal aesthetics of the post-privatization British Railways (Bissel 2008), it is unclear whether it has also grounded such studies of embodied experience and its representation in a full reckoning of the relationship between familiar and non-Euroamerican modes of mobility (e.g. Flower 2004). Further, and in this context more significantly, in commonly starting from 'the fact of physical movement' much work on mobility treats the boundaries between mobile and non-mobile, home and away as givens, the starting points for rather than objects of analysis.

To remedy this oversight, work on im/mobilities, new and old, must be brought into productive articulation with recent critical approaches to concepts of home (e.g. Blunt

2003, Tolia-Kelly 2004 Ralph and Staeheli 2011). Linking theorization of movement and homing practices may well enable scholars to focus less on reified boundaries between mobile and immobile than on the significant traffic across these bounds that colors imaginings of belonging and unbelonging alike. Such an approach might also push us to reconceptualise the relationship between territoriality, movement, national belonging, home and displacement as contingent and contextual rather than as pre-given. As Ralph and Staeheli (2011) write in a recent review article on the subject, 'the challenge…is to conceptualise the simultaneity of home as sedentarist and mobile' (518). They further press the analyst to 'consider how home is already inflected with mobility –and conversely, with the ways mobility is inflected with gestures of attachment' (519), ultimately suggesting that 'recognizing home as at once grounded and uprooted highlights the often-overlooked dissonances between the lived and the desired meanings with which people imbue the notion' (525).

This is all well and good, yet it still does not quite go far enough in problematising what one might call the methodological belongingism of much work on mobility, Diaspora and the spatial politics of community. One could think of this as a subspecies of the methodological nationalism critiqued by Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002). Building on a romantic, implicitly Herderian emphasis on the world as divided into nations conceptualised as organic entities whose peoples, unified by language and culture, express their political will over the national territories that are their birthright, such a framework assumes that if all of these factors are arranged properly, everyone has a place in which they will fit. If people are out of place, it is because of disruptive or aberrant circumstances that have disordered their present situation rather than a result of the nature of the world. In a Herderian (or for that matter Westphalian) framework, every nation, in theory, has its proper place – the goal consequently has been to reshape territorial and political entities so that culture, language, territory and the *volk* might correspond.

In some instances this has been remarkably successful (as with the creation of the German nation along loosely Herderian lines or with that of the Han as a pan-regional and pan-dialectical exemplar of the nascent Chinese nation in the nineteenth century (see Chow 2001)). In other cases—the examples of the massive transmigrations of ethnic and religiously defined populations to and from Turkey and Greece or India and Pakistan spring to mind—conformity with the Herderian ideal was purchased only with tremendous loss of life and human suffering. Yet the idea has been less commonly entertained that unbelonging might be as common or more common than belonging in the negotiation of self, home and (dis)place(ment). In recent years, critical human geographers (and some others) have increasingly sought to think through notions of originary unbelonging, resulting in some compelling work on 'ruined' Benjaminian (Edensor 2005, Dubrow 2010; see Dawdy 2010 for an analogous approach in critical archeology), loosely Derridean 'spectral' (e.g. Wylie 2007, 2009) and even more loosely Freudian 'uncanny' (Della Dora 2006, Gelder and Jacobs 1992; see also Krell 1992, Vidler 1999) geographies of the nexus of im/mobility, in/stability and processes of identity formation that add a particularly spatial element to the critique of Herderian visions of territorial nationalism.

Portable Fatherlands

Such literatures deserve a fuller discussion than present space allows, but as a necessarily abbreviated gesture towards their significance, I signal an alternative figure to Herder in imagining nations as machines for producing unbelonging. Heinrich Heine, the noted poet, was of the generation following Herder's and was both acquainted with and enamored of the older man's theories (see Barnard 1981 for details). Yet the Herderian narrative of national belonging and organic unity is belied by Heine's own itinerant life. As discussed by Feinberg (1997) in her essay on unbelonging and homeland-lessness amongst contemporary German Jewish thinkers, Heine emerges as a prototype for a kind of nomadic, belonging-less extra-territorial existence. Sammons (1986) who is on the whole less sanguine about Heine's potential to serve as a sort of exemplary exile nonetheless

highlights most clearly the complexity of his engagements with home, belonging and their opposites:

> As for his nationality, it is not easy to see under the legalities of the time what that was. He was born theoretically under Palatine sovereignty but in fact under French occupation. He was briefly a subject of Bavaria and for a longer time of that Napoleonic contraption, the Grand Duchy of Berg. His hometown was shifted under his feet from Dusseldorf to Luneburg to Hamburg. Eventually he probably became a Prussian *de jure*, and on occasion he liked so to identify himself, though not without an underlying irony, for his allegiance to Prussia was, to say the least, restrained. For nearly half his life he was a permanent resident of France, but he declined to become a French citizen. He was a voluntary, then an involuntary exile, yet he was never very far from home; he was both at home in Paris and a stranger there (615).

In place of (or alongside) Herderian territorial nationalism and its innate belongings, we have Heine and his *portatives Vaterland* (portable fatherland), in which belonging, where possible, is not natural or grounded, but the result of situationally constrained bricolage. Feinberg notes the account of literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki, who 'rejects his native Poland and his adopted country, Germany as his *Heimat*: "

> I have no *Heimat* and no fatherland, but I don't complain. In the end, I'm not *Heimat*-less, and certainly not a person without roots… I have country of my own, a portable fatherland, a *Heimat* not of the worst kind: literature, more precisely stated, German literature (Feinberg 1997: 165).

The ultimate referent of both this comment and Heine's more famous reference to the Bible as itself a *portatives Vaterland* is as Safran (2005) reminds us, the creation, after the destruction of the second temple, of a 'form of Judaism in which the Torah became a "portable Temple" and a "portable fatherland." The maintenance of this portable fatherland, i.e., of the Diaspora itself became a religious obligation' (44).

At this point in the discussion, caught with contemporary German Jews between their '"uncanny" [Central European] homelands' (*unheimliche Heimat* in Robert Menasse's words (Feinberg 1997: 168)) and Israel, we might seem very far indeed from the lives of trans-Himalayan-ly mobile Tibetans poised between the Scylla of China and Charybdis of external exile. Yet, I suggest, there are particularly uncanny parallels between the Jewish and Tibetan cases, not least in the tense relationship between territorial (unportable) and

extra-territorial (portable) imaginings of national (un)belonging. In part this stems from a particularly close resemblance in many aspects (apart from temporal duration of exile) of the processes by which the two communities were scattered.[5]

In the context of excavating the relationship between Tibetan studies and recent thinking on Diaspora, Anand (2003) perspicaciously highlights the similarities between Tibet and the Jewish historical prototype of scattered belonging.[6]

> Remarkably, the Tibetan case fits such a definition of Diaspora quite closely. Perception as well as evidence of coercion was the root cause of the dispersion of thousands of Tibetans from Tibet to South Asia. Like the watershed of the 586 BCE exile within Jewish diasporic consciousness, the Lhasa Uprising of 10 March 1959 (which led to the flight of the Dalai Lama, who took refuge in India) plays an important role in Tibetans' discourse about themselves, pinpointing a particular date as *the* moment of exile of the Tibetan nation. To a significant extent, the crucial elements of Tibetan identity—religion, language, folk memories—were already in place well before the dispersion, and so the exile leadership saw itself as the custodian of an ancient culture. In fact, this ethos of preserving the culture from possible extinction permeates the entire material and performative domain of Tibetan Diaspora (214).

Yet, as useful (and wittily engaging) as Anand's account of 'Tibetan culture-in-displacement' (223) is, he both replicates some of the unthinking conceptual separations of most work on Diaspora and underplays the similarity between Tibetan and Jewish cases, that for my money, is most crucial to understanding the generalised sense of homelessness amongst Tibetans on both sides of the Himalayas. On the first count, he seems to conclude that only diasporic Tibetans (in interaction with westerners) produce diasporic consciousness. 'It is fruitful to look at Tibetanness' he writes,

as a product of the creative negotiations conducted by diasporic Tibetans with the dominant representational regime and as a process of selective resistance to and appropriation of dominant identity concepts, including (trans)nationalism, sovereignty, indigeneity, universal human rights, and Diaspora (222).

What of those Tibetans who, while not exiles themselves, circulate through the exile communities of north India and in turn affect Tibetan self-conceptions on both sides of the Himalayas? Further, what of those Tibetans who stay behind in China but maintain actual or affective connections with wider communities (c.f. Yeh 2009 on the role of Radio Free Asia)? Surely Diasporic (and other) Tibetan-ness(es) must be produced at the intersection of what Ulrich Beck (2000) might call a geographically polygamous set of Tibetan communities and their multiply positioned interlocutors. Diaspora is not just about those who move.

A generous reading of Anand's argument would attribute his focus on Diasporic Tibetans as particularly important in the process of collective identity formation to the fact that in the Tibetan case, nationalism is clearly a product of the process of forming the Diaspora. Anand argues, as have many other scholars (e.g. Kapstein 1998, Dreyfus 2005, Yeh 2007, to name but a few) that exile itself was responsible for the formation of a recognizably 'modern' Tibetan national consciousness. Yet his suggestion that since 'imagining Tibet as a nation is, to a large extent, a post-exilic phenomenon', that it, 'therefore… comes as no surprise that the most sophisticated articulation of Tibetan national identity comes from the more radical sections of Tibetan Diaspora', (224) is rather more problematic. The problems with this assertion stem from the duality at the heart of contemporary Tibetan nationalism. Upon closer inspection, the dynamics of Tibetan exile have produced not a single nationalism on a modern, secular, territorial model, but at least two. While one would be recognizable to Anderson, Thongchai and other theorists of nations as territorial geobodies, the other, perhaps less commented upon, looks like nothing so much as Heine's *portatives Vaterland*, a sacred (post-sectarian rather than post-

particularist), cultural nationalism associated not with geobodily representations of national territories but with what Sumathy Ramaswamy (2010) has called the idiom of 'the anthropomorphic sacred' (9).

The object of this latter set of nationalist desires is not the territory of the nation (i.e., geographic Tibet as the union of the three regions (*cholka-sum)* of Kham, Amdo, and Ü-Tsang) but the (more-than-)human body of the fourteenth Dalai Lama as, in Kolås' words, 'a personification of the protector deity of Tibet…[and] the primary symbol of Tibetan unity. As a reincarnation of the deity Chenrezig', she notes, 'the Dalai Lama is the only unquestioned leader of the Tibetan people. Chenrezig not only provides continuity to the history of Tibet, but epitomises the community of Tibetans itself' (1996, 57; also see Klieger 1992).[7] In this mode of enacting the Tibetan nation, true Tibet lies not in a territorial homeland, but in a body of religious and cultural practice that has traveled with the Dalai Lama and other members of the Tibetan religious and cultural elite into India and, even, perhaps, beyond territory itself into putatively universal salience.

In her work on Tibetan migrants to western countries, *Immigrant Ambassadors,* Julia Meredith Hess (2009) notes that,

> The utopian ideal of Tibet stands in opposition to the evils of modernity as a reason why the entire world should care about its fate: because Tibet's cultural ideals can help save an imperiled humanity. In this way one can argue that the community of Tibet has been imagined as inherently limitless primarily by non-Tibetans....
>
> Tibetans themselves tend to be a little less grandiose, but suggest that Tibetan culture, particularly Buddhism might have something to offer others. But for this hypothesis to work, one must equate nation with culture. And in fact, Tibetans do this (57).

In its incipient transformation of a territorialised ethno-national category into a cultural or religious resource of potentially universal availability, 'the' Tibetan case again uncannily parallels 'the' Jewish one. Anand acknowledges this, noting that, 'there is some tension between "Tibet" as an ideal religious practice and "Tibet" as an exile nation with necessary links to territory', (Anand 2003: 221) but he does not fully pursue the consequences of this

similarity, preferring to emphasise the 'highly political act' of 'presenting oneself as [a displaced member] of *a* bounded territory of Tibet' (222).

From a perspective informed as much by Heine as by Herder, it is harder to dismiss these parallels between the evolution of Tibetan Buddhism into utopian ideal and Safran's observation that, 'the Jewish Diaspora lasted for such a long time without a permanent hinterland ... and without any territorial backup that Jews could no longer be imagined as a *Staatsnation* [state-nation] and were thought of only in religious terms' (Safran 2005: 43). Alongside historical references to the Torah as portable Temple and recent German-Jewish references to German literature as a portable *Heimat* in contrast to the unhomeliness (*unheimlichkeit*) of territorial origins, we can see a particular version of sacred, if putatively post-sectarian, Tibetan religious culture as *portatives Vaterland,* a mobile nationalism that operates across boundaries of traditional and modern, secular and sacred.

The point is not that Tibetan nationalism is really ungrounded and has been done injustices by the methodological sendentarisms of scholars of nationalism and Diaspora alike, but is that, as Dreyfus (2005) notes, 'Tibetan nationalism is not a unified discourse, but a site of contention, where conflicting visions compete for the allegiance of Tibetans' (Dreyfus 2005: 14).[8] Specifically, as mentioned above, the present situation is characterized by the mutual interference[9] of at least two incommensurable nationalisms, one territorial and largely, if not entirely, secular, grounded in the soil of Tibet, defined as the "the tradition[al] three provinces of U-Tsang, Do-toe, and Do-med,"[10] as the locus of Tibet as a 'moral desti-nation' (c.f. Malkki 1992) whether conceived of as independent state (in the envisionings of organizations such as the Tibetan Youth Congress) or as a 'Zone of peace' under the nominal control of the Chinese nation-state (as embodied in the Tibetan constitution and in the more accommodating formulations of the Dalai Lama).[11] The second, locates the 'true body of Tibet' in the person of the Dalai Lama (Falcone and Tsering Wangchuk 2008: 179-180), and thus argues that as the Tibetan nation is embodied in culture rather than territory, and that in the words of Kasur Lodi Gyari, the Dalai Lama's

Special Representative in Washington, 'Today Tibet lives, not within Tibet but outside Tibet. Everything that is Tibet – the culture, the religion, every aspect of Tibet lives outside Tibet' (197 n.45).

Once upon a time, it was possible to associate each of these incommensurable nationalisms with populations on one side of the mountains—the situated, territorial version with Tibetans from Tibet (and with official Chinese pronouncements on the subject), the portable, cultural version with the exile community. Hess cites Calkowski's (1997) work on

> the controversy that has arisen on multiple occasions when Tibetan cultural groups from the Tibetan Autonomous Region and from India each represent themselves as the true emissaries of Tibetan culture. Tibetans in exile have positioned themselves as maintaining a bastion of cultural purity in the face of Chinese practices in Tibet... whereas the Tibetan troupes from China link their authenticity to the physical location of Tibet (2009, 65).

Yet increasingly, and perhaps unsurprisingly given the journeying practices and media worlds that animated the connections between 'homeland' and 'Diaspora' prior to the events of March 2008, there is no longer any simple connection between geographic location and the territorial and religio-cultural modes of Tibetan nationalism. As the ethnographic vignettes with which I began this essay demonstrate, in addition to the oppositions Calkowski describes, one may encounter territorial nationalists in India, mourning their separation from the homeland and cultural nationalists in China, bemoaning the flight of 'all our best and brightest' into exile.

That territorial and cultural modes of Tibetan nationalism now exist uneasily on both sides of the Himalaya is no doubt at least in part attributable to the changing dynamics of Tibetan peregrinations across the mountains since the 1980s. As one way journeys premised on the taking of refuge have been supplemented and to some degree superseded by return migrations and, especially, tarrying circulations of Amdo and Kham Tibetans through the largely Lhasa-centric (see Diehl 2002) cultural forms of the Diaspora, a classical model of Diaspora as comprising a spatially (and temporally; c.f. Axel 2001)

separated homeland and its dispersed populations only imperfectly captures the contemporary Tibetan reality in which homeland and Diaspora are *both* in motion and in which understandings of self and of political possibility are colored at least in part by the traffic between the two.

The consequences for belonging of this plurality at the heart of Tibetan nationalist imaginings, now complexly spatialised by a skein of movements across the highest mountains in the world, is perhaps the most surprising element of this entire picture. Where one might expect this dual conception of Tibet as longed for territory and jealously guarded cultural possession—as both grounded and portable fatherlands, that is—to result in an expanded compass of national belonging, for the most part just the opposite has been the case. While recasting Tibetan Buddhism as a universal soteriological and political resource has had some success in rallying westerners to the Tibetan cause (see Prost 2006), in general, amongst Tibetans, the mutual interference between the two most prominent modes of imagining possible Tibetan nations has resulted in an augmented field of possible unbelongings, in, in other words, more ways not to fit.

Thus Tibetans in China who might otherwise see themselves as belonging to true Tibet by virtue of their territorial location now are perhaps just as liable to see themselves as degraded or out of place by virtue of their separation from the Dalai Lama as the embodiment of Tibetan culture. Similarly, many Tibetans who have passed through Dharamsala since the intensification of the second wave of migration from Amdo in the 1980s find their proximity to the traditional religious and cultural elite small compensation for their distance from the cuisine, kin, climate and the allegedly more sincere religious practice of territorial Tibet. While trans-Himalayan migration may have knit the two sides of the mountains more closely together than the communities of most diasporic dispersals, it has also opened a widening zone of homelessness at the center of Tibetan community. Given the Dalai Lama's centrality to cultural nationalism in particular, as well as his efforts to set up an effective secular political structure in preparation for his passing, only time will

tell whether territorial and religio-cultural versions of Tibetan nationalism will move closer together or farther apart in the coming years.

Conclusion: The Co-Mobility of Home and Diaspora

I want to conclude with some reflections on the resonances between the double-ness at the heart of Tibetan nationalism(s) and Liisa Malkki's classic article (1997 [1992])[12] on the place of refugees in the 'national order of things'. Malkki described the differing responses to exile amongst two groups of Hutu refugees in Tanzania. The first group had lived in a refugee camp in rural western Tanzania since escaping the 1972 genocide in their native Burundi. The second group had spent the intervening years 'in and around the township of Kigoma on lake Tanganyika' (Malkki 1997: 54). The 'camp refugees', she suggests, 'saw themselves as a nation in exile and defined exile, in turn, as a moral trajectory of trials and tribulations that would ultimately empower them to reclaim (or create anew) the "Homeland" in Burundi' (66). In their case, 'displacement had become a form of moral purity', and this purity, based centrally on their status as refugees, had become intimately bound up with this group's sense of cultural and national identity—of essential Hutu-ness. The 'town refugees' by contrast, 'were not *essentially* "Hutu" or "refugees" or "Tanzanians" or "Burundians", but rather just "broad persons"' (67). They pursued in other words, 'not a heroized national identity but a lively cosmopolitanism' that prompted the camp refugees to see them as 'impure' or 'problematic' (68).

The parallels between the Tibetan situation(s) I have described above and Malkki's case should be clear enough. In both, alternatively nationalist and cosmopolitan visions of community are in circulation. Yet the salient difference between the two cases may not be immediately apparent. Where Malkki casts both sets of Hutu refugees as relating primarily to a geographically defined homeland that has stayed put while they have traveled away from it, in the Tibetan case, in at least one version of the story, the homeland has itself been in motion. Where both groups of refugees in Malkki's account, '[invent] homes and

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homelands in the absence of territorial national bases – not *in situ* but through memories of and claims on places that they can or will no longer corporeally inhabit' (52), in the Tibetan case we see both migrants and *non-migrants* imagining their relationship to an absent homeland in a context of both chronic mobility and the mutual interference of incompatible nationalisms. Phuntsok and others like him, after all, never went to India, and live to this day *in Tibet*. Unlike their refugee and returnee compatriots and unlike both sets of migrants in Malkki's article, they stayed put while their homeland moved away from them. The Tibetan example, then, pushes us to attend to the central role of displacement to imagining homelands *in situ*. Amdowa migrants to and from India, as well as their non-migrant co-nationals, invent homes and homelands, both at a distance *and in situ*, through, around, and in idioms shaped but not exhausted by 'territorial national bases' that are themselves both compelling moral destinations and significant elsewheres.

I began this essay with a discussion of the creeping reification of the boundary between mobility and immobility in some of the most innovative work in the 'new mobilities' turn. At this point in the analysis, it bears noting that similar sorts reification and linking of categories of mobile and immobile to particular spaces or populations can also be observed in much of the recent work on Diaspora as a more-than-national social formation. In particular, in much recent writing on that subject, even thinkers attuned to the complexities of 'home' as a category freighted with ambiguous and gendered political and cultural content, have tended to see the dispersion of Diaspora as always already referring back to a fact of physical movement.[13] The stories we commonly read of diasporic identity are almost entirely those of making home in the aftermath of a spatial movement away, reflections on how in Divya Tolia-Kelly's (2004) words, 'the experience of a past home resides with you as you traverse toward your next' (Tolia-Kelly 2004: 7).[14]

In this mapping, home is the fixed or the desire to fix, movement is that which unfixes or refixes, even if such binaries are no longer approached in terms of a purely sedentarist ethics that would mark displacement or uprooting as aberrant. Diasporic consciousness is

approached via an analytical dialectic of movement and stability, but the story told about it is over-determined by what has become an almost universal set of genre expectations—people who move have, as a result, had their notions of home reshaped. These genre expectations have rendered it surprisingly difficult for the anthropology of Diaspora (and perhaps, of mobility more broadly) to reckon with people who are displaced *in place*, as in, Kathleen Stewart's (1988) evocative phrase, 'exiles in their own homelands' (Stewart 1988: 235).

Thus, it seems clear that placing (a common sense notion of) movement alongside (common sense notion of) stasis in one's analytic scheme as anthropologists and others have done over the last few decades is insufficient to gain critical purchase on the co-mobility of home and Diaspora. While placing routes alongside roots is certainly an improvement on an exclusive focus on static or grounded social forms, I suggest that a focus on a dialectic of stability and mobility wherein we assume we know what each of these are ahead of time is likely to be as ultimately as rigid and constraining an analytic frame as the methodological nationalism it has been intended to supersede. In place of a dialectic between stable homes and mobile aways, proximate securities and distant risks, I suggest scholars would be better served by treating both home and the unhomely, those who move and those who stay, not as neatly mappable onto either mobile or stable but as complex *mixtures* of movement and stability, the particular contours of which must be studied *in vivo* rather than assumed *a priori*.

Notes

[1] These areas, historically two of the three regions of cultural (but not political) Tibet, are not part of the contemporary Tibetan Autonomous Region but are parceled out between the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan.

[2] A useful source of information on such movements is the International Campaign for Tibet's annual publication entitled 'Refugee Report: Dangerous Crossing' available at their website. The 2011 version is accessible at:

http://www.savetibet.org/documents/reports/refugee-report-dangerous-crossing-2011

[3] See Gupta and Ferguson 1997.

[4] Cresswell alludes to this only in passing: 'and it matters where walking happens the walk in 19th-century Paris is very different from the walk in rural Mali or the walk in the contemporary British countryside' (Cresswell 2010: 20).

[5] I.e., made into Diasporas; see Safran 2005 for an eye-opening reappraisal of the relationship between the Jewish case and scholarly work on Diasporas more broadly construed; see Yeh 2009, among others, for a contrasting list of Tibetan similarities to the Palestinian Diaspora.

[6] The Jewish model of Diaspora, he suggests, incorporates 'coercion as a causative factor of out-migration of people with a well- defined identity from their homeland; conscious cultivation of collective memory of the homeland, with a strong emphasis on ultimate return (this is more about "re-turn," a repeated turning to the concept and/or reality of the homeland, than a physical return); preservation of culture through a patrolling of communal boundaries as the defining feature of the dispersal; and maintenance of communication and solidarity through institutionalized practices' (Anand 2003: 214).

[7] Dreyfus confirms the central importance of Chenrezig/Avalokitesvara to both historic and contemporary imaginings of Tibetan nationalism; many of these narratives, 'identify Tibet as an originally barbarous country civilized by Buddhism and transformed into the "pure land surrounded by snow mountains" *(gangs ris bskor ba'i zhing khams)* often referred to in Tibetan prayers. This transformation was brought about by the beneficent activities of Avalokitesvara during his periodic manifestations throughout Tibetan history as *Srong btsan sgam po*, Padmasambhava, Atisa, and later the Dalai Lamas. In the *Ma ni bka' 'bum,* Avalokitesvara [Chenrezig] is described as the deity with whom Tibetans have a

special relation. He is the progenitor of the Tibetan race, and he comes to the aid of Tibet throughout its history' (Dreyfus 2005: 11).

[8] Dreyfus continues: 'There are many Tibetan nationalists, both inside and outside of Tibet, who are markedly uncomfortable with religious nationalism and who feel ill at ease to self-identify with the moral community defined by the "Prayer of Truthful Words" and the National Anthem. They argue that Buddhism should not have much of a role to play in Tibetan political institutions, and that the predicament of Tibet is largely due to Buddhism and its non-violent message, which they see as a possibly fatal liability for the future of Tibet. Such a stance has been expressed with great force in some of the literature that has come out of Tibet, particularly out of Amdo, in the last two decades' (2005: 14). Also see Misra 2003: 192.

[9] The term is Donna Haraway's; see Law and Hetherington (2003) for a fuller contextualization.

[10] http://tibetanyouthcongress.org/about-tyc/, accessed October 13th, 2011.

[11]http://www.savetibet.org/resource-center/dalai-lama/guidelines-future-tibet-policy, accessed October 14th, 2011.

[12] Moran (2004) argues compellingly that the Tibetan example stands Malkki's argument on about the place of the refugee in the 'national order of things' on its head, noting the 'the rather different semiotic valence of the "Tibetan refugee". It is as if, by the magic inherent in this particular geographic qualifier, the categorization of refugee is stood on its head. The Tibetan refugee does come to stand for his or her nation in absentia, carrying the culture as legacy and as precious cargo. Further, within the world of popular media representations (as well as many Tibetans' own estimations), this cargo is in fact their gift to the world. Tibetans are not usually portrayed as "rootless" or as stripped of the aura that surrounds their nation-culture; in fact, quite the reverse' (189).

[13] See for example, Safran's assertion in an otherwise stimulating and innovative essay (2005): 'In any case, it can be argued that almost all of the diasporas listed above are the

products of migration from one country—normally their country of origin—to a hostland; they perpetuate its culture, sustain specific ethnic or religious institutions, are reluctant to give up their identities, and maintain a transpolitical connection to their countries of origin and dispersion. This last qualification makes it difficult to refer to the Québécois, Spanish Basques, or Tamil Sri Lankans as diasporas: they have not been dispersed, but they wish political independence in the land in which they have remained' (38-39).

[14] The unquestioned focus on movement as the sole source of displacement in Tolia-Kelly's essay is in contrast to her critical feminist sensibility towards 'home'.

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