

BUDDHISM AND THE BODY

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~ ALL NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO ENSURE CONFIDENTIALITY ~

Introduction

For a human to exist in, experience and interact with the world, a body is required. The body is a universal vessel that carries human beings through their lives and provides a platform to interpret and construct concepts of the world they exist in. Although bodies differ in shape and size, they can be universalised into a class, that of the human. However, this is a simplistic beginning to a complex and dynamic objective construction. The body is a persuasive objective truth for many persons; the physicality of its presence in every day life for every human being makes it difficult to ignore as an important element in understanding the world in relation to the self. The body is visualised and interpreted in many different ways by many different cultures. Levi Strauss's binary opposition theory has shown how the body is also put into many varying oppositional relationships with the world and other social beings. For the duration of this paper I shall be drawing upon Levi Strauss's theory of opposition in order to demonstrate the relationships between bodies and Buddhism. For many people, such as Tibetans, the body is used as a vessel for knowledge and belief. The Tibetan can embody many elements of the world around it. The body can physically and mentally store knowledge of the world. Often this knowledge is specific to individual bodies and their minds, however individual bodies also contain collective knowledge that is shared between bodies within societies. This specificity of knowledge is then reflected back into the world and interpreted as culture by other social beings. In this paper I will look into the ways Buddhism is embodied by the Tibetan people, the way it is validated, perpetuated and then reflected back into the world only to be embodied by someone else; thus creating a circle of embodiment that allows Buddhism to grow as it is passed on through generations of Tibetans. However, there are many different ways in which Buddhism is embodied. It is not only the individual who places Buddhism in or at their own body, but external entities and persons can place knowledge and belief such as Buddhism in bodies that are not their own.

Three interpretations of the Tibetan Body

This paper will look at three different forms of body interpretation and conceptualisation and how these are used in the embodiment of Buddhism into the Tibetan body. The first category is that of a Tibetan viewing his or her own body in an individualised conception; this will be termed the '*self reflexive body*.' This construction individualises the body and disengages it from a collective conceptualisation of all Tibetans sharing one body. An example of this conceptualisation can be seen when a patient at the Mentsi Kang said to a doctor, "When you cut my skin, will the pain be really bad. I'm afraid of the pain."¹ This is demonstrating the body being individualised and existing independently from other Tibetans. The second is a Tibetan interpreting the body of a fellow Tibetan; this is termed as the '*shared second body*.' This category is more complex than the first. The *shared second body* is the conceptualisation of a body of a Tibetan, as seen from another Tibetan. However, in conceptualising a Tibetan body separate from oneself, the Tibetan may also include one's own body by collapsing the *self-reflexive body* into the *shared second body*; in grammatical terms this would mean the subject 'I' becomes 'we'. In making comments about the Tibetan body, Tibetans are therefore referring to a concept of a shared body, accessible to all Tibetans. An example of this is when Doctors at the Mentsi Kang have repeatedly told me that Tibetans prefer to take Tibetan medicine over Chinese medicine as their bodies react better to herbal medicine whereas Chinese medicine can damage their body further. In one case, after having this discussion with me, a doctor opened a packet of crushed Tibetan medicine and licked the powder, placing himself in the conceptualisation of the *shared second body*. The third is the Tibetan body viewed by the current Chinese government and the international community; this will be termed the, '*spectated Tibetan body*.' The Chinese government and the international community of both Tibetans and Westerners play a powerful role in constructing the concept of the Tibetan body. The power of constructing identity and validating identity that these two entities regularly exercise directly influences both the *self-reflexive body* and the *shared second body* of Tibetans. The external

¹ Quotation taken from a patient at the Mentsi Kang. Recorded by the author.

identity labelling that these forces impose are often internalised and subsequently morphed into perceptions of the *self-reflexive body*. This process is essentially an internalisation of external perceptions that lead to self-identity and self-perception. An example of this would be when the government issues an identity card to a Tibetan from Amdo that classifies them as Amdo ethnicity. Thus the Tibetan, on some internalised level, will identify himself or herself as an Amdo Tibetan.

The division of these three categories are not meant to isolate them and ignore the importance of their interaction. For example there can be no *self-reflexive body* without the knowledge of a *shared second body*. It is their very interaction and dualistic existence to the Tibetan that allows them to exist, create meaning and embody Buddhism. Each category draws upon the others in order to create itself. For a Tibetan to have a concept of a *self-reflexive body*, he or she must internalise the conceptualisations of the body that the *shared second body* and the *spectated Tibetan body* generate and further map these constructions into the perception of the self. In doing so, Tibetans are creating a self image of the body that draws upon elements external to the self, however, these elements that help to construct a notion of the self, when fully internalised, are invisible to the self. They essentially cease to be elements of the external, but rather exist solely as the concepts of the individualised self. Therefore, although these categories are defined, they will be interacting with each other in the following arguments. To begin looking at the ways Buddhism is embodied by Tibetans, we must first have an understanding of the body in which it is being internalised; thus we begin by looking at the conceptualisation of the *self-reflexive body*.

Deki's Body

During my research in Lhasa, I worked closely with a lady named Deki who acted as my translator. We spent so much time together that she ended up being one my best Tibetan friends and closest and most reliable informants. After a trip to the Mentsi Khang and over a bowl of noodles, I once asked her what she thought of her own body. She replied, "Tibetans have a saying, if you loose your wealth you loose nothing, if you loose your body, you loose everything."

The conceptualisation of the Tibetan *self-reflexive body*

The issue of the conceptualisation of the *self-reflexive body* is extremely complex. Knowledge and experience is drawn from all facets of life and is further interpreted by an individual in order to construct a self-image of the body. For each Tibetan this may be done in different ways using different experiential knowledge. However, a common theme runs through most of Tibetan's lives. Through my research I have found that Tibetans conceive the body in light of Buddhist understanding and interpretation. With Buddhism playing such an intrinsic role in many Tibetan's lives, it becomes clear that the body will be conceptualised in terms of Buddhism theory. "I am content with this body of mine which enabled me to encounter religion."² Milarepa sets the example of what a Buddhist's body is there for. It acts as a vessel for which the mind or consciousness can reside in through the ions of reincarnation. The body acts as a passageway towards enlightenment and further towards the benefit of all sentient beings. Therefore great importance is placed on the health and sustainability of the body in order to attain states of enlightenment and further the benefit of other humans. This is why suicide is so adamantly revered and rarely found in Tibet. To destroy one's own body is a terrible act in relation to karma because one is acting against the good of all sentient beings.³ "All the other material things that we gather around us with

² Lhalungpa, Lobsang. The Life of Milarepa. p135

³ In spending time at the Mentsi Kang with Deki, the topic of suicide has arisen many times in conversation with doctors. They have continually claimed that it is very rare in Tibet due to two main factors. The first is that the strong relationship formed between the doctor and patient stops patients from committing suicide. The compassion showed by Tibetan doctors is extremely valued by the profession and reduces the suicide rate. The second is the patient's belief in Buddhism and that the body is a sacred place where religion and faith can harbor and grow. To actively destroy

so much effort and concern are for the care of our bodies, and compared to any other possession it is without doubt our bodies that we cherish most.”⁴ Patrul Rinpoche’s comment reflects the importance Deki placed on the care for one’s body. Not only does it stand as a vessel for one’s own consciousness, but also as a harbour for deities and Bodhisattva that return to Samsāra through reincarnation or incarnations. This will be looked at more carefully as I begin to explain the ways in which Buddhism is embodied by Tibetans. The concept of the body acting as a vessel for Buddhism and one’s own consciousness is not limited to the *self reflexive body*, but incorporates and uses both the *shared second body* and the *spectated Tibetan body* in a interactive relationship. To conceive a *self-reflexive body*, Tibetans must draw upon the bodies around them and understand them in relation to themselves. By doing this, one gains a conceptualisation of the *self-reflexive body*.

There is an apparent contradiction to both Deki’s and Patrul Rinpoche’s comments on the importance of the body when it placed against Milarepa’s example of a strict observer and follower of the Buddhist tradition. If the body stands as a vessel for Buddhism to exist and flourish within, why does Milarepa allow his body to fall into such a state of decay? “My body is like a skeleton; at the sight of it, a savage enemy would weep.”⁵ Milarepa’s disregard for his body indicates a level of Buddhist practice that allows him to exist independent of his body. In Buddhism the body acts as a vessel, however, it is a temporary place that must be understood within the concepts of impermanence. “From the summit of the highest heavens to the very depths of hell, there is not a single being who can escape death.”⁶ Although the body is required for a person to reach the higher levels of Dharmakaya, it can only follow a person’s consciousness so far, be it to death or enlightenment. At the point of enlightenment, the *self-reflexive body* is no longer required for the ego is lost, oppositional relations are understood and forgotten and the world is seen as a collective whole. Murdock and Lama Govinda (1969) call this operation of extending one’s consciousness away from the body as “transmutation.” “Buddhism as a technique in which images of lived experiences

the body by suicide that is not conceptualised as a gift or dedication to the Dharma, means that one is acting negatively against the Dharma and therefore generating negative karma.

⁴ Patrul Rinpoche. *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*. p297-298.

⁵ Lhalungpa, Lobsang. *The Life of Milarepa*. p124

⁶ Patrul Rinpoche. *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*. p41

are transmuted into new planes of mental awareness."⁷ The body is used in skill full means to reach this elevated level of understanding. Milarepa reached a level in his practice where his *self-reflexive body* lost importance as his consciousness excelled beyond the realms of Samsāra and physical presence. This shows the temporality of the body and how it must be harnessed and used by individuals until practice takes one beyond the reliance on a physical vessel in the realms of Samsāra.

Offering your horse or elephant is worth hundreds of other offerings;

Offering your child or spouse is worth thousands;

Offering your own body is worth hundreds of thousands.⁸

However this level of practice is extremely advanced and is not obtained by many humans. Most Tibetans still require their bodies in good health in order to use it as skill full means to reach a higher level on the path of the Dharma. Even Milarepa himself had to use his body in the beginning of his teachings with Marpa in order to reach the elevated levels of the Dharma. "Each time that I cruelly drove you out from the ranks of the disciples and overwhelmed you with grief, you had no bad thoughts against me. This signifies that your disciples will have first of all the zeal, perseverance, wisdom, and compassion necessary for every disciple."⁹ Here Marpa admits to the hardships placed upon Milarepa's body in order to drive him to a higher level of Buddhist practice, especially compassion. Therefore, we can see the *self-reflective body* for many Tibetans to be an important instrument on the path of the Dharma.

The possible dialectic relationship between the *self-reflexive body* and the *shared second body*.

To further the exploration into the conceptualisation of the Tibetan body, one must consider the relationship between the *self-reflexive body* and the *shared second body*. To what extent is the *self-reflexive body* invalid, in that it cannot exist without a collective Tibetan body; in that all Tibetans on some level of conception, share a single body. In a sense, the independent *self-reflexive body* becomes a

⁷ Murdock. Tibetan Lamas and Gurung Shamans in Nepal. p24.

⁸ Patrul Rinpoche. The Words of My Perfect Teacher. p298

⁹ Lhalungpa, Lobsang. The Life of Milarepa. p74

collective *shared second body*. Vincanne Adams in her article pertaining to “human rights issues, the Tibetan medical tradition and politicized bodies” comes to the conclusion that Tibetans do share a collective conceptualisation of the body. She reaches this conclusion by studying Tibetans in light of a Tibetan medical discourse. She claims that Tibetans’ illnesses are frequently manifested from the “external”¹⁰ world (that separate from the body itself.) It is understood that experiences that are external to the body can manifest themselves as illness within the body through the imbalance of the three humours.¹¹ This internal bodily imbalance then represents itself in the external world for all other Tibetans to be subjected to. “Internal and external causes and effects are manifested in the same way because the external world is in some sense found at the site of the internal. But also a “flawed” internal world can create an oppressive and conflictual external one. That Tibetans think of their bodies as social milieus finally then directs our attention to the possibility of a collective subjectivity.”¹² From interaction between the Tibetan body and the social environment surrounding that body, Adams makes the claim that there is a collective understanding of all Tibetans. In correlation with this argument, the *self-reflexive body* becomes nullified or rather incorporated into the *shared second body* of Tibetans.

While this argument seems convincing in its structure, Adams misses a vital element in the Tibetan conceptualisation of the body. She overlooks the role in which Buddhism is used to understand and interpret both the *self-reflexive body* and the *shared second body*. This is a key aspect to the Tibetan psyche that Murdock picks up on in his book on the “Tibetan Lamas and Gurung Shamans in Nepal.”¹³ He claims the opposite to Adams and argues that the practice of Buddhism and the belief of karma strengthens the conceptualization of the *self reflexive body* and disengages Tibetans from the concept of a collective body. “The Tibetan Buddhist lamas’ rites and teachings, based on written texts, thrust the theme of harmony into the background and draw to the foreground a highly

¹⁰ Adams, Vincanne. *Suffering the Winds of Lhasa: Politicized Bodies, Human Rights, Cultural Difference, and Humanism in Tibet*. p88

¹¹ The Tibetan Medical Tradition believes that health is maintained by the balance of the three bodily humours. “For when they are in the state of balance, the three humors are causes maintaining and improving good health. The moment that they are disturbed, they become causes for disorders.” Doctor Yeshe Donden. *Health Through Balance*. p34.

¹² Adams, Vincanne. p88

¹³ Murdock. *Tibetan Lamas and Gurung Shamans in Nepal*

individuating religious destiny."¹⁴ In Murdock's argument, the Tibetan's concept of the *self reflexive body* resembles more the Buddhist construction of the body being a vessel that can store a karmic history for an individual consciousness. Murdock claims that there is an understanding of the body and consciousness that involves the *self-reflexive body* to merge into a collective *shared second body*. In this vein of thought he parallels Adams in saying that on a social level, Tibetans do view their own body by conceptualising it as part of a collective body shared by all Tibetans. Ultimately he accepts the understanding of a Tibetan viewing one's own body as part of a social milieu. "Tibetan rituals include an under layer that deals with this-world concerns, just as do the shamans, but the lamas use their rites as an opportunity to introduce a Buddhist path of extrication from the world matrix."¹⁵ The "world matrix" is the social network that is created by the existence of the *shared second body*; Tibetans viewing other Tibetans and deriving meaning and knowledge from these relationships. However, the quotation clearly shows that the Buddhist conceptualisation of the body is one that extricates oneself from this "world matrix" of collective existence and creates the body within an individualistic worldview. For Murdock, the *self-reflexive body* is constructed through the belief and following of Buddhist theory, thus keeping the body individualised and disengaged from a collective conceptualisation. His argument appears stronger than Adams's as he incorporates both the "world matrix" and the Buddhist viewpoints. He makes the distinction between the two and demonstrates through description of the shamans and the lamas how the Tibetans of Gyasumdo must balance their belief between the two powers. This means that Tibetans are constantly balancing the conception of the body between the *self-reflexive body* and the *shared second body*.

The Lama's embodiment of Buddhism

With this outline of the different conceptualisations of the Tibetan body, one can begin to look at the ways Buddhism is embodied by a Tibetan. One of the most obvious and arguably frequent embodiments is found in the teachers and role models of the religion. "The precept of the Lama is more important than scriptures

¹⁴ Murdock. Tibetan Lamas and Gurung Shamans in Nepal. p23

¹⁵ Murdock. Tibetan Lamas and Gurung Shamans in Nepal. p23

of Tibet's past, revelations of potent teachings, artwork, and songs...have been central to Khenpo Jikphun's reputation as a great spiritual master...and they have been the basis of many of his actions."¹⁹ Germano here shows how a Lama's perception of himself can influence his actions along the path of the Dharma. Khenpo embodied Buddhism in the *self-reflexive body* and acted upon this embodiment. Subsequently, from this internalisation of Buddhism, he managed to muster a following of around "2000 in winter and 1,400 in summer with an expanded population of up to 10,000 during major initiatory rituals."²⁰ This collective reaction to the apparent Buddhism embodied by Khenpo within the *self-reflexive body* implies that the internalisation of the religion is not exclusive to the first person. The embodiment extended outwards from the *self-reflexive body* and into a more socially visible *shared second body*. Khenpo's internalisation of Buddhism became accessible and accepted by his followers. It is here that we begin to witness an externalisation of the internalised embodiment of Buddhism within a Lama.

It is not sufficient for a Lama to embody Buddhism in the *self-reflexive body* alone and not allow it to be externalised and made visible for other Buddhists. If the embodiment is restricted to the *self-reflexive body*, no other people will be able to identify or experience it. Therefore, a Lama must make the embodiment of Buddhism accessible to others by externalising it through a *shared second body*. In Khenpo's example, the Buddhism that was positioned within his body spoke out to his followers multiple times. This can be done in many ways including what some might term as miracles. "A "chest" resembling a dark green bird egg then fell from the sky in front of his arms and landed on his desk."²¹ This is a very visible and material externalisation of the Buddhism and power embodied by Khenpo. Other forms of externalisation can come from instantaneous song recital such as those of Milarepa or simply inspirational teachings. The important point to recognise in all of these manifestations of the embodied Buddhism is that they originate from the body of the Lama. It could be argued that in cases of incarnation or reincarnation that the origin of the externalised powers is actually the Bodhisattva or the reincarnate consciousness that entered the body. However, this becomes

¹⁹ Germano, David. Re-memembering the Dismembered Body of Tibet. p60

²⁰ Germano, David. p65

²¹ Germano, David. p81

insignificant within the Buddhist conceptualisation of the body acting as a vessel. What remains important is that the Buddhism, spiritual power, incarnation or reincarnation is centralised in the body, the vessel that can support it and act as a platform for which it can be externalised to other followers of the Dharma.

Thus far we have seen an embodiment of Buddhism by the *self-reflexive body* of a Lama that is then externalised and made visible to other followers through a *shared second body*. This represents one half of a circle of the embodiment. What has yet to be discussed is the ways in which the perception of the *shared second body* embodying Buddhism fortifies and validates the embodiment within the original *self-reflexive body*, thus completing the circle and allowing the embodiment to be perpetuated. This section of the cycle can be exemplified by Peta, Milarepa's sister. After hearing the song of her brother, (an externalisation of his embodied Buddhism,) "she cried out, 'Whoever spoke these words is a Buddha!'"²² Within the body of her brother, she places a representation of Buddhism, the Buddha. This validating perception of the embodiment that originated from the internalisation of Buddhism from Milarepa is returned through the conceptualised *shared second body* as seen by Peta, to the *self reflexive body* perceived by Milarepa himself. In simpler terms, Peta returns to Milarepa the very embodiment that she experienced from him in the first place. This example is slightly flawed in that Milarepa is moving beyond the concepts of his own body through his elevated practice. However, this example can be collapsed onto many Lamas that have not reached that level and who still rely heavily upon the objectivity of their own bodies. It is common for a Lama to strengthen the conception of Buddhism embodied within their *self-reflexive body* by their followers acknowledging this embodiment and validating it. "I began just to enjoy his presence, just to go along with him."²³ Chogyam Trungpa demonstrates the use of the conceptualisation of the *shared second body* of his Lama and how this brings him enjoyment. His "devotion"²⁴ towards his Lama will have surely fortified the embodiment of Buddhism within his Lama's *self-reflexive body*. It is now possible to see how the embodiment of Buddhism within a body can be perpetuated as this cycle repeats itself while constantly reaffirming the truths within it.

²² Lhalungpa, Lobsang. The Life of Milarepa. p123

²³ Trungpa, Chogyam. Crazy Wisdom. p67

²⁴ Trungpa, Chogyam. Crazy Wisdom. p67

The use of the Tibetan medical tradition to embody Buddhism within the bodies of 'every day' Tibetans

Up to this point we have paid specific attention to the embodiment of Buddhism within Lamas or teachers, however, it is not restricted to these persons. The embodiment of Buddhism is a process that almost all Buddhists will experience through the *self-reflexive body*. I would like to look the ways an 'every day' Tibetan internalise Buddhism in the *self-reflexive body*. To do this I will look at the Tibetan Medical tradition and how it incorporates Buddhism into its practice and from there examine the ways Tibetans conceptualise the embodiment of Buddhism by using these medical theories and practices. The Tibetan Medical tradition and its concepts of the body and health are firmly believed by most Tibetans and so it plays an important role in how they conceptualise Buddhism within their bodies.

Tibetan medicine has its history firmly rooted Buddhism. The two intertwine on so many levels that they have become dependant on each other. Neither exists mutually exclusive of the other. As long as humans have existed in Tibet, there has always been systems of medicine or healing, no matter how rudimentary they may have appeared. For example there is a noted Bön Medical tradition which predates the Tibetan Medical tradition that was founded by a figure known as Shenrab Miboche in the 6th Century BC. However, for the present day Tibetan medical practitioners, the "origins of illness" were "propounded by the Shakyamuni Buddha" and transcribed into various texts.²⁵ From this origin it is commonly understood that a man named Yuthon Yonten Gompo the Younger kick started the Tibetan Medical tradition by translating and widely establishing the *Gyushi* (the main medical texts of the tradition) between 1112 and 1203 AD.²⁶ From this early stage, Tibetan medicine became a subject that could be studied and student-master lineages developed in order to pass the knowledge through generations. From the 15th to the 17th Centuries "two main schools of Tibetan medicine developed under different master lineage holders...Desi Dangye Gyatso (1653-1705), the regent of the Fifth Dalai Lama, eventually united these two schools."²⁷ This final quotation

²⁵ Dr. Yeshe Donden. Health Through Balance. p15

²⁶ Tibet Information Network. Tibetan Medicine in Contemporary Tibet. p25

²⁷ Tibet Information Network. Tibetan Medicine in Contemporary Tibet. p25

begins to show how the Buddhist religion and its institutionalised monasticism had control over the Tibetan medicine tradition while incorporating it as part of its curriculum. The present situation of Tibetan medicine is that it remains a core subject in Buddhist studies for those involved in the monastic community. Buddhist philosophy can be found imbedded in the theories of Tibetan medicine. "A system of knowledge and behaviour that is highly complex, comprised as it is of Buddhist, shamanic, and humoral constructs of the mind-body and the misfortunes and suffering to which it is susceptible."²⁸ As the general populous of Tibet believes in a conceptualisation of the body and how to keep it healthy that Tibetan medicine offers, one can conclude that the Buddhist elements within the tradition are also adopted. Therefore, the Buddhist elements within Tibetan medicine are being embodied by Tibetans. We shall now look at these elements within Tibetan medicine and see how they are internalised by Tibetans.

Tibetan medicine and subsequently Tibetans conceive the body as having "Three Humours": wind, bile and phlegm. "When they are in the state of balance, the three humors are causes maintaining and improving good health. The moment that they are disturbed, they become causes for disorders."²⁹ These three elements within the body are intrinsically linked with the Buddhist concept of karma. Good karma will lead to the balance of three humours, however, if negative karma is built up through one life or possibly from past lives, the three humours will be prone to imbalance and therefore sickness. "My kidneys are always bad and always making me sick. This is because in my previous life I wasn't good and so I have bad karma."³⁰ In this example the Buddhist elements of karma are embodied within Deki's *self-reflexive body* to take the form of the three humours. Not only is Buddhism being embodied but it is also affecting her body in a clearly direct fashion. The Buddhist conceptualisation of her *self-reflexive body* makes it perceptible to illness and chemical imbalance when her karma is negative. In this bodily perception, the embodiment of Buddhism is active in that it affects the biological body and manifests itself externally. Tibetan doctors are therefore constantly faced with patients that have an externalisation of embodied Buddhist belief in the form of an imbalance in the humours. Doctors meet these disorders

²⁸ Janes, Craig. Tibetan medicine at the Crossroads: Radical Modernity and the Social Organization of Traditional Medicine in the T.A.R, China. p13

²⁹ Doctor Yeshi Donden. Health Through Balance. p34.

³⁰ Notes from a conversation with Deki about her illness.

caused by this imbalance with treatments that directly target the Buddhist elements within the three humours. Tibetan medicine attempts to cure the cause of disease rather than just applying a bandage to the symptoms.³¹ Doctors do this by approaching the embodiment of Buddhism within the *shared second body* of their patients and rectifying the imbalance of the humours. During a Tibetan acupuncture treatment on a male patient at the Mentsi Kang, I witnessed a practice in Tibetan medicine that highlights the attempt to transform negative karma into a positive to rebalance the humours. A golden needle with a small ball of incense balanced on its top was stuck into a man's head. The incense was lit and as it burned, the head doctor of the department began to recite a Tibetan mantra.³² This was a visible and direct use of Buddhism within the medical tradition in an attempt to affect the embodied Buddhist elements of karma within this Tibetan man. Similar to the Lama's externalisation of embodied Buddhist elements within his or her *self-reflexive body* through the use of miracles or spontaneous song, the average Tibetan will externalise their embodied Buddhism through their health and bodily functions. It is here that this theorising meets Adams with her comments about the internal and external worlds of Tibetans. "A "flawed" internal world can create an oppressive and conflictual external one."³³ The holes in Adam's arguments now become more apparent. Even though she describes the externalised embodiment appearing as illness, she misses the fact that this embodiment is not just the three humours, but rather Buddhist elements and belief.

Buddhism embodied within the *spectated Tibetan body*

I will now switch focus from the *self-reflexive body* and the *shared second body* to the embodiment of Buddhism within the *spectated Tibetan body*. During the cultural revolution of the 1960s, the Chinese government attempted to unify China by abolishing all 'backwards' cultural practices and forcing people to adapt to new modern modes of thinking and living. In Tibet, Buddhism was seen as an opposition to 'progress.' Religion and its practices were targeted for abolishment

³¹ Information of the way Tibetan medicine heals patients taken from an interview with a doctor of Orthopaedics at the Mentsi Kang.

³² Witnessed in the blood letting department within Mentsi Kang during my research in the Autumn of 2006.

³³ Adams, Vincanne. p88

as they were considered one of the 'four olds.' The government at that time actively attempted to deconstruct the religion and eradicate it from the Tibetan culture. A task that would prove extremely difficult as Buddhism was such an intrinsic part of Tibetan life, not to mention its embodiment within many Tibetan's *self-reflexive body* and *shared second body*. "Monks and nuns were forced to marry. But many kept their vows separately...Buddhism is deep within us."³⁴ To attack the religion, the government targeted monks and nuns; persons who they deemed to be the avid and primary supporters of Buddhism. The government approached the *spectated Tibetan body* as though Buddhism was embodied within it. The red robes, the vows, the short hair and the chanting all represented a bodily devotion to Buddhism. These devotions were seen as externalised elements of the Buddhism that was embodied within the *spectated Tibetan body*. In order to deconstruct this seen embodiment, the government attacked the very physical body of many monks and nuns.

"They wrapped wires around my fingers. Then they turned on the electric current. The shock was unbearable. My whole body contracted, and sharp pains shot up from my feet. It was more painful than the cattle prod. If I was sitting like this when they turned on the current I was thrown across the room. I was shaking and screaming. I didn't know how it was done...They tortured me every day, and then they set my sentence. They gave me two years."³⁵

This nun speaks of how the Chinese tortured her body in order to eradicate or deconstruct the embodiment of Buddhism within her. The *spectated Tibetan body* is an objective externalisation of Buddhism that can be easily targeted. However, even though the body is attacked, it is difficult to destroy the Buddhism embodied as it is not as objective as the body appears. It is rather a larger part of the Tibetan conscious and self-perception. Destroying or torturing the physical body will not necessarily deconstruct these self-perceptions. In the example of these nuns, Buddhism had become such a visible and intrinsic part of their bodies that to remove it would kill them. Rather than deconstructing the embodiment of

³⁴ Adams, Vincanne. p81 - Quotation lifted by Adams from a film by Ellen Bruno, *Sarya: A Prayer for the Enemy*

³⁵ Adams, Vincanne. *Suffering the Winds of Lhasa: Politicized Bodies, Human Rights, Cultural Difference, and Humanism in Tibet*. p81 - Quotation from a nun who was imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution.

Buddhism within Tibetan's *self-reflexive body*, pain and torture is more likely to strengthen the very internalisation of Buddhism that it aims to eradicate. The intense pain that the nun in the example felt was more likely to clarify the position of Buddhism within her *self-reflexive body*. The pain inflicted on her would have validated this embodiment rather than ridding it from her body. Therefore when the Chinese viewed the *spectated Tibetan body* as embodying Buddhism, it only reinforced the internalisation to the *self-reflexive body* of the nun, verifying the existence of Buddhism within it.

In the modern day Chinese political climate, policies and approaches to Tibetan identity have changed dramatically since the 1960s. However, there still remains a *spectated Tibetan body* in the eyes of the government in which they continue to embody Buddhism within. After the attempts of the Cultural Revolution to disembody Buddhism, the government has come to realise that this task is extremely difficult without killing the Tibetans. Government policy has now turned to a stance that accepts Buddhism within the Tibetan population and employs tactics in order to have some control over the *spectated Tibetan body*. With Tibet now being part of China, almost all Tibetans consider the self in relation to the greater nation of China, be it either apart of or separate to it. This perception of a national conscious has allowed the Chinese government to play a new but equally important role in embodying Buddhism within Tibetan's *self reflexive bodies*. "While Khenpo reportedly experienced initial problems from governmental authorities, a key turning point occurred when the Panchen Lama certified the institute as an academy in 1987. In the late 1980s the community was granted special local government funding for electricity."³⁶ In modern Tibet, Buddhists and Buddhist institutions cannot exist without being in a relationship with the government. This is not to say that all Buddhist institutions are regulated by the government, however, they are all in a relationship with the government be it formalised by papers or in a type of aversion from formality. Khenpo's institution in the East of Tibet was given a type of validation by the government to exist and operate as a Buddhist institution. This action by the government would play a role in embodying Buddhism within the people living Khenpo's community. They are recognised by the nation state as being Buddhist. Although this does not account for the full embodiment of

³⁶ Germano, David. p62-63

Buddhism within the *self-reflexive body* of these Tibetans, it contributes to the process. Another example of the government embodying Buddhism within the *spectated Tibetan body* can be found in the bureaucracy of becoming a monk or nun. Government issued identity cards and 'papers' now define one's profession. When one becomes a monk, the government will issue an identity card that clearly labels the person as a Buddhist monk. On some level of the Tibetan's *self-reflexive body*, this labelling will be embodied. Therefore the role of the government's *spectated Tibetan body* is extremely important in modern day Tibet. As it not only validates the Tibetans own conceptualisation of their *self-reflexive bodies* but might even impose new concepts of self-perception that will be internalised and believed.

Conclusion

To conclude, I have outlined three types of conceptualised body within the Tibetan social milieu, the *self-reflexive body*, the *shared second body* and the *spectated Tibetan body*. Through the use of these three dimensions of the Tibetan body I have looked into the ways Buddhism is embodied by Tibetans and their government. An important point to remember is that these three constructions of the body are dynamic and constantly being redefined and changed by both Tibetans and the Chinese government. Although the body and its actions that impact the world externally appear objective, they are essentially subjective to those that live with them or through them. The Tibetan body is a conceptualisation originating from a consciousness, be it that bodies owner or the government that attempts to control it. With this in mind the body and its conceptualisation can change as these consciousnesses adapt and change in the face of new thinking and modernisation. The body remains dynamic in a social setting. However, even after the events of the Cultural Revolution, it seems as though the Tibetan population will always embody Buddhism as part of the conceptualisation of the body. From the examples used throughout this paper, it becomes apparent that Buddhism's depth and richness within the self-perception of many Tibetans creates a body that cannot exist without it. Buddhism is so intrinsic in the perception of the body that it stands as important as the heart or lungs. Although in relation to the dynamic qualities of the subjective body and the perception of self, this

conceptualisation of embodied Buddhism is likely to change and adapt. The future of the Tibetan body and its construction in relation to Buddhism will continue to adapt as modernisation and new traditions begin to enter into Tibetan society and culture.