

DECLINE OF TIBETAN MUSIC AND THE INVASION OF CHINA

By

URGEN YOLMO

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Supervisor

Name: Dr. Jomi Thomas

Designation: Assistant Professor

Signature:

Coordinator

Name: Father Biju K C

Signature:

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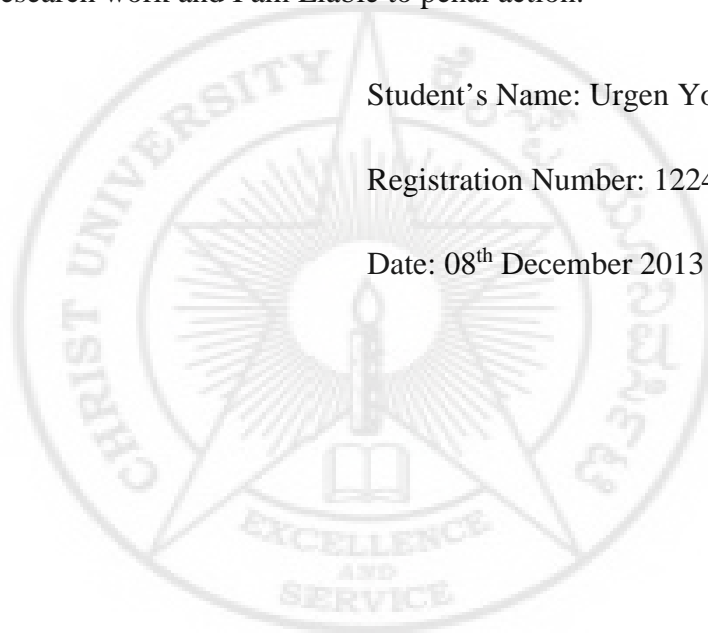
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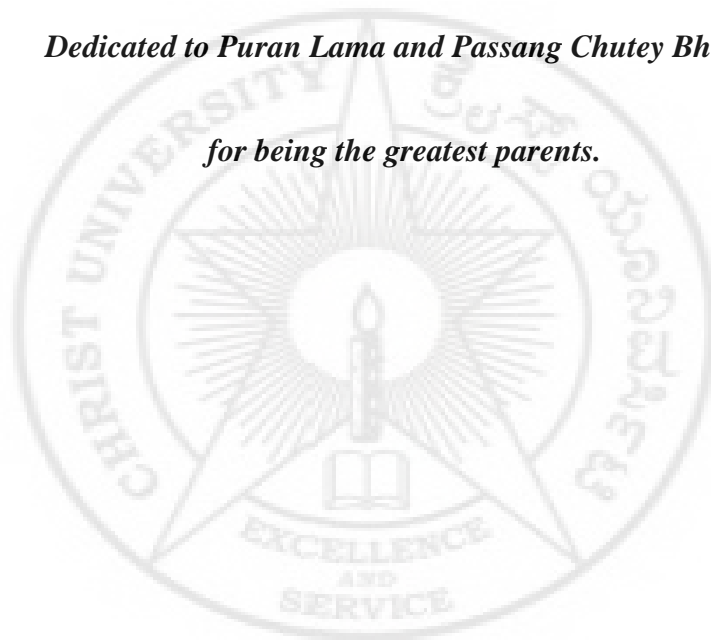
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*Dedicated to Puran Lama and Passang Chutey Bhutia  
for being the greatest parents.*



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## **Abstract**

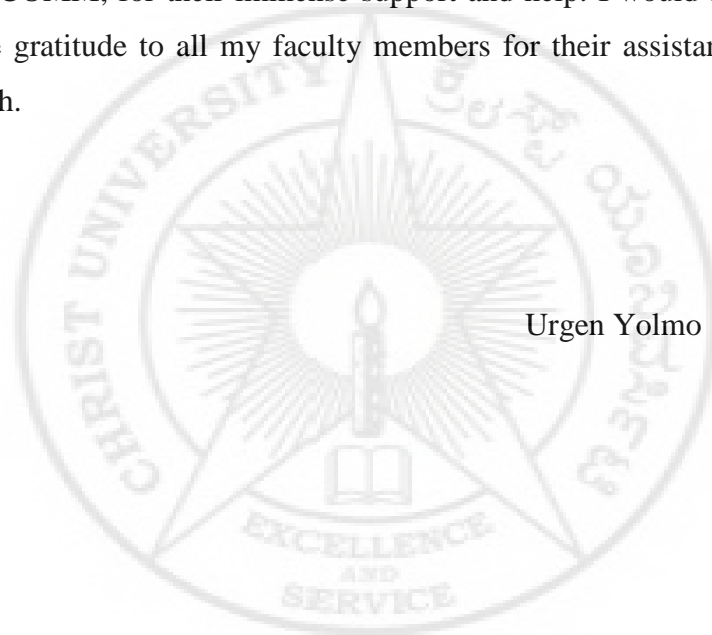
This study explores the forms and features of Tibetan music that existed in the past and its gradual change to the present. It looks at the traditional music that Tibetans followed and the amalgamation of the same with other forms and genres of music as it altered during and after the Chinese invasion of 1949. The study will be working under the idea that the Tibetan music has lost its traditional trace as the prominence of commercial marketing of music have escalated and how this was brought on by the mentioned invasion: the political, social, cultural and economical aspects which directly or indirectly changed the musical culture of Tibet. It envelopes the idea that the musical tradition of Tibet has been lost due to the strong administrative control of the Chinese government and how that led to the failure of the native Tibetans to safeguard the Tibetan traditional forms and genres of music.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Music is an element present in everything that has the ability to produce sound. It is the synchronized version of sound. A mixture of tonal sounds with harmonic connection that is common across cultures. It is the ascending and the descending variations that are brought together to give a length of notes and songs. Music tells about a society's likes and dislikes and the wants and needs. It not only defines a society in terms of the contemporary happenings but also describes its past and its continuation with the present and perhaps the seeming behaviour in future. Music is one of the major aspects that describe a culture and its ways. Tibetan culture can be read through music in a specific way.



Figure 1: Map view of Tibet

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## 1.1 Brief History of Tibet

Over the years, whenever Tibet's history is spoken of or written about, the most important aspect that has been focussed on is the religious sphere of Tibetan region. It is perhaps because of its richness in religious culture and its world famous Tibetan Buddhism. Apart from its religious importance there have been other developments in Tibet in terms of its history that is hardly highlighted. There have been civil wars, independence, occupation and reoccupation of the land which are loosely included while talking about the history of Tibet. Here I talk about the various events and happenings in Tibet that hold weight and are responsible for giving Tibet its structure today:

Tibet has been ruled by innumerable dynasties in the past most of which have been the Mongols rulers who set up their alliance with the Tibetans and spread their empire. What is extremely important to notice is how all these shaped slowly that led to occupation of China and the condition of Tibet that is today.

Before all the invasions and conquering Tibet was a small place where the people lived in harmony and had no practice of religion. They used to practice *bon* rituals which involved belief in the supernatural and spirits. It was believed that human beings were possessed by the spirits easily and these could be expelled by different ways of bon rituals that involved chanting of songs that were especially meant for the purpose. Thus the Tibetans believed in the existence of good and evil spirits and practiced a crude form of exorcism. As time passed the historical texts depict that the bon practice was slowly removed and replaced somewhere around the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD when the Zhang Zhung kingdom of the bon culture annexed by Songtsen Gampo. During that time Tibet was referred to as Tubo by the Chinese.

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Figure 2: The Tibetan Empire

The power that slowly converted to the Tibetan state initiated when Stag-bu snya-gzigs [Tagbu Nyazig] was convinced by a group to revolt against Dgu-gri Zing-po-rje [Gudri Zingpoje] the head of the Zhang Zhung Empire. The group managed to prevail against Zing-po-rje and Namri Songtsen (Namri Lön-tsän) the leader at that point overcame all his neighbouring clans, sequentially and took control of all the area around. That is now called Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. This name was given to the area when Songtsen was assassinated. This infant state which had been formed later became the power house and came to be known as the Tibetan Empire.

There were a number of rulers that came after that which the traditional Tibetans took an account of and that was recorded by the Chinese ministry. These series of emperors ruled from the 7<sup>th</sup> century to the 11<sup>th</sup> century of which three of the most important ones who gave shape to the religious traditions were Trisong Detsen, Ralpacan, and Songtsän Gampo, the *mes-dbon gsum* meaning the 'three religious kings'. Throughout the centuries as the emperors changed and emerged there was a gradual increase in the power of the empire over a diverse terrain This increased to such an extent that by the opening reigning years of the emperors of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the empire's influence extended as far south as Bengal and as far north as Mongolia.

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Slowly the culture had its change as the now very weakly existing bon religion and the supporters of the ancient noble families consequently saw themselves in competition with the introduction of a newly found religion, Buddhism.

After the 9<sup>th</sup> century the political foundation collapsed because of the various rebellious groups that emerged between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> century. This era has been rightly termed as the Era of Fragmentation. However, after the collapse there were several other rulers who took hold of the empire and spread their rule although they weren't as strong and powerful as they had been before. With this developing, the religious sphere of Tibet as well developed rigorously. Tibetan Buddhism grew and opened up schools where the religion would be taught and made aware of to the mass. Monasteries as well were built and scholars were taught and given formal training on the beliefs and the teachings of Buddha. One of the most famous monasteries was the Sakya monastery which held a prominent position in the Tibetan culture and the lives of the Tibetans.

In 1236 Tibet was invaded by the Mongols and the Yuan dynasty prevailed that had its administrative control over the mass. Tibet was integrated into the Mongol Empire after the invasion. It retained its ostensible power over Tibet's regional as well as the religious political affairs, while the Mongols built its structural and administrative power over Tibet with its occasional military intervention. This prevailed as a diarchic structure under the Yuan emperor with the power completely in favour of the Mongols. However, religion was most powerful even after the emphasis of administration of the Mongols. The dominance of the Mongols was more or less indirect and the Sakya lamas had more control over the decisions of the administration of Tibet and that was considered to be legitimate.

The Sakya supremacy over Tibet sustained into the middle of the 14th century though this reign was confronted in 1285 by Drikung Kagyu sect revolution which was assisted by Duwa Khan of the Chagatai Khanate. This revolt was readily concealed and suppressed within five years by the Sakyas when they burned down the Drikung Monastery and killed their people with the help of the eastern Mongols.

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This made the religious head in Tibet more powerful. The years that followed saw the slow growth of the Dalai Lama lineage and rule of Tibet. Dalai Lamas were essentially the religious heads who were monks who controlled the administrative aspects of the State. They looked at the well being of the people and took care of the spread of religious beliefs throughout Tibet. Resultant, Tibet became a theocratic state ruled by the Dalai Lamas. Thus it gradually transformed into a nation that stood for



Figure 3: Religious Supremacy in Tibet

peace and harmony. As time passed however, there were many invaders that came in to annex Tibet and in fact some succeeded where as some failed. These invasions include the invasion of the Europeans, like the Gurkha, the British and the Chinese. However, these influences made Tibet more and more experienced in terms of her resistance but slowly she lost her hold on the military power and as the picture of the world map changed, Tibet changed with each of its invasions. And slowly the culture changed along with her social surroundings, her language and her music. The most impactful invasion was the Chinese invasion which changed everything in the Tibetan culture. The music of Tibet is completely inhibited and none of the Tibetan ways are allowed any more. The change of the head and the change in the form of government impacted Tibet in ways that were never anticipated by the Tibetans. The history of

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Tibet might seem to be bright and glorious but ever since the 1949 invasion, the present of Tibet has been dimmed thus the culture affected.

## 1.2 The Invasion of China

By the 1700s the Qing dynasty of China had its control over some of the areas of Tibet. It had put Amdo under their rule in 1724, and integrated the eastern part of Kham with the province of the neighbouring parts of China. These areas were ruled by the Qing government however indirectly through the noblemen of Tibet.

It was claimed by the Tibetans that the Batang region of the eastern Kham had been left without any claim as per the agreement since the occupation of 1726. This caused uneasiness among the Chinese and in turn the imperial official, Fengchuan was sent to that region such that the Qing control over that area could be reasserted but that caused a revolt by the locals who killed him.



Figure 4: Chinese soldiers on patrol in Tibet

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The Qing government in retaliation sent the Governor of Xining, Zhao Erfeng to Tibet who was appointed to reincorporate the areas in Tibet into China. Consequently a number of monasteries were destroyed by his troops in Kham and Amdo.

Till this point the title of the Dalai Lama had completely been erased from Tibet and he had been forced to flee the country. When the title of Dalai Lama was restored in 1908 he decided to go to Lhasa from Amdo to gauge the situation in 1909 but he was stopped by the military troops sent by the Chinese government. He once again was forced to flee and this time he fled to India. However this hostility was to change in 1911 when Zhao was mutinied and beheaded by his soldiers. That is when the Qing dynasty had its fall.

Even though the Qing dynasty had fallen China had completely occupied Tibet and had direct and full control over her. However the only motive at the time was to make sure that there would not be any European invasion in Tibet because they feared that if a European country was to invade Tibet then the Chinese rule in the East would be weakened. Now the Chinese had control over Tibet and also over the Dalai Lama.

After the fall of the Qing dynasty the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet in 1912 and he expelled the *amban* and tried expelling all Chinese troops, which he succeeded in doing to a great extent. In 1913, the Dalai Lama issued a proclamation stating that the Chinese and Tibetan relationship was that of “priests and patrons” and that there should not be any more violence among the two groups. He wrote, "We are a small, religious, and independent nation" referring to Tibet. After this bright and bold statement the Chinese government accepted and agreed to the proclamation and for the next thirty-six years, Tibet enjoyed *de facto* independence. It cannot be clearly told if Tibet was either still under China for this period of thirty-six years or if it was free from the rule of China completely. Tibet continued to be the closed society that it was and flourished in its cultural sphere and making it close to impossible for any outsider to enter. Lhasa became a very important hub for cultural and social intercourse. In 1914 the Simla Accord was signed between the Tibetan government and Britain. This surrendered the South Tibet region to British India.

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The Chinese did not approve of this and so in 1932, the Tibetan army was defeated by the National Revolutionary Army, in the Sino-Tibetan War when the 13th Dalai Lama tried to seize the land in Qinghai and Xikang. This took care of the situation that the Chinese were facing. After that they warned the Tibetans not to dare cross the Jinsha River again. This resulted in the two parties signing a truce which immediately ended the truce. The Dalai Lama had tried receiving help from the British in India when his armies were being defeated.

In 1949, the Kashag barred the Chinese government, over the dispute of the Kuomintang. It was the period when the Chinese Communist party was coming to power through China. The new Communist Government of China led by Mao Zedong could not keep its communist hold in Tibet. In 1950 the People's Liberation Army of China had occupied the Chamdo area of Tibet and by the beginning of 1951 there was a negotiation in Beijing between the Chinese and the Tibetans. The *Seventeen Point Agreement* followed as a result which made China's sovereignty over Tibet official.

The manorial estates and the lords of the Tibetan society remained the same and continued to function from 1951 to 1959. The Dalai Lama was allowed to hold the kind of power it had since the years of Tibet's de facto independence.

However, the traditional slavery and serfdom was abolished by the communist. The Communists claimed to have improved the condition of Tibet in many ways but the problem was that the Tibetans were suffering.

There was turmoil in eastern Kham and Amdo by 1956, where land reform had been implemented fully. These rebellions eventually spread into western Kham and Ü-Tsang.

There were more than 250,000 Tibetans who died in prisons and labor camps under the Chinese rule. The women of Tibet were raped, sterilized and forced into abortions. Children were closed away from the Tibetan culture and were beaten up by teachers and authority figures in schools and outside home. The Tibetan ways of life was destroyed and the culture was inhibited and next to declination.

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### 1.3 Music of Tibet



Figure 5.1: Tibetan *Tingsha* are small cymbals used in rituals and prayer by Tibetan Buddhist practitioners.

The music prevalent in Tibet is unique and quite different from Chinese music just as every other aspect of culture. Music is incorporated in Tibet in terms of the sacred and the secular. The sacred being the kind of music played in monasteries in the form of chants and instrumental invocation; and secular being the kind that are anything that covered the non-sacred. This type included the folk songs and the music of the popular culture. There were traditions like the *Lama mani* and *lhamo* that were more



Figure 5.2: Singing Bowls are made from alloys of seven metals: gold, silver, copper, zinc, iron, nickel, and antimony. The pitch of each bowl depends on its size, thickness, and weight. They are used as percussion instruments for meditation.

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folk oriented which included bards singing about the society and political situation. Moreover there was the *lu* style which is still existent in Tibet. *Lu* was a folk style which was sung throughout the nation in order to celebrate mythologies and heroes. Though there is very little information that can be caught hold of in term of Tibetan music, it is without a doubt a highlighted fact that the native Tibetans loved music. They had songs for almost all day to day activities, like churning of milk, harvest, washing etc. This form of music followed the *lu* style of singing, which involved singing in specific syllables in high pitched vocals. Thus most of Tibetan music was acapella singing, singing without instruments.

Apart from the different styles of singing the Tibetans practiced, the musical inclination of the natives can also be traced from the way they experienced their music through their instruments. Most instruments that the Tibetans played as a part of their culture were not made up of sophisticated musicology as they believed more in singing. They had instruments like *dhanghe*, *tingsha*, *dorje*, different types of horns, harps, bells, conch, trumpets, cymbals, gongs and many other types of musical instruments that they used to incorporate in their formal and popular music. Accompaniments of these instruments were also included in ceremonial rituals. A list of the list of names of instruments and their compositions are given in the following figures.

The question here is what was the first form of music that emerged in Tibet which served as the foundation for the aforementioned styles to emerge? It was the *bon* music that served it all. Since the *bon* tradition was one of the first traditions existent in Tibet its music was carried out in ceremonial chanting, which were ways to communicate with the supernatural. These included techniques which would invoke the good spirit and exorcise the evil ones.

With the advent of the formation of the Tibetan Empire the music as well started evolving and newer forms were given birth like the aforementioned *lu* style. Today Tibet has styles like the *toshey* and the *nangma* style that are famous in the city of Lhasa. These styles are all dance numbers and are given a lot of importance because of the entertaining power it holds.



Figure 5.3: *Dhanghe* or *Dramyin* is a traditional Tibetan folk music stringed instrument with seven strings, which is used as an accompaniment to singing in the Tibetan Buddhist culture. The instrument is often played during religious festivals.



Figure 5.4: The Tibetan Harp, used for various religious ceremonies and seldom used in accompanying in various folk songs

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Figure 5.5: The *Gyaling* (top) is traditional wind instrument made out of wood that is used in Tibet. Its body is made of hardwood and copper brass bell. It is associated with peace and is used during *pujas* in monasteries. Another wind instrument used in Tibet, the Tibetan Copper Curved Horn (bottom) is used during various Buddhist ceremonies.



Figure 5.6: Bell (left) and *Dorje* (right) are important ritual objects in Tantric Buddhism. These bells are used during prayers and meditations



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 Figure 5.7: Ornate Tibetan conch called *Dung* used in ceremonies and festive functions.

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Figure 5.8: The *Silnyen* is a Tibetan percussion instrument which is pair of cymbals with a small or no central boss. The *Silnyen* is struck by horizontal movement and is used in Buddhist rites.

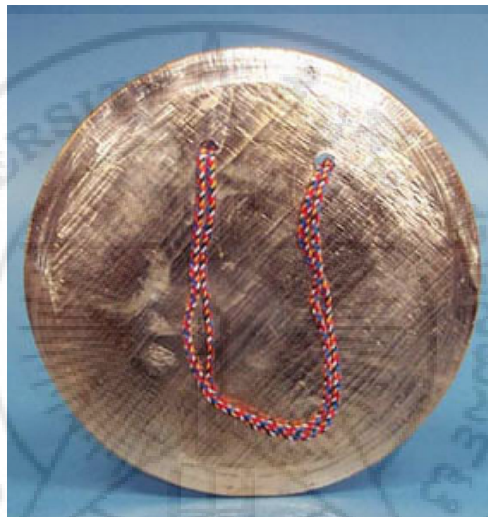


Figure 5.9: Tibetan Gong made up of bronze is used during various rituals. Suspended by a cord with beater included.



Figure 6: The Tang Du is the traditional Buddhist shaman's drum used in Nepali & Tibetan cultural ceremonies. Carved handle, skin heads with rawhide lacing. Comes with playing stick.

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Tibet has had seen her times of ups and downs. Situated in the Himalayan region, Tibet is also called the “roof of the world” sometimes as it is the highest point in the world. She is considered to have a rich culture with colourful history and sitting at the centre of that the beautiful music that has been able to define Tibetan culture to an extent. The purpose of the research was to understand Tibetan music and its decline in the current times.

In order to give base to the research argument, the researcher chose to use a qualitative research method in which he mainly took into account various scholarly articles on Tibetan music, books on the history and development of Tibet, the social condition and the political and the economical condition; the history and the situation of Tibet that affected its music. The articles chosen will focus mainly on the folk music of Tibetan culture and the techniques that remain indigenous only to the Tibetan culture, for example the technique of “chordal” (Ellingson 827) singing that is ubiquitous only in Tibet, which involves solo singing of chords by individuals. “In April 1967 Huston Smith reported on his discovery of a unique vocal ability of some lamas of the Tibetan Gelugpa sect: the ability of individual lamas to sing chords.” (qtd. in Ellingson 827).

The research aims at delving into the Tibetan culture with its music as the medium of study of the culture. Among the studies chosen some as mentioned looked at the techniques of Tibetan singing, some just looked at the sacred and the secular forms of music, some looked at understanding the Chinese invasion affecting Tibetan music and culture, and some looked at the instruments that are indigenous to the Tibetan culture. “Commonly used are whistling; drums or other percussion instruments such as gongs, cymbals, and so on; wind instruments such as flutes and trumpets; and reed instruments such as jews’ harps” (Bradley 535).

Not only were these articles taken into consideration but there were other internet articles that were searched for, that would give extra backing to the authenticity of the research. The articles mostly dealt with the decline of Tibetan music in the current age and, it also looked at the history of Tibetan music, moreover also looking at the Tibetan history itself. A film review by Eric Hung was also taken into consideration which looked at the effects of Chinese supremacy on the Tibetan

music. “A particularly gripping scene involves his interview with three women who were sent to prison for protesting. During their incarceration, they were tortured for refusing to sing the Chinese National Anthem during the flag-raising ceremony each morning.” (Hung 1)

Moreover, one of the important sources that is taken is the documentary by Ngawang Choephel called *Tibet in Song*. The research thus looks at the decline of Tibetan music in the contemporary world. It aims at understanding the failure of the native Tibetans in safeguarding their national pride and being submissive to the external forces that came their way. The research mainly aims to know the decline of the traditional Tibetan music that existed in the past and its decline in the present. It does not look at the popularity it has got in the present time. Hence there will be aspects that will not be touched upon in detail: 1) the rise of the Tibetan music as popular culture throughout Asia and parts of Europe. 2) The similarities between the Chinese and the Tibetan culture. What is more specifically looked at is the historical, social, political and economical status of Tibet before and after its invasion and how that affected the musical culture.

The objectives of the research are essentially to show the traced history of Tibet is music and its development within the musical field. “In the remote plateaus of Tibet, recording artists have been hard at work laying down tracks of love ballads, drinking tunes, and songs meant to soothe the savage beast.” (National Geographic News) The research will widely look at the: 1) the historical basis of the socio-economical and socio-political that served as a reason for the decline of the traditional music of Tibet , 2) the effects of Chinese invasion on Tibetan music, 3) the influence of other cultures on Tibetan music.

There various limitations that the researcher can face while researching for the required field:

1. The researcher will be working on the research where there are negligible amount of Tibetan population present. Hence no quantitative research can be conducted. The research paper can be backed extensively by various surveys

and interviews but since the required stakeholders are not present in the area the required backing cannot be met.

2. Not much is written or spoken about the traditional form of Tibetan music due to which it will be difficult for the researcher to find authentic data to back his hypothesis.
3. The researcher might be biased about the Tibetan community because of which most of the analysis he does is liable to have a subjective view on the matter.
4. The Tibetan texts on Tibetan music had different dialects which can make it difficult for the researcher to read and understand them thus leading to the failure in understanding the explicit view points of the natives.

Though there are liabilities, the hypothesis that the researcher poses is relatable to him thus it will not pose much problem to the researcher. The research paper deals with the lost melodies of the Himalayas: the melodies that ought to have been preserved, that ought to have been alive today but is sadly not. It is about the wandered music that perhaps cannot be found. The research is a revival of the Tibetan past to clearly define one of the most important traditions that defines any culture, the music.

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## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Tibet has seen and survived much turmoil, which has shaped its social and political history since the past 50 years. In conjunction with these factors, one factor that remains rather unfortunately unnoticed is the alteration of Tibetan music throughout the period of instability. Lobsang P. Lhalungpa in his research article, *Tibetan Music: Secular and Sacred* looks into Tibetan music as one that has been forgotten and all that remains of it are the sacred chanting that are done in the monastery. He delves into the musical instruments that are used during the monastery liturgies done by lamas. Apart from this, he looks at the Secular music as well like the folk music and minstrel music informing how they bring out the culture of Tibet to the front.

In my research I will be taking into account the musical study that Lhalungpa writes about and with that I will be giving more importance to the musical decline that Tibet has faced in the recent years. In my study I will be giving importance to both the sacred and secular music as well but I will focus more on the secular music. It is because the sacred music of Tibet has not undergone much change whereas at the same time the secular music has had immense influence of the west and the Chinese music according to my thesis statement. Thus my research paper will be working under the hypothesis that Tibetan music has declined during the recent times due to the influence of Chinese and the Western Music. This huge blow to Tibetan music and culture can be because of globalization and/or westernization, spread throughout the world; and also could be because of the loss of Tibetan power to China.

I will also be looking into the history of Tibetan music: its recorded advent, its evolution and its sequential decline. With that I will be analyzing the emergence of various instruments used in Tibet and the gradual amalgamation of the form and features of the instruments with other non-indigenous instruments that became an influence to the music of Tibet. Whereas Lhalungpa only talks about the musicology

of the music culture in Tibet, I will be looking into the creation and the core survival of Tibetan music that is, the music that started as a way of reciting the folk lore by and for the native Tibetans which grew in that environment; towards being a part of their popular culture; and that evolved with time adopting the western genres to give it a new 'complete' feel. Thus, the loss of that traditional touch that started it all.

Lhalungpa, LobsangP.. "Tibetan Music: Secular and Sacred." *Asian Music* vol. 1, No. 2 (Autumn, 1969): pg. no. 2-10. University of Texas Press.

The research paper done by Terry Ellingson titled *The Technique of Chordal Singing in the Tibetan Style* deals with his focus on the unique solo singing of chords by individual Tibetan monks that can be duplicated by the use of the technique of inhalation singing. In his paper, he writes about the interval combinations that can be sung which indicate that the chords consist not of acoustically reinforced harmonics of their lowest notes, but of distinct and separately produced tones. The singing experience that he describes is related to Tibetan yoga practices, and the listening experience to Western vocal styles. Ellingson analyses the vocal techniques that are used by the Tibetan monks and compares them with the techniques that the Western vocals require. One specific comparison he makes is that of the "growling" technique, which is used to a great extent in Rock or Heavy Metal genre, with the Tibetan tradition of choral singing. He finds similarity in choral representation of vocals done during "growling" and done by Tibetan monks during singing.

In my research I will be taking into account the musical decline that Tibet has faced in the recent years. My research paper will focus on the vocals involved in Tibetan music as well as the instrumental elements used in creating music. I will be studying the music structure of Tibet as a whole and not just an aspect of it: which will study Tibetan music as an institute that has undergone great change due to the influence of the Western and the Chinese music. Thus my research paper will be working under the hypothesis that Tibetan music has declined during the recent times due to the influence of Chinese and the Western Music. This huge blow to Tibetan music and culture can be because of globalization and/or westernization, spread throughout the world; and also could be because of the loss of Tibetan political power to the Chinese.

Use it for fair purpose. Give credit to the author by citing properly, if your are using it.

I will also be looking into the history of Tibetan music: its recorded advent, its evolution and its sequential decline. With that I will be analyzing the emergence of various instruments used in Tibet and the gradual amalgamation of the form and features of the instruments with other non-indigenous instruments that became an influence to the music of Tibet. While Ellingson only talks about the unique use of vocals in Tibetan singing and the technique that is used, I will be looking into the creation and the core survival of Tibetan music that is, the music that started as a way of reciting the folk lore by and for the native Tibetans which grew in that environment; towards being a part of their popular culture; and that evolved with time adopting the western genres to give it a new 'complete' feel. Thus, the loss of that traditional touch that started it all. This will include the vocals as well as the instruments that make up Tibetan music.

Ellingson, Terry. "The Technique of Chordal Singing in the Tibetan Style". *American Anthropologist* New Series, Vol. 72, No. 4 (Aug., 1970): pg. no. 826-831. Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the American Anthropological Association.

Tibetan folk music is one of the oldest from of music culture that Tibet has. It has lived on for years due to its rustic yet rich feel. Stephen Jones in his research paper, *Reading between the Lines: Reflections on the Massive "Anthology of Folk Music of the Chinese Peoples"* writes about the folk music of China, specifically Tibet. In his work, under the section Ethnic Minorities he writes about the Tibetan folk music and how Tibetan folk music actually started as narrative-singing. Though he does not focus on Tibetan music in particular, he does write about the oriental folk music of China which gives some detailed idea about the influence of Chinese music on Tibetan music. The paper not only focuses on the vocals of the Tibetan folk songs but the instruments used in the folk songs as well.

My research paper deals with the study of Tibetan music as a whole: from the ancient times to the recent times. It will focus on the vocals involved in Tibetan music as well as the instrumental elements used in creating music. I will be studying the music structure of Tibet as a whole and not just an aspect of it: which will study Tibetan music as an institute that has undergone great change due to the influence of the Western and the Chinese music. Thus my research paper will be working under the

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hypothesis that Tibetan music has declined during the recent times due to the influence of Chinese and the Western music and culture. This huge blow to Tibetan music and its culture can be because of globalization and/or westernization, spread throughout the world; and also could be because of the loss of Tibetan political power to China.

My research will be mainly about the waning of Tibetan music as a traditional music in the Tibetan society. It will be different from the research paper written by Jones as it does not focus only on the folk songs or the narrative-singing of Tibet. It will also look at the gradual development of Tibetan music as a whole and how it adopted musical elements from other cultures and evolved thus. While Jones focuses only on the older forms of singing in Tibet, I will be focusing on a rather chronological order of the music development and how it has declined in the present scenario.

Moreover, Jones focuses more on the whole of China for his research of which Tibet is a part. I will be looking at only Tibet as my main target of study. That way I'll have more access to the information for my subject of study

Jones, Stephen. "Reading between the Lines: Reflections on the Massive "Anthology of Folk Music of the Chinese Peoples."" *Ethnomusicology* Vol. 47, No. 3 (Autumn, 2003): pg. no. 287-337. University of Illinois Press on behalf of Society for Ethnomusicology.

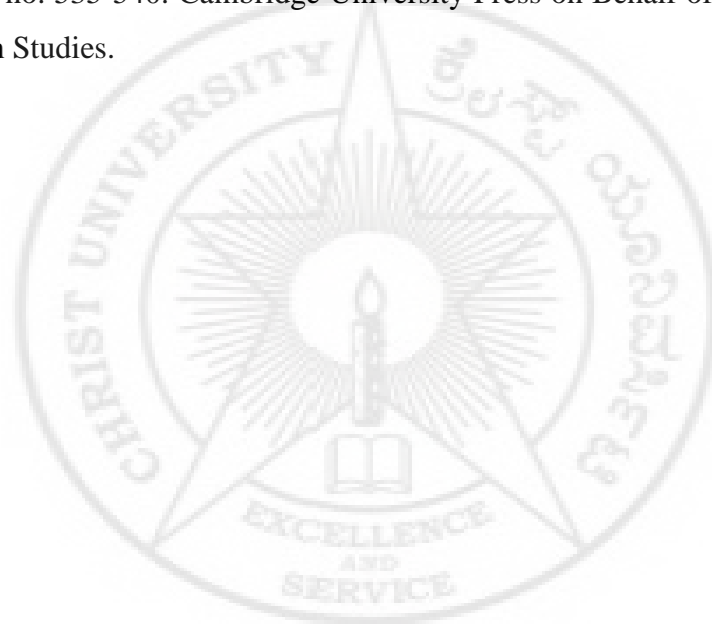
There is evidence that a particular musical instrument was used by various Sino-Tibetan groups to convey speech, both for courting and for religious purposes. The Proto-Sino-Tibetan etymon for this gourd reed-organ is re-constructible as \*s-njan. Its use as a speech surrogate is widely reported, from the earliest sources to the present. It is still used thus by many Tibeto-Burman group. The research paper *Speech through Music: the Sino-Tibetan Gourd Reed-Organ* by D. Bradley talks about Speech Surrogates like whistling, drums or other percussion instruments that are used by the Sino-Tibetans to convey speech. He looks at Tibetan music as an applied field to convey speech.

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My research focuses on the Tibetan music as a component that has changed with time due to various political and social instabilities and change that have struck Tibet. My research will be talking about the traditional music of Tibet and its evolution across time. It will be about the influence of the Western music and the other regional music and thus the decline of the originality of the songs that existed in Tibetan music before. While Bradley writes only about the music that exists in the Sino-Tibet and focuses only on the reed-organ, my research will not be looking at anything specific but Tibetan music as a whole.

Bradley, D..“Speech through Music: the Sino-Tibetan Gourd Reed-Organ.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* Vol. 42, No. 3 (1979): pg. no. 535-540. Cambridge University Press on Behalf of School of Oriental and African Studies.



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### Chapter 3: Methodology

Surrounded by the regal ranges of the Himalayas and the Kunlun Mountains, Tibet lies at the highest point of the world where the rich culture has flourished and survived for years. Owing to this topography and her sporadically flown history—sporadic in terms of the political stability or rather instability—the fate of Tibet has shaped in many ways. The social, political and cultural aspects of Tibet, has had major alterations due to this factor. This study will deal with the cultural aspect, specifically the Music of Tibet and the changes it has undergone because of the political instabilities; societal variation due to those political instabilities; globalization and westernization; and also migration of large number of Tibetans from the Tibetan nation to other countries.

The Tibetan musical tradition dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century: a time during which not much was known or written about the Tibetan culture. During those times music was a major part of the lives of the people in Tibet. It was celebrated throughout Tibet, as a medium of telling stories or providing commentaries for various occasions. The music they had then was pure and refined with very less musical instruments backing up the main vocals. The *Lama Mani* tradition was one of the most widely followed music culture which involved telling of Buddhist stories and parables through songs. Storytellers who used to travel from one village to another used to sing about the stories they heard during their travel and commuted news about the people from neighbouring villages to the other. There were various styles they employed to sing which gave the songs a unique feel to them. “If so many of this small group of men could in fact reach such a depth, it might be accounted for by their having been carefully selected on the basis of their unusual vocal range.” (Ellingson 827)

The researcher aims at studying the history of Tibetan music as a whole: to understand the detailed account of how the aforementioned forms of music that

existed before in Tibet were wrought, and how they were engaged in the then lives of the natives. The study looks into understanding the growth that the Tibetan form of music had with time and how it slowly flourished, though not outside but within Tibet due to its ethnic quality. Holding this state of Tibetan history at hand, the study explores the Tibetan culture and music, and states the declination of Tibetan music in the contemporary times. Tibetan music and culture though in the recent times has flourished and has become extremely popular, the study looks at the fall of the traditional form of music culture due to the Chinese invasion.

The researcher took scholarly articles and books that provided him with significant information on the contemporary forms of Tibetan music. Moreover, he also based his qualitative research by taking information from the film review of a Tibetan documentary film called *Tibet in song*, by Ngawang Choephel which is an autobiography about the suppression by the Chinese military of a Tibetan folk musician thus repressing his opportunities of directing any Tibetan music further. Another source the researcher took was from a popular reality show on music called *Haonaner* (the Chinese version of American idol).

After taking into account all these articles and visual data, the researcher aims at accumulating his resources from them, and combining them to trace the traditional form of music of Tibet while following a sequential pattern of events to check the changes that the Tibetan music culture has undergone with change in time and its social surroundings. Thus comparing the music of the older times to the modern ones and looking at how much the musicians now have been able to retain the traditional weight of the music that had its flavour in the past. The researcher touched upon the contemporary music as popular culture in Tibet and the use of Western genre that has made it so popular among the crowd.

A qualitative analysis is done in order to understand the pressing matter of the fall of music of Tibet. The articles, books and the visual data taken are all taken too understand the social, political and the economical change that the invasion brought about in the state of Tibet and how these factors changed the way Tibetan music existed in the society. The body looks at the immense increase in the suppression by

the Chinese Empire and how communism led to the death of a different culture from China and how this death led to the decline of the music.

The step by step process of this qualitative research would be the analysis of history of Tibet and the socio-economical and the socio-political situation of Tibet before and after the invasion by the Chinese and how these aspects of the people's day to day lives led to the suppression of free will and free culture. The music of Tibetan culture died off and newer forms of music that is more globally similar and less indigenous to Tibet came into being in Tibet.

The research will look at four parameters which will be taken from the analysis of the historical and the sociological existence of Tibet. The four parameters are,

- i. Theocratic to Communist
- ii. Introduction of the Han Railway Station
- iii. The Invasion
- iv. Migration of the natives.

The first one looks at the political state of Tibet before and after the invasion; the second one will look at the how countries outside Tibet influenced Tibetan culture before and after the invasion; the third looks at the invasion itself and what Tibet was before it and how the music culture was; and the fourth looks at the mass migration that occurred after the invasion and how that led to the slow loss of culture of the Tibetans and acceptance of newer cultures and the decline of the older forms of Tibetan music. The parameters look at the social change and the individual lives of the Tibetans which followed after the invasion and how it governance led to the gradual decline in the culture of Tibet. The decline in culture here is considered to be the change in culture and the failure of the Tibetans to contain and preserve the culture that existed before the invasion. It should not be mistaken that the culture of the Tibetans so not exist anymore but it should be looked at in terms of the fact that the immense practice of the culture does not include in the day to day lives of the

Tibetans as it used to be earlier, when Tibet was an independent nation under the Chinese rule

### **3.1 Why Qualitative Research?**

The reason for taking up qualitative research is because of the fact that the history and the social sphere that has been considered for the research need to be the objective truth. These objective truths can only be taken if the history books and texts are considered that do not have a subjective view of the situations. Also if quantitative data was taken into account then there would have been problems regarding biases of the interviewees and moreover it would have been difficult to find the required sample and the required number of sample for the research. The group that is being discussed here are the Tibetan groups who are not very prominent in the area this research is being conducted.

Even if the mentioned groups were available they would have had their personal views on the matter and that would not help in the context and content of the research. What is worth noting here is the fact that we are actually not looking at the invasion of China of Tibet but the reoccupation of Tibet by China in 1949. But a Tibetan would view that objective fact as something false.

Furthermore, qualitative research looks at not the number but at the analysis of resources and the resources the research looks at are all present in written form of books which are looked at as the primary form for the research mainly relies on analysing the history and sociology of the culture of Tibet and how that has changed and interpreted the way the music of Tibet is.

The Tibetan music culture is an aspect that needs an experts view and not a layman's perspective of the same. Thus, like mentioned the expert views can be provided by texts easily and finding an expert in the area where the research is being conducted is extremely difficult.

Most lay people would not know about the parameters that have been chosen, like the exactness of the political change and the system; the details of the invasion; the

influence of foreign countries on the music of Tibet and how the migration of the natives affected music. The musicology of Tibetan culture itself happens to be an extremely complex body which needs a textual understanding. However, the biased views are taken from the documentary that the researcher takes into account.

Therefore because of the fact that the research required an objective view and an expert eye and a properly structured understanding the material, it was necessary and pragmatic for the researcher to take up qualitative research in order to study the decline of the music of Tibet with respect to the invasion of China.



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## Chapter 4: Analysis

The researcher took scholarly articles and books that provided him with significant information on the contemporary forms of Tibetan music. Moreover, he also based his qualitative research by taking information from the film review of a Tibetan documentary film called *Tibet in song*, by Ngawang Choephel which is an autobiography about the suppression by the Chinese military of a Tibetan folk musician thus repressing his opportunities of directing any Tibetan music further. Another source the researcher took was from a popular reality show on music called *Haonaner* (the Chinese version of American idol).

After taking into account all these articles and visual data, the researcher aims at accumulating his resources from them, and combining them to trace the traditional form of music of Tibet while following a sequential pattern of events to check the changes that the Tibetan music culture has undergone with change in time and its social surroundings. The parameters that will be chosen are:

- i. Theocratic to Communist
- ii. Introduction of the Han Railway Station
- iii. The Invasion
- iv. Migration of the natives.

After the analysis of the aforementioned resources they will be merged in order that it is made clear that the invasion affect the traditional music of the land. The above mentioned parameters are chosen such that the historical, social, economical and the political aspects of the nation before and after the reoccupation are covered

meticulously and thereafter those aspects can be analyzed in accordance with the situation of music that stood because of these conditions.

After these parameters are closely examined, it will be easier for the researcher to understand how the music of Tibet was affected and it can be explained how the musical history, the musicology and the position of music in the Tibetan culture took shape to exist in a muffled form today. Therefore, it is considered that the music of Tibet faded from Tibet after the 1949 invasion which led to newer forms of government, inflow of newer culture, the migration of the people which led to a change in the social content and newer ways of socio –political and socio-economical intercourse in the administrative and communicative spheres in Tibet. Thus the analysis ranges from understanding the way Tibet functioned before as a whole and how the encroachment of a new culture affected its music. The parameters look at the social change and the individual lives of the Tibetans which followed after the invasion and how its governance led to the gradual decline in the culture of Tibet. The decline in culture here is considered to be the change in culture and the failure of the Tibetans to contain and preserve the culture that existed before the invasion. It should not be mistaken that the culture of the Tibetans so not exist anymore but it should be looked at in terms of the fact that the immense practice of the culture does not include in the day to day lives of the Tibetans as it used to earlier, when Tibet was an independent nation under the Chinese rule Following is the analysis of the parameters chosen.

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## 4.1 Theocratic to Communist



Figure 7: The upholding of religion in the Tibetan culture

Tibet, before its occupation by the Chinese was ruled by the Dalai Lamas, the highest institution of reincarnation in the whole of Central Asia. It was independent with no sophisticated structure of political rule. The state did not control much of its activities and had a theocratic approach of governance. The Tibetan government started its theocratic rule when the military power of the Mongol Gushri Khan was allied with the Fifth Dalai Lama after which the state was ruled by this consolidated power. Thus it ran under a dual system of government. However, there were other elite group of people who used to take care of smaller areas as Tibet had a feudal system. The monasteries controlled the well being of the state while imparting spiritual education which to a great extent accomplished in controlling social violence.

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Figure 8: The Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso

The political rule did not stress on materialistic gain but on spiritual upheaval thus there existed very little politics other than that of religious ceremonies. "For many Tibetans material life was hard, but they were not the victims of desire; and in simplicity and poverty among our mountains, perhaps there was more peace of mind than there is in most of the cities of the world," Dalai Lama quotes in his autobiography, *My Land and My People*.

Tibet was invaded by the People's Liberation Army of China in 1949. It could rather be called a re-occupation of the land by the Chinese as Tibet was a part of China before she was given independence in the year 1912. It was declared in the resolution of the 2nd congress of the Chinese Communist party (1922) that "it's necessary to grant autonomy to Mongolia, Tibet and Chinese Turkestan and to transform them in democratic federations and to envisage the unification, on the basis of independent federations, of China itself, of Mongolia, of Tibet and Chinese Turkestan, and the creation the Federal republic of China ".

The main reason for the occupation could be traced to the fact that when the Sovereign Nation states were being recognized by the UN, Tibet was not, since officially it was a part of China that was proclaimed independent. Also since Tibet is located in the centre of the Asian continent, it has a good geostrategic position. And

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since China is ruled by the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) the means of controlling the new found political strength was an advantage for the nation.

Among the considerations discussed which pressed China to reoccupy Tibet the following three could be considered the pivotal reasons: geopolitical nature, the ethnic aspects, and the richness of the subsoil.



Figure 9: Tibetans ready to perform for a festival

Tibetan music is predominant in the monasteries. Such type of music is essentially religious in nature made to express Tibetan Buddhism. However there are other forms of music that exist like the *Lu Style*, *Nangma style*, *Toshey style*, *gar* and *lhamo*. Moreover there was another form of folk music called the *lama mani*. This tradition involved bards singing about the political and the social situation. After the invasion the *lama mani* tradition was completely removed from the culture since no ill could be spoken against the communist government.

The *nangma*, the *toshey* style and the *gar* were a part of the popular culture and still are however after the invasion expression of the culture has become limited. Nevertheless, the *toshey* and *nangma* are sung in bars in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet.

*Lu* has replaced the *lama mani* tradition. *Lu* is a style of singing in which

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singers/bards sing in high pitched voices with great vibratos about the Tibetan national hero, King Gesar, who was a Mongolian ruler in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Though there were many styles of music in the popular culture the religious chanting was more often looked at as important and had great following. As mentioned this sort of music was more predominant in the monasteries.

When the government changed from theocratic to communist the Chinese government tried forcing their religious beliefs on the Tibetans. This led to change in music styles and forms, musical instruments changed and evolved from one to another. However, this did not stop the Tibetan monks to conserve their cultural heritage. They did not stop using the traditional ways of expressing.

As the Chinese government started establishing the *lama mani* style declined as there was no way of criticising the government and slowly the music forms changed. The musical forms that were more secular and were meant for entertainment remained only at places that were considered as hubs. In Lhasa dance music was played out in bars which conveniently did not pose harm to the Chinese rule while also helped the Tibetans safeguard their culture to an extent.

#### **4.2 Introduction of the Han Railway Station**

Geopolitically, China receives the upper hand in ruling and controlling the imports and exports in terms of the countries that lay in the southern part of its topography. Moreover, the city of Lhasa proves to be a good source of economic gains for the ready spread of the political power. As for the ethnicity, when “Chinese” are referred to, it is generally the Han Chinese, who are one of the dominant ethnicities of China. Nevertheless there are ethnic Chinese minorities whose language, clothing, rituals, culture, and even music are as exotic in almost every aspect but all of them come from China. Tibetans are an ethnic group that have different ways of life but they can easily be accepted as Chinese which gives China a whole new ethnic group to add to its culture.

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Figure 10: The Railway route within Tibet and China

As Chinese domination prevailed the imports and exports from the Tibetan frontier increased which inevitably led to exchange in foreign goods and services into Tibet. This in turn led to the spread of foreign culture into Tibet as well. Since the Chinese invasion the level of imports and exports increased. Before there were very less trading relations of Tibet with different nation states as there did not exist a systematic economic organization in Tibet. Further, Tibet did not look into foreign matters to a large extent before the invasion. It always existed as a closed country away from all the outside forces and never let anything outside Tibet worry the functioning of the internal affairs. But however this changed after she was invaded.

Tibetan subsoil which is rich in minerals would be a good resource for the Chinese government after the occupation. Tibet is considered to have one of the largest uranium reserves in the world. There were around 92 kinds of minerals in 1719 sites that were discovered which included 39 sites that had extremely impressive reserves. More than ten of those reserves would be extremely beneficial for China.

After the Chinese invasion there were comparatively a great number of developments in Tibet, most important of all including the connection of the Han Railway Station. The Han Railway Station provided the Chinese with easy travel to different parts of Tibet from and into Tibet. This connection made it easier for the Chinese to transport

goods and while the goods were easily transported it was also convenient a job for the imports and the exports to take place as the resources mentioned were easily transported from Tibet and into China while the exports also started to be done from the Tibetan territory to the foreign nations. This led to the economy becoming better which directly helped the Chinese government. That gave way for a change in popular culture in Tibet as cultures from different parts of the world came into Tibet and while the popular culture in China also was affected the Tibetan culture also imbibed and got influenced by the different cultures. For example: the introduction of rap forms and the pop genres of music in the popular culture



Figure 11: Purba Rgyal (left), the winner of *Haonaner* and Kelsang Metok, Tibetan singer who incorporates both Chinese and Tibetan techniques in her songs.

“In recent years, Tibetan songs are popular throughout China because of their unique charm, for instance, the song Qinghai-Tibet Plateau conquers millions of listeners.”(Pescovitz 1). Tibetan music has become a part of the commercial marketing system and is being sold globally because of its popularity. It has largely become a part of the popular culture, not only of Tibet but throughout China as well. There are various Tibetan musicians who have earned names for themselves because of their music career and have risen to fame overnight. One example would be of Phurba Rgyal who was the 2006 winner of *Haonaner*, the Chinese version of American Idol. He rose to fame because of his adaptation of Western and Chinese

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vocals techniques in Tibetan music which the audience adored. Kelsang Metok is another popular singer who combines the vocal techniques of Tibet with that of Chinese, Indian and Western pop, also rose to fame because of her commercial music of fusion and modern Tibetan music.

This form of globalization perhaps would not have happened if the invasion would not have taken place. It is because it is quite clearly seen that Tibet had always been a closed culture throughout its history. The only large change in its culture happened when the *bon* tradition was removed by the conquerors. Ever since that change the culture remained almost unchanged with the same kind of folk music and the same ballads and instruments and the sacred chanting that the natives and the monks used to keep.



Figure 12: Ngwang Choepel

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The new era of modern music has essentially started in Tibet because of the widely blanketing influence of different foreign cultures. These cultures were given way to enter the Tibetan territory by the Chinese. It was inevitable for the Tibetans to not follow these cultures because the traditional forms were completely removed and forbidden in Tibet. Ngwang Choephel in his documentary explains how the songs that were originally indigenous to the Tibetans were not allowed to be sung and carried on by the Chinese. Since they were not allowed, there was no option but to follow the



Figure 13: Tibetan stringed instruments being played by the monks

culture that seemed available to the newer generation of Tibetans. This phenomenon led to transferring of cultural aspect from one culture to another. This has steered a path for the non-western cultures to adopting western culture. This provides a false notion to the ideological systems of the non-western cultures that the western flavour is capable of refining the culture that they already have. In that process, the non-western cultures lose their cultural nuances. Thus, the same phenomenon led to the loss of the musical nuance of Tibetan culture.

It is very unlikely now for one to hear the melodious songs that were sung before while the Tibetan natives used to do their everyday job such as working in the fields, or even cooking food. Mostly during the time of harvest the Tibetans have a special kind of song that they sang which echoed joyfully throughout the valleys and the hills of Tibet. The women used to hum tunes while washing clothes or cooking, which

gave it own uniqueness to their culture. The songs of Tibet were never complicated with extra instruments accompanying the vocals. It used to be clean with barely any musical instruments and which was mostly acapella with vocal harmonies. But today these songs are just lost in the uncertain abyss of influences that have led to the decline of the Tibetan music.

### 4.3 The Invasion

As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter Tibetan music in the past had its ethnic feel to it which mostly was folk singing. The most popular form of music used to be *Lama Mani* tradition in which they had story-tellers conveying Buddhist fables and folklores through songs. This kind of music tradition was extremely common in which they used to follow *lhamo* style of singing. The music used to be simple with fewer instruments (mostly accompanied only by *dhanghe*, a stringed Tibetan instrument) and every song sung used to have a motive behind it that is, they had different kinds of music for different occasions like funerals, marriage, sacred meetings etc. The most informal forms of music they used to sing were the “street songs”. There was another common form of music that was sung often called the *bon* music. “*Bön* music was used as an accompaniment to ritual chanting, a means to communicate with the supernatural forces” (Lhalungpa 2).

However, the Tibetan music began declining gradually because of several reasons one major reason being the invasion of China. David Pescovitz writes in his online article about how the music of Tibet has been waning in the recent times. “Tibetan music first went on the decline during the Cultural Revolution, a campaign between 1966 and 1976 during which the Chinese government sought to wipe out all "feudal" practices and "make art serve politics..." (Twenty-year-old student Dawa Drolma) said another problem has been the influx of modern Chinese pop music.” (qtd. in Pescovitz 1).

Thus, the Chinese invasion of the nation in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century is one of the major reasons why there has been this enormous decline in the traditional music of Tibet. China took control of every aspect of the lives of the Tibetans. “A particularly gripping scene involves his interview with three women who were sent to prison for

protesting. During their incarceration, they were tortured for refusing to sing the Chinese National Anthem during the flag-raising ceremony each morning.” (Hung) This loss over their political power led to the disillusionment of the people which caused chaos diverting the minds of the natives from the daily activities and the social life. This political instability exaggerated the need of the Tibetans to fight against the invasion and that gave a blow to the cultural aspect of Tibet, leading to the demise of the music culture and highlighting of the triviality of cultural elements. “Threatened by modernization and Chinese imperialism, Tibetan folk music is sadly vanishing into the dustbin of global culture.” (Pescovitz 1).

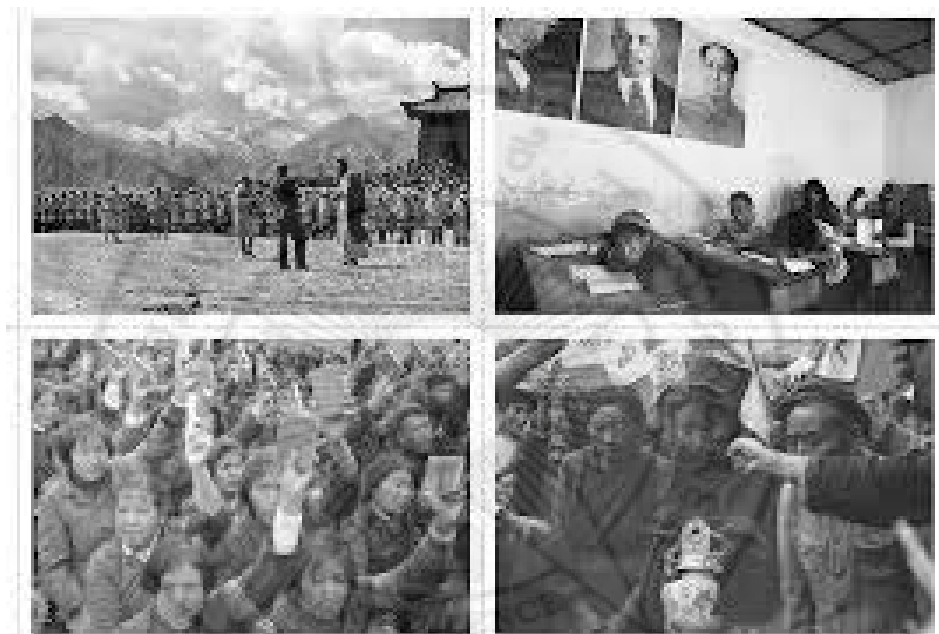


Figure 14: Different areas of Chinese suppression in Tibet following the reoccupation

Not only did the Chinese invasion trivialize the concept of music culture of the Tibetans, but it also changed the culture all together as Tibet was trying to recover from the deathly strike of the conquest. Subsequently, as the ashes of the hostile smoke pacified with time Tibet started rehabilitating her lost identities— the music of Tibet was revived again but it was not the same anymore: the *lhamo* style of singing of the Tibetans had completely moulded into something anew; branched down into so many different forms and styles, one of which was the *toeshey* style. The *toeshey* style was comparatively modern in which they adopted dance music, thus fusing it with the Chinese instruments and percussions. Later, they started using the percussion

instruments indigenous to them which they used in their sacred music. “The size of the instruments, and their range, as their symbolic nature, determine their employment



Figure 15: Protest rally led by the Tibetans against Chinese reoccupation

for specific purposes” (Lhalungpa 8). But by now, Tibetan music that was prevalent before had already started losing its touch. China would never allow Tibetan culture to flourish. “The bulk of texts in the volumes with Tibetan genres are given in Chinese transliteration. Even instruments, terms, and names of performers are rendered in Chinese transliteration.” (Jones 296). Everything the Tibetans worked for after that would not go without Chinese intervention.

It was the process called the Incorporation of Tibet into the People's Republic of China which gained control of the Tibetan area by the People's Republic of China (PRC). After the attempts by the Government of Tibet to achieve an international recognition the regions of Tibet Autonomous Region regions came under the control of China. This was done to try to modernize the Tibetan military, negotiate matters between the Government of Tibet and the PRC, and to solve the military conflict in the Qamdo area of Western Kham in October 1950. This was also done to make the Chinese government settle for at least some of the wants of the Government of Tibet which was eventually accepted in the Seventeen Point Agreement by the Government

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of China. In October 1951, this government remained and administered Tibet within the TAR until 1959, when the Dalai Lama was sent into exile.

This changed everything and changed how Tibet would function thereafter. The effects of the invasion would start showing and becoming more prominent and would change the ways the Government of Tibet functioned which dissolved after the Dalai Lama fled. The Government of Tibet had come under the Government of China.

The invasion of China changed the social, cultural and the political status of the Tibetans. The Tibetans were not allowed to use their indigenous forms of any social or cultural interactions. Even the usage of the Tibetan language started becoming a problem to the Chinese as the communist ideology required that the whole country spoke in a language that was common. Moreover, the Chinese government established schools within the Tibetan territory which meant that the students were brought up in such an education system which favoured the Chinese government. There was no other way for the Tibetan society to retain anything that they had from the past. The invasion aimed at breaking down every aspect of the Tibetan culture such that it would feed the requirements of the CCP.

Not only did the lives change, even the Tibetan flag was forced to be brought down and the communist flag of the Chinese floated in the state of Tibet that was now a part of the Chinese communist government.

Thus the ways of the Chinese culture were forced into the culture of Tibet and the music changed from folk to what was moulded for the convenience of Chinese culture.

As time further passed, there were other styles of singing that emerged mixing with so many other genres, losing its originality. *Nangma* is a popular style of singing that is prevalent in Tibet in the current times. It is essentially a form of karaoke that is sung in bars in the city of Lhasa. Even though these new forms over-shadowed the older traditional music, the Tibetan musicians did come up with ways to revive the classical singing. This classical Tibetan singing called *lu*, is not so rare nowadays. The monks in the monasteries employ this style of singing in which they sing with unique glottal

vibrations and high pitches and using special techniques. When *lu* was revived they started singing songs about their national hero, *Gesar*. There were stories sung for him but that never got much response. Due to this tragic factor Tibet failed to retain her own tradition. The music of Tibet was lost because of the concentration of a powerful, external and an imperialistic culture.

#### 4.4 Migration of the Native Tibetans



Figure 16: Migration of Tibetans (1959)

After the invasion of Tibet the Government of China made it a point to keep every Tibetan activities suppressed thus that was protested by the Tibetans in the Lhasa Uprising, following which the Government of Tibet and the Government of China has come to a consensus in terms of the TAR but after the exile of the Dalai Lama from Tibet in 1959 the condition and future of the Tibetans living in their own native land seemed bleak. When the Dalai Lama fled from the country there were many other Tibetans who migrated and fled from Tibet. These Tibetans became refugees and fled to different neighbouring countries. The migration proved to be extremely tedious for the Tibetans and a lot of lives were lost during the process. The Government of India accepted the Tibetan refugees and supported the one who needed refuge. Even the Dalai Lama had come down to India after his exile. These Tibetans were given refuge in the *Dharamsalas* in the mountainous regions.

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Figure 17: Dalai Lama, who was sent to exile in 1959

However, though the migrated Tibetan had come out of the problems that were prevailing in their homeland, there was no way they could go back and thus they faced problems of diaspora. This is called the Tibetan Diaspora which happened in three waves: first in 1959 when the Dalai Lama went in exile, second when Tibet was opened to tourism and trade and commerce in the 1980s and thirdly the wave that happens to be more modern where the parents send their children in diaspora in order that they pursue learning and getting educated outside the PRC. This Tibetan Diaspora led to the Tibetans getting completely dissociated from their own culture which led to the slow fading of the culture that was.

In 1989 the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize which gave a lot of international attention to the predicaments of the Tibetans. The Dalai Lama received the award for his peaceful way of protesting against the PRC. Thus, this helped the Tibetans in refuge to some extent as well.

The refuges of the Tibetans in exile have expanded since the first migration in 1959. This expansion has led to duplication of monasteries in India which is a place for living for several numbers of monks. The culture of Tibet was brought down to India with the same religious rituals and ceremonies, and celebration of Tibetan New Year, *Losar* and festivals like Lama Dance. However, these endeavours do not come up to

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Figure 18: Tibetans celebrating *Losar*, the Tibetan New Year

save the culture of the Tibetan tradition that prevailed in the past. The culture completely fades as the migration also led to the slow acceptance of the newer culture that the Tibetans had occupied themselves in. It was not only India that the Tibetans had fled to, there were parts of Nepal and Bhutan where the Tibetans created their shelter and they tried rehabilitating their culture in these unknown alien lands which all had different cultures from that of the Tibetan culture.

As mentioned before the music of the Tibetan culture could be divided into the sacred and the secular music. These forms of music remained quite close to the Tibetans till they were in Tibet in comparison to how that slowly became close to impossible to retain once they had fled their country as these Tibetans became more and more familiarized with the new culture that they had come to.

The sacred music culture remained and still persists in parts of India and Nepal. The monks who have been living in the monasteries they built practice all the musical practices they used to have in Tibet. The usage of the Tibetan gong or *tingsha*, *dhanghe* or *dramyin*, the *damru*, the *gyaling*, the Tibetan horn, the *rolmo* and more (all of which are shown in the diagrams) have become quite prevalent in both India and Bhutan. The monks use these instruments during different religious rituals during which Tibetan *mantras* are recited which form as a way of singing in “chordal” form

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as Terry Ellingson describes in his work. These forms of music survive because of the religious context they are performed.

However, the other form of music which as mentioned happens to be the secular form of music does not live anymore. The migrated Tibetans do not get a chance to perform or express the Tibetan secular forms of music in the countries that is completely alien to them. Moreover, the music that the counties they have settled in have other forms and language which has got transferred to them in and thus the language of the music and the cultural context of those forms and genres of music are nowhere close to what the secular music of Tibet used to be. The folk styles of music are not at all celebrated by the migrants because of the great lack in cultural education among the migrated Tibetans. The generations of Tibetan culture have changed and moved forward thus there are no ways of letting these Tibetans know about their cultural history and in turn their musical background.

The *lu* style, the *Lama Mani* style, the *bon* music and even the newer forms like the *toeshey* and *nangma* have all become very unknown to the Tibetans who have migrated thus it is almost unaccountable of the Tibetan indigenous culture for the migrants of Tibet to follow their culture that they were never taught about.

Thus, it can be said that the Tibetan Diaspora do not get the chance to safeguard the Tibetan music culture because of the fact that they have no forum to express the olden folk music of Tibet and also that they are already too influenced by the music of the state that they have migrated to.

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## Chapter 5: Discussion

After having read, understood, examined and computed the progression of the history, the social change and the growth and fall of the Tibetan culture, the four parameters that were chosen were looked at in terms of those aspects learnt by the researcher. These aspects helped the researcher to understand the pressing matters of the political system in Tibet before and after the invasion, the social conditions of the Tibetans in Tibet and outside Tibet (who were forced to be refugees), the religious beliefs, the position of music in the culture, the importance for a need to safeguard the Tibetan culture for the Tibetans and the geographical and the history of Tibet.

The researcher delved into the analysis of the social and the historical background and with these resources tried analysing and understanding the music of Tibet as it exists in the Tibetan land today.

It was understood during the analysis of the research that the reasons why the cultural heritage of Tibet might be getting lost is because of the coercion that the Chinese government has held on the Tibetans ever since the occupation. In accordance to the Agreement of 1951 China was on paper, not to intervene in any existing system of the Government of Tibet and not have any administration over its society. But these promises were not fulfilled which led to the Lhasa Uprising and in 1959 the sending of the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso to exile.

Not only did China not follow the agreement she also has renamed two provinces out of three of Tibet which have been declared as parts of the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, Yunnan and Sichuan, and also renamed the remaining province of Utsang as Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). To top this, it was learnt that the Chinese government has control over the education of the mass in Tibet. The official

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language of Tibet was changed in Tibet. Because of this fact the Tibetans are not able to get enough work different sectors and thus suffer.

There is loss of culture in the fact that the secondary school children are taught in Chinese which is difficult of the Tibetan students to understand. Moreover, there happens to be an option of studying English but the Tibetan schools cannot learn English unless they give up the study of their own language. Thus most children are sent to China to study where the Tibetan culture has no place or heritage.

Ever since 1994, the Chinese have been trying to make the Tibetan students learn their version of distorted history of the Tibetan land and that is done in order to indoctrinate the generations to come.

Another aspect being controlled is the religion of the Tibetans. Though both the Chinese and the Tibetans are Buddhists there are vast differences in the way both the cultures approach the religious practices. Though China claims to be liberal in religious views and claims that the Chinese government allows all kinds of religious beliefs to be followed, it is not so when it comes to the Tibetans following Tibetan Buddhism. The monks and the nuns are not allowed to enter monasteries and since the invasion many monasteries have been destroyed.

Taking these social and historical bases into account it is seen how the culture of Tibet is completely under the mercy of the Chinese. The educational, religious and the political aspects show how the Tibetan form of practice and culture have completely died in her own land.

The parameters that were analysed cover the aspects of religion, socio-political state and the socio-economical state of Tibet. The most important aspect here is to see how each and every aspect changed how the society would function and how the music of Tibet would be affected.

The music of Tibet was looked at in the analysis in terms of its complete history. In the sense that, it was seen as to how music in Tibet was before the different styles started emerging and they became a part of the Tibetan culture. The *bon* tradition was

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traced which gave way to a lot of the Tibetan forms of music that came later. The other forms of music seen looked at how they defined the Tibetan culture. Most of the secular songs of Tibet generally involved singing in styles that did not have complex structures and forms in terms of the musical arrangements. It was the lyrical and the vocal qualities that were looked at.

These forms described and defined the Tibetan culture because they were people who were content with scanty wealth but immense resources. These resources would generally be food, clothing and shelter, all of which were extremely domestic for all. Thus while carrying out these chores the Tibetans used to sing to themselves which signified how they enjoyed running errands and completing chores. This became a part of their culture and stuck on for long enough time.

The parameters look at the change in the lives of these people and the drastic decline of the culture, especially the music in the Tibetan culture. The first parameter, Theocracy to Communist is able to prove and throw light on the decline of music of the Tibetans as it explains how the invasion changed the form of administration and government in the area. The fact that Tibet was first administered by the Dalai Lamas and the sudden change in the authority where new ideas were imposed on the natives; changed the way they thought; and changed how they lived. Since there was so much violence occurring in the area, there was no encouragement for the native to follow their own culture. Everything that occurred was forced and nothing could go against what had been forced, not even the Dalai Lama, who was sent to exile in 1959.

The second parameter, the introduction of the Han Railway Station looks at how the introduction of technology was responsible for the injection of a new culture all together in Tibet. The researcher notes the change in foreign policies and the entering of foreign culture that were not able to enter Tibet before the invasion. It looks at Tibet as a closed society before the invasion and how that changed which inevitably changed the Tibetan culture and its music. It was an aspect worth noting for the content of the research as it covers the sociological as well as the economical history of Tibet which led to change.

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The third parameter, which happens to be the invasion itself, highlights the changes the nation went through after the grand historical change that the whole research is based on. It takes into account the way the Chinese forced their culture, beliefs and the administrative system on the Tibetans and with that the following removal of the folk and the traditional culture of Tibet which included music. The change in music is distinctly seen as the domination of China and the traces of how the Tibetan cultural heritage was forbidden. This aspect of the research shows the explicit nature of how the Tibetan culture existed before and how the sociology changed with the coercion of the new culture and how this coercion not only led to the slow death of the Tibetan culture but the following of the new culture which gave way for the Chinese to establish themselves which was a resultant decline of the Tibetan culture.

The fourth parameter, migration of the natives of Tibet takes a look at the way the Tibetans reacted when the invasion occurred. The researcher takes this issue up to see how there was very less opportunity of the migrated Tibetans to follow up on their culture once they had gone out of their homeland. They had no way to see or check the way things went about in their homeland and neither did they have any way or chance of create their own place of Tibetan cultural education in the countries they migrated to and lived as refugees. Though in the contemporary times there have been many Tibetan centres teaching Tibetan music and its art form the authenticity slowly fades as they are not practiced in the homeland where it actually emerged in the first place. The importance of this aspect in the research comes with the fact that this act of the Tibetans of living in exile discouraged the Tibetans who lived in their own homeland. Thus there was lower and lower chances of the Tibetan culture to flourish in their own land which was one of the causes of the decline of the Tibetan music.

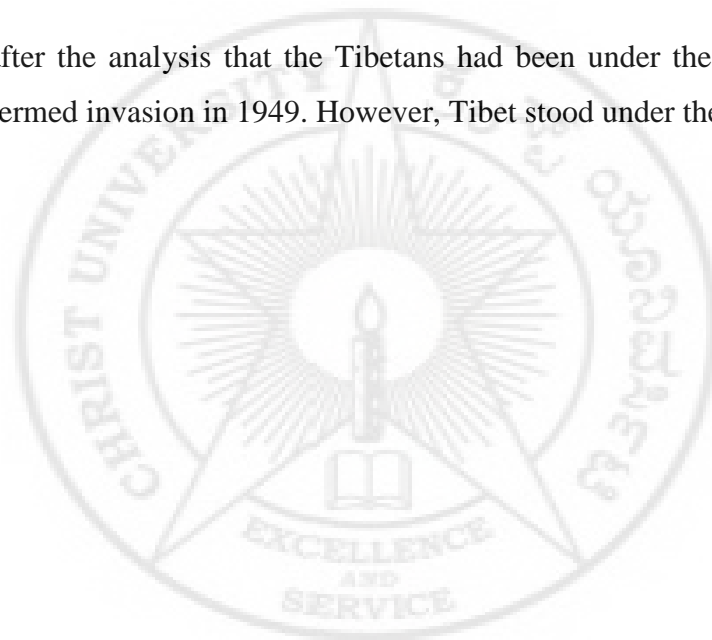
These parameters considered were chosen by the researcher to understand the decline of the music culture in Tibet in relation to its history vis-à-vis the invasion (rather, the reoccupation of the land) of the Chinese government, the PRC (People's Republic of China). The parameters considered show different aspects of the Tibetan culture and society under the administration and governance of the Government of Tibet and how it changed and got affected under the Government of China. The parameters look at the social change and the individual lives of the Tibetans which followed after the invasion and how it governance led to the gradual decline in the culture of Tibet. The

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decline in culture here is considered to be the change in culture and the failure of the Tibetans to contain and preserve the culture that existed before the invasion. It should not be mistaken that the culture of the Tibetans so not exist anymore but it should be looked at in terms of the fact that the immense practice of the culture does not include in the day to day lives of the Tibetans as it used to earlier, when Tibet was an independent nation under the Chinese rule.

The research understands the limitations of not having enough quantitative resources for explaining the same thus takes into account the history and the social condition of the Tibetan territory from resources like books, documentaries and articles which are tried to analyse in an objective fashion to give shape to the flow of the research.

It is seen after the analysis that the Tibetans had been under the Chinese rule even before the termed invasion in 1949. However, Tibet stood under the Chinese in



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## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The research paper named: *The Lost Melodies: Decline of the Traditional Music of Tibet* was to understand the fading music culture of Tibet and the reasons why it faded in the recent times. It looks at the beauty of the Tibetan music, tracing it back to its past and looking at its historical beauty. The paper aimed to study the evolution of the Tibetan music since the ancient times to the music that prevails now and how the massive change has led to the disappearance of what used to exist. It not only looks at the change of the music culture of Tibet but also the failure of the Tibetans in safeguarding and preserving the traditional. The music that used to exist in the olden times like the folk songs and the harvest songs do not exist anymore in Tibet. All that remains are the remote melodies that have been cloaked by the western influence mostly. The traditional instruments like the *dhanghe* or the tin percussions are far from being used anymore. Tibetan music today takes mostly from the rock music or the pop of even rap that comes from the west thus leading to the decline in the music culture that originally existed before.

Therefore the hypothesis the researcher worked under was the decline of Tibetan music in the contemporary times. When the research first began, the main aim of the researcher was just to know the history of Tibetan music with a problem statement that the importance of Tibetan music is no longer there. The researcher was of the opinion that the Tibetan music as a whole had completely been forgotten but as and when more research was conducted, it was clear to the researcher that Tibetan music is one of the leading popular music cultures that is being followed through Asia. “Tibetans have a very strong popular-music culture, and are also well-represented in Chinese popular culture. Tibetan singers are particularly known for their strong vocal abilities, which many attribute to the high altitudes of the Tibetan Plateau.” (The society of ethnomusicology)

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This discovery prompted the researcher to change his hypothesis. The traditional music was now not remotely present in Tibet because of its decline. The music that used to be present in the olden times is not present in Tibet anymore. Even if it does, it is endangered and is liable to get removed forever.

“Led by anthropology professor Gerald Roche, the team is fighting fire with fire, using high-tech devices to capture tunes that are being lost due in part to encroaching modernization. "The goal is to digitalize the songs we record and return them to our communities," said 20-year-old student Dawa Drolma. "We want to record as many songs as possible."

Dubbed the Tibetan Endangered Music Project (TEMP), the volunteer-run program aims to put all the digital songs they collect online, as a way of archiving the material for future generations.” (National Geography News)

The conclusion that the researcher reached after working on the study was that the decline of Tibetan music is widely because of the invasion of China and modernization. This has led to the complete reformation of Tibetan music or the fusion of the music with different foreign genres.

The future research on the same topic can be on the further reasons for the decline and also the solution that can be given in order to curtail the declination. This can be done perhaps, according to the researcher, by working to preserve the Tibetan music and to release new album that promote traditional Tibetan culture and making the world know about what used to exist in the past. That is by showing the world that what has faded can be revived again. The notes can be re-written and re-sung; the mountains of Tibet can vibrate with the advent of its past folk songs again; and the beautiful colours of the soothing melodies can be re-painted on the walls of Tibet.

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