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Summary of Doctoral dissertation

*Modernization, migration of tradition, integration.*

*Contemporary Tibetan Buddhist festive ceremonies in exile*

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate how Buddhist institutions and practices are perceived and maintained in exile, to verify if Buddhism practised in Tibet and the one practised nowadays in India and Nepal is still the same. To find the answers I aimed to explore the response of the religious leaders (Karmapa, Rinpoches and Lamas) and religious followers (ordained and lay) to the cultural, economic and technological changes experienced in exile. The research meant to discover how Tibetan Buddhist practices (mainly conducted in Karma Kagyu Lineage) are socially constructed in India and Nepal.

Referring to James Beckford [2003; 2015] and his social constructionist approach, I explored how Buddhist practitioners in exile construct their practices, rituals and institutions. Moreover I enriched the theoretical approach with interactional ritual theory by Randal Collins [2004]. Making use of this theoretical framework I observed the process of change occurring in Buddhist rituals and ceremonies, explored their different stages (preparations and completions) along with their direct social impact. I analysed how the old and traditional rites are nowadays influencing the personality of the young generation in exile.

Exploration of festive ceremonies in exile opened the door for much bigger and elaborate debate on the sociocultural change and modernisation of the monastic tradition in exile. Therefore, I began to explore the Tibetan Buddhist monasticism in exile, precisely how it is socially constructed by the ordained and the lay society.

During the research project, between the year 2014 and 2018, I conducted pendulum travels to India and Nepal. I managed to explore ten different Buddhist festive ceremonies carried out in exile according to the Karma Kagyu tradition, under the guidance of 17th Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje. The methods that I used in the research process included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, autoethnography, and nethnography.

Participation in various festive ceremonies showed how modernity and the new media silently affect the young generation of monks and lay practitioners. How they seduce the young generation with “beautiful pictures” and “daydreams” of Western scenarios. How they subconsciously urge them to shift their altruistic attitudes to a more self-centred approach.

This doctoral thesis shows how once again in the history of Buddhism, dharma has to face a very strong opponent. However, in this contest, they are not historical rulers, hostile countries or other religions. This time it is the modernity.