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The Story of Princess Wencheng:

Establishing a 'Regime of Truth'

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ABSTRACT:

As Chinese domestic tourism to Tibet continues to grow, understanding the mechanisms and 'effects' of such ethnic tourism becomes increasingly important. The historical story of the marriage between the Chinese princess Wencheng and the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo is commonly known in China and employed by the Chinese government to legitimize their modern rule over Tibet. This study uses Critical Discourse Analysis to research a theater play of this story, and the presence of this story in Tibet's many tourist sites. The results of the analysis reveal a process that shows how state-directed stories could become commonly regarded as 'true', with tourism as the primary vehicle to advance such a process. I argue that such a process can be found in other cases as well, and is not unique to the story of princess Wencheng.

Contents

"We invented a nonexistent Plan, and They not only believed it was real but convinced themselves that They had been part of it for ages, or rather They identified the fragments of their muddled mythology as moments of our Plan, moments joined in a logical, irrefutable web of analogy, semblance, suspicion. But if you invent a plan and others carry it out, it's as if the Plan exists. At that point it does exist."

Umberto Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum*

"A way of seeing is also a way of not seeing"

Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change*

1.0 Introduction

On the 12th of March 2019 it is exactly 60 years ago that a Tibetan uprising in Lhasa erupted, it led to the Dalai Lama fleeing to India and the Chinese state instigating a new rule over Tibet. Since 1959 Tibet underwent a massive social, political, and economic transformation. If, and to which degree, this transformation was positive or negative is a hotly debated topic. Be that as it may, the widespread 2008 uprisings confirmed that Tibet remains a problematic area for the Chinese government to rule over.

Since the turn of the century, the Han-Chinese image of Tibet underwent an exceptional transformation, from an area where it was thought people could barely breath to a highly popular tourist destination framed within the imaginary of a mythical Shangri-la (Lafitte, 2014). As Chinese domestic tourism to Tibet continues to grow, research into the function, mechanisms and consequences of ethnic tourism becomes increasingly important. Tourism in China is, and has always been, a state-orchestrated process, employed for economic gains and to solidify the legitimacy of the Chinese nation-state and its governing apparatus (Bulag, 2012; Chio, 2014; Klingberg, 2014). Ethnic tourism is especially powerful in the ways that it can reiterate notions of a civilized Han-Chinese self *vis a vis* an uncivilized ethnic minority in need of support from the Chinese state (Alles, 2014; Bulag, 2012; Schein & Yu, 2016). This study places itself within that precise process, and explains how state-supported 'stories' become recognizable and readily accepted as 'truth'. While this study primarily focusses on the theater play of princess Wencheng, I argue that the outlined processes are not unique to this case, and can be found elsewhere in China too.

2.0 Reconfiguring Identities within the Nation-State

In a thesis that concerns itself with the broad area of majority and minority relations, an overview of surrounding topics is indispensable. The first chapter of this thesis therefore introduces a few key issues that deal with identity construction within the nation-state and the role domestic tourism plays in such processes. The first section discusses commonly used, but rarely questioned, terms such as Tibetan and Han; and introduces the Chinese governmental project of constructing identities. The second section is an overview of the rise of domestic tourism in China since 1949, and touches upon the relation between tourism and national identity. The third section of this chapter discusses the emergence of a national identity within the framework of internal orientalism and outlines its relation to domestic tourism. The final section discusses the role of intertextuality in the process of stories, and their integral narratives, becoming 'truth'.

2.1 Tibet, Tibetan, Chinese, Han?

The demonyms Tibetan and Chinese seem to denote clear-cut categories. However, as Toni Huber comments, such terms "evoke the existence of a stable or unitary social and geopolitical entities that readily gloss over an enormous actual complexity and fluidity both past and present" (1999, p. VIII). The problematic nature of such terms encompasses, more generally, ideas on ethnicity in itself.

Mark Elliott defines ethnicity as the "social organization and political assertion of difference that is perceived to inhere in culturally bounded descent-based categories" (2006, p. 33). Intergroup contact, in the form of competition, is essential in the process of 'establishing ethnicity'; as Giersch remarks: "the ethnic group uses its perception of shared culture – reinforced through rituals, common myths, and so on – to mobilize in times of competition with other groups" (2012, pp. 191-192). Ethnicity is thus the outcome of historical contingency and social group dialectics. Indeed, as Roger Brubaker comments "ethnicity is fundamentally not a thing *in* the world, but a perspective *on* the world" (2004, p. 65, emphasis in the original). This recalls the numerous studies which pay attention to the socially constructed nature of ethnicity and, by extension, the nation-state. A phenomenon Benedict Anderson calls an 'imagined community' (2006). Alon Confino clearly enunciates the contradictions arising from the notion of a socially constructed nation-state originating in a 'imagined community':

> "while it symbolizes roots and solidarity, nationals will never know most of their fellow members or visit most of their homeland; while it is a new historical phenomenon, it is believed to be ancient; while it is part of modernity, it obsessively looks back to the past; while it yearns for the past; it simultaneously rejects it by constructing a better one; while it represents the one and indivisible nation, it tolerates a host of identities within the nation" (Confino, 1993, p. 44).

In an attempt to deconstruct 'Tibetan', Shakya explains that the issue is predominantly a western one.[1] Tibetan peoples themselves do not have any corresponding demonym that encompasses the same range of people denotated by the Western term 'Tibetan'. Rather, the Tibetan peoples use *nangpa* 'insider', which is intimately connected to a Buddhist identity (1993, p. 8). Adrian Zanz, however, observes that the argument by Shakya faces considerable problems when the adherents to the Bön religion and ethnic Tibetans who follow Christianity and Islam are brought into the picture (2013, p. 20). It seems that the primary concern with identifying 'Tibetan' lies in the gap between the ethnic and national elements of being 'Tibetan' (1994, p. 206). Shneiderman, building on a study by Dreyfus (2002) – which suggests that Tibetan nationalism is distinctively different from 'typical secular nationalisms' as Tibetan nationalism stresses its Buddhist identity – concludes: "a comprehensive theory of Tibetan ethnicity might challenge existing anthropological models for ethnicity by broadening the parameters of the presumed 'nation-state' in which ethnicity takes shape to include non-geographically bounded entities like 'politico-cultural' Tibet" (2006, p. 22).[2] 'Tibet' as a topographical entity is equally problematic. Although any map clearly demarcates Tibet, the contemporary borders of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) only encompass what used to be the region Ü-Tsang in the Tibetan kingdom. The border regions of Amdo and Kham which, partially, contain Tibetan cultural elements are excluded from the TAR (Kapstein, 2006, pp. 1-11).[3] In this thesis I refer to Tibet as the entirety of the Tibetan cultural region consisting of the TAR, Amdo and Kham.

[1] By 'western' I mean European and North American.
[2] The complexity of the issue far exceeds the scope of this section, for insightful commentary on the problematic use of 'Tibet' and 'Tibetan' see Richardson (1984), Samuel (1993), Goldstein (1998), Seidel (2016).
[3] Amdo is located in modern-day Qinghai, while Kham covers the western part of Sichuan and the far northwestern corner of Yunnan. These border regions generally consist of varying ethnic groups such as Tibetan, Hui, and Han. Framing these border regions as exhibiting pure 'Tibetan' culture is part of government policy to promote tourism to these areas (Vasantkumar, 2014).

Just as the case with 'Tibetan', likewise 'Chinese' or 'Han' are categories that overlook historical and ethnical complexities. As Mark Elliott notes, Han and Chinese are often used interchangeably, yet who is considered Han or Chinese is a highly contextualized decision. Elliot finds the origins of 'Han' in the northern nomadic people's denotation for those who lived on the Central Plains. In addition, Elliot argues that the contemporary use of Han is "more the *product* of repeated efforts to create and foster political unity than it is the *source* of that unity" (Elliott, 2012, p. 174, emphasis in the original).

While Han as an ethnic identity had 'existed' for centuries, even millennia, Han as a nationality only came into existence with the transition from a Chinese empire to a Chinese nation-state (Gladney, 1991). Returning to the element of competition in establishing ethnicity, Suisheng Zhao argues that Han as a nationality came about at the end of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the 20th century a struggle against the Manchu regime and Western imperialism – invigorated by Western notions of race and Social Darwinism – was framed by ethnic nationalists as *the* struggle of the Han people against their oppressors. The 'Han peoples' were collectively defined by their heritage going back to the Yellow Emperor (Zhao, 2004, pp. 21-22). James Leibold, too, recognizes that "the search for identity in modern China began in the present with territorial boundaries of the Chinese geo-body", going back in history in an attempt to provide a linear narrative of national becoming (2012, pp. 218-219). Leibold adroitly summarizes the notion of Han ethnicity throughout 'Chinese history' as a "dynamic and chameleon-like category [...] with its boundaries and membership altering from one historical context to another" (2012, p. 212).[4]

During the Republican era Sun Yat-sen – in an attempt to dispose with the dichotomy of uncivilized/civilized that persevered throughout imperial times – presented the Chinese nation as a union consisting of four frontier peoples – Tibetan, Muslim, Mongol, Manchu – and those inhabiting China's core, whom he denotated as 'Han'. In one move, Sun Yat-sen unified the "populations of northern and southern China with their diverse languages and cultures" (Alles, 2014, p. 135). After the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) attained control over China in 1949 attention was increasingly redirected to the notion that while there was one nationality, there were multiple ethnicities within China. This resulted in a quest to 'scientifically' classify the

[4] On this topic also see Tackett, whose study traces the origins of a Han 'national consciousness' back to the Song dynasty. He argues that the during the Song dynasty many processes of 'nation-building' resembling the European post-Westphalian state system gave rise to a 'national consciousness', hereby also complicating rooted discourses of Western modernity versus Eastern non-modernity (Tackett, 2017).

ethnically diverse population of China. During the beginning years of the communist period, the heyday of this 'ethnotaxonomic' project, scientists managed to identify over 400 distinct ethnic minorities. However, a mere fifty-five came to be officially recognized in the subsequent thirty years (Mullaney, 2011, pp. 2-3). Therefore, like Han, the fifty-five ethnic minorities group together linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse peoples. The subsequent scaling of ethnicities on a range from least to most civilized was based on communist thought shaped by Morgan, Engels, Lenin and Stalin (Harrell, 1995).[5] Unsurprisingly, the communist state placed the Han at the highest point of the scale, setting them as the leading example of civilization, to which the Chinese minorities should strive to become. The search for 'proof of ethnicity' continues into present-day scholarship in China, with studies claiming to have uncovered unique genetic structures for the Han which can be traced back 5000 years; and studies claiming to have found certain unique structures in fingerprints. All in an attempt to find a 'scientific' basis for ethnicity and the ethnic classificatory system (Leibold, 2012, pp. 210-211). While aware of its historical and ethnical complexities, this study, for reasons of readability, uses 'Han-Chinese' to refer to those living in the eastern provinces of China; and, more importantly, are usually considered as belonging to the ontological majority by anyone working on China.

2.2 The Rise of Tourism in China

Before reform and opening-up tourism was virtually nonexistent in China, and even throughout the 80s tourism in China remained a largely foreign affair. Nonetheless, higher incomes and increased leisure time in post-reform China resulted in the emergence of a marginal domestic tourist industry (Bulag, 2012). At the onset of the 1990s[6] the Chinese state recognized the economic potential of tourism and began to actively promote it amongst its citizens (Klingberg & Oakes, 2012, pp. 197-200). Honggen Xiao, through an insightful discourse analysis of five speeches made by Deng Xiaoping at the beginning of the 80's, argues that the core theme was "tourism as a means of economic development", while at the same time "tourism was exploited as a facilitator

[5] Dru Gladney shows that marriage rituals were employed by the communist government to establish such a hierarchy, placing the Dai minority group at the lower end of the scale, the Hui at the middle, and the Han at the highest point (Gladney, 1994, p. 104).
[6] Ghimire and Zhou comment that the 1989 Tiananmen protests caused a dramatic decrease in international tourist arrivals, enforcing "large state-owned travel services to engage actively in domestic tourism" (Ghimire & Zhou, 2001, p. 96).

of openness of the communist regime to the outside world" (2006, pp. 809, 812). A stagnating economy propelled the government's decision in 1998 to give its citizens three weeks of mandatory vacation each year. This coincided with the emergence of the term 'leisure culture', which the government framed as an attribute of a modern and civilized citizen (Nyiri, 2007, p. 6). Tim Oakes, too, links China's rise in tourism to the state's framing of it as modernity. In researching the 'theme park fever' of 90s era China, Oakes marks the opening of Splendid China in Shenzhen as the true "beginning of tourism's active collaboration in the project of Chinese modernity, only the most obvious aspect of which is the intensified market commercialism and commodification that have combined to invent a nostalgic past upon which to build a sense of national identity and alternative modernity" (Oakes, 1998, p. 50).

Jenny Chio considers 2006 an especially important year in tourism development of peripheral areas, as it was dubbed the year of 'China Rural Tourism', thereby "firmly situating tourism within new national priorities" (Chio, 2014, p. 1). Chio links rural tourism to new forms of rural-urban mobility (migration and leisure) for both the tourist and the host, further arguing for a relation with larger policies attempting to influence nationwide social processes: "The Chinese national government attempts to stem rural-to-urban migration by promoting urban to rural tourism" which reinforces "how the rural has been reconceived, represented, and reimagined as a desirable place for urbanites to visit and for rural villagers to stay" (Chio, 2014, p. 19).

That the rapidly increasing numbers of Chinese domestic tourists is a state-orchestrated phenomenon is also attested by Gabriel Lafitte, who argues that the spectacular rise of domestic tourism to Tibet was "an outcome of social engineering" that not only drastically improved the "hard infrastructure of railways, museums, palaces, and theme parks" but also paid "equal attention to the soft infrastructure of changing the image of Tibet in the minds of China's newly prosperous urban masses" (Lafitte, 2014, p. 61). In the past 20 years, China's field of tourism underwent a considerable transformation, from tour-group tourism, to a more individual style of tourism. Klingberg argues that while this transformation has opened up possibilities for contesting dominant state narratives, as tourists are increasingly able to travel outside the trodden paths; tourism, as a government project for strengthening the national geo-body, has now also reached the 'ordinary' Chinese, expanding and, by extension, empowering the discourses conveyed through tourism mediatization (Klingberg, 2014).

2.3 Internal Orientalism

The previous section touches upon the interaction between tourism and the larger social, political and economic spheres. The following section discusses, in more detail, how tourism is both part of and constitutive of the larger social, political and economic realm.

Said's study *Orientalism* (1978) argues that the Orient was a Western construction. Said heavily built upon Michel Foucault's (1972) concept of 'discourse', which Iara Lessa explains as the "systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak" (2006, p. 285). Such discursive formations, in addition, constitute that which is commonly thought to be 'true'. Such systems of thought are intimately tied to – even inseparable from – power. Said shows that asymmetrical power/knowledge relations between the East and the West gave rise to a 'way of thinking', both in academia and the Western society at large, about the East as the oppositional Other. The Orient was constructed by Western thought and functioned as a system of knowledge which legitimated Western domination over the East. In addition the Orient was posited as the oppositional Other by which the West was able to define itself. In Said's words, Orientalism is "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (1978, p. 11).

Critics point out that Said's framework presents "orientalism as the discourse of power by which imperialism rationalized itself to itself, justifying its domination while distorting the image of the colonized, Said in effect imported the very dichotomies between powerful, active colonizers and passive peoples he otherwise sought to refute" (Burke III & Prochaska, 2008, p. 3). In the same vein, James Carrier argues that Said's Orientalism readily glosses over the complexities of Western society as Said's West is defined entirely by the enlightenment. Moreover, Carrier points out that, for Said, the West cannot become the object of the processes of Orientalism, while studies into Occidentalism show that Orientalism is a dialectic process. As Carrier eloquently writes: "Westerners, then, define, the Other in terms of the West, but so Others define themselves in terms of the West, just as each defines the West in terms of the Other" (1992, p. 197). Such critiques are also prevalent in internal or national forms of Orientalism, which I discuss in the following section.

Although Said wrote on the East versus the West, the essence of his study, namely, that asymmetrical power/knowledge relations produce epistemological discrepancies, both in academia and society at large, meant that it could be applied elsewhere too, even *within* nation-

states. The term 'Internal Orientalism' was first coined by Louisa Schein. She argues that the very processes characterizing Orientalism can also be found within nations themselves, whereby ethnic minorities are posited as the oppositional Other. In the case of China, Schein argues that the destructions and suppressions of the Cultural Revolution, combined with imported culture from the West in the reform era caused a "void at the core of Chinese ethno-nationalism" (1997, p. 72). Minorities, as "reservoirs of still-extant authenticity" became the means by which to build a unique 'Chinese' identity. This not only "incorporated minority essences", but also "stigmatized them as the arch negation of the highly valorized modern" (Schein & Yu, 2016, p. 264). Dru Gladney, likewise, argues that "peripheral minorities have played a pivotal role in influencing and constructing contemporary Chinese society and identity" (1994, p. 94). However, Gladney's research takes the reconfiguration of majority *vis a vis* minority identities in China further and relates it to nation-building and modernization. In an analysis of sexual portrayals of minorities, Gladney describes how the Han-Chinese majority is never seen in pornographic or erotic imagery, while for minorities this is certainly the case (1994, pp. 104-107). Building on George Mosse's (1985) study, that links sexuality to totalitarianism, and following Foucault's (1980, p. 24) argument that "policing of sex" is a necessary part for maintaining state power, Gladney argues that "China's repressive prudishness is perhaps the best example of this endeavor [that is, maintaining state power]" (1994, p. 107).

Schein and Yu argue against Gladney's argument that the communist state is a totalizing and objectivizing apparatus, instead Schein emphasizes that power is a model of discursive practice that far exceeds the formal Chinese state or the Han Chinese monolith (2016, p. 276). Said, too, underlined the importance of "the cumulative effect of repeated reiterations in an environment ever-imbued with the possibility of contestation" (Schein & Yu, 2016, p. 276). Jiao Pan comments that much of Western scholarship on China's ethnic minorities, while claiming to deconstruct China's minority classification system, merely reiterated the idea that "China's national minorities are passive entities that are virtually at the disposal of state construction" (2010, p. 48). Schein and Yu conclude with a call for more research that acknowledges the dialectic relations between the majority and minority in China, and research that considers internal orientalism as not a project of the state apparatus *per se*, but a process that constructs itself within and between civic and civil society. Schein and Yu call for a redirection of emphasis to the "afterlives, or what Foucault called 'effects' of such imaging practices in instantiating both regimes of truth and the social order itself" (2016, p. 265).

Following Schein and Yu's call, I argue that tourism is a (possible) vehicle through which one can understand how the process "between civic and civil" society manifests itself, and discourses could become hegemonic. The construction of tourist attractions and destinations, in which the Chinese state apparatus plays a large role, does entail that grassroots projects (civic society) are a rare sight in China (Lew, 2017). Alan Lew comments that the institutional (i.e., governmental) construction of tourist places, which he calls "intentional worldmaking acts", implicitly holds "unintentional or unaware presuppositions" about the concerned minorities, concomitantly resulting in unintentional consequences (2017, pp. 460-461). The agency that we can ascribe to those who become a tourist destination, is that they actively adapt to the tourist gaze (dominant tourist narrative) in order to attract tourist, it is after all, an economic enterprise. As Bruner incontrovertibly states: "This is what power is about – the powerful are able to decide what stories will be told, by whom, in what discursive space, so that others in the system [...] have to base their actions on what is essentially someone else's story" (1991, p. 241).

However, as Hollinshead argues, tourism is not merely a field in which discourses are simply perpetuated, tourism is also an active field of production (2007). Kristin Winet aptly explains this reciprocal process: "discourse intimately shapes the tourist experience, and the tourist has shaped our discourses about people and places over time" (2015). Contrary to common perception, the tourist is not a freely moving entity. As Hannam and Knox explain: the discourse of leisure created the institutions of tourism, which "regulate human behavior within the relevant context" (2005, p. 25). Tourism is thus not an isolated activity, but takes part in the social sphere at large. Research into the social and political power of tourism therefore "tends to recognize that the naturalization or normalization of meaning is an expression of 'power' and, nominally, of the power of ascendant groups who have – over time – not only classified that place or space, but standardized the 'talk' and 'text' in currency about it" (Hollinshead, Ateljevic, & Ali, 2009, p. 434).

2.4 From Story to Hegemony

While the previous sections discuss some of the more general issues and theories, the following section specifically deals with how a single utterance, a 'text'[7], becomes a recognizable and readily

[7] Following Bakhtin, this study understands 'text' "in the broad sense – as any coherent complex of signs" (1986, p. 103).

accepted 'truth'. The section introduces the concept of intertextuality and explains its essential function in the process through which 'stories' become 'true'.

Intertextuality, in its essence, presumes that 'texts' are redistributive: a 'text' is the outcome of a combination of previous utterances (discourses); but a text is also a productivity, a discursive building-block for future 'texts' (Kristeva, 1980, p. 36). The study of intertextuality began with Mikhail Bakhtin's studies on the contextualized nature of language. Bakhtin explains that a lexical item (a word) does not derive its meaning intrinsically, rather meaning is expressed through the specific context in which the utterance of the word or phrase occurs. In the words of Bakhtin words are "always individual and contextual in nature" (1986, p. 88). Consequently, "all our utterances (including creative works), is filled with others' words" which "carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we *assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate*" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 89, emphasis added). As Kristeva comments "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (1980, p. 66). Intertextuality therefore does not merely point to the process that texts always incorporate 'old language' in 'new texts', but that the re-used 'old language' retains some of its original meaning. Indeed, as Adam Hodges reminds "any text is woven out of previous pieces of discourse that are merely stitched together into a new patchwork of coherence" (2015, p. 44). Thus, "all texts, therefore, contain within them the ideological structures and struggles expressed in society through discourse" (Allen, 2011, p. 35). One could regard such a process as the intertextuality of discourse, or what Norman Fairclough calls 'interdiscursivity' (1992, p. 104).

The scholars Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs thoroughly theorized the process of re-using and re-producing discourse, which they call 'entextualization'. Entextualization "is the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit – a *text* – that can be lifted out of its interactional setting", and, importantly, this process "may well incorporate aspects of context, such that the resultant text carries elements of its history of use within it" (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p. 73, emphasis in original). Employing the notion of entextualization illuminates "the larger systemic structures in which [discourses are…] decentered and recentered both within and across speech events – referred to, cited, evaluated, reported, looked back upon, replayed, and otherwise transformed in the production and reproduction of social life" (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p. 80). Moving a discursive act between different speech genres necessarily produces an intertextual gap. Briggs & Bauman explain that as each speech

genre has its own conventions, possibilities and constraints, "the process of linking particular utterances to generic models thus" creates a gap accordingly (1992, p. 149). Indeed, as Adam Hodges explains "re-creations always introduce some variation on the theme" (2015, p. 46). In short, discourse is an evolving phenomenon, a discourse remains accepted due to its evolving aspect, going from one framework to the other, meanwhile retaining the essence of the particular discourse strand itself.

Birgit Neumann and Martin Zierold argue that "the very transformation of specific epistemic constellations into potent figures of knowledge relies on transmedial procedures [...] continuous recursive representations in a variety of genres and media," recycling and building on previous processes of 'worldmaking' "always work on the basis of transmediality", which results in certain 'knowledge' "becoming collective points of reference" (Neumann & Zierold, 2010, p. 108). The authors of the chapter emphasize that remakes of earlier narratives are an essential means of "keeping earlier worlds 'up to date,' i.e. relevant according to the norms and values of new social constellations" (Neumann & Zierold, 2010, p. 108). The story told, for example, the history of princess Wencheng and Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo, serves as an excellent example of how events, whether historical or contemporary, become stories and in turn are employed by civic and civil actors to advance certain narratives and thereby aid processes in which stories become 'truth' (Nünning, 2010).

The intertextual nature of discourse entails that discourses are commonly repeated through a variety of genres and media platforms. It is precisely through the cumulative effect of discourse that it becomes accepted as 'truth', or what Gramsci calls hegemony. Gramsci's (1971) seminal work explains hegemony as the process by which certain understandings become readily accepted as self-evident within a society. Hegemony, therefore, is an ongoing process in which the commonly accepted 'truth' is constantly in flux, struggling with competing narratives and adapting to altered 'facts'. Morgan and Pritchard further elaborate, hegemony is not the outcome of a powerful institution's attempt to forcefully advance a certain discourse, but of a consensus of any narrative among the majority of a certain community (1998). I do not deny the importance of institutional representations, they are indeed essential, but they do not necessarily account for the totalizing aspect of hegemony. Hegemony involves, and needs, both top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top processes, which echoes Foucault's important remark that power is distributed.

The diversified aspect of power so important in Foucault's work, engenders that discursive formations taken to be 'true' in any given society, are not only 'true' due to the relation between knowledge and power, but also "makes itself true" through the interaction between civic and civil elements. The resulting overwhelming occurrences of repeated claims, happen to such a degree that a 'regime of truth' is maintained while the discursive formations have never truly be proven to be 'true' (Hall, 1997, p. 49). That the claims made by those in power regularly become hegemonic is not surprising, as Norman Fairclough lucidly explains: "productivity is not in practice available to people as a limitless space for textual innovation and play: it is socially limited and constrained, and conditional upon relations of power" (1992, p. 103). Indeed, Foucault argues to regard discourses "as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (1972, p. 49). Tygstrup, in the same vein, calls for a realization that "that there is an intimate link between a historical regime of symbolic forms and a corollary architecture of power enforcing specific ways of seeing, thinking, acting, and feeling and prohibiting others precisely by way of such representations, *then politics is present everywhere*" (Tygstrup, 2010, pp. 89, 94, emphasis in the original). Adam Hodges explains the path from story to hegemony clearly in the following statement:

> "Ultimately, it is by the cumulative traces laid down across intersecting speech events that particular representations of an issue gain sufficient inertia to become reality. In other words, it is through a series of interconnected discourse encounters that isolated truth claims or representations turn into larger narratives and shared cultural understandings" (2008, p. 500).

3.0 Setting Up the Analysis

The following sections set up the analysis of the play. The first section introduces critical discourse analysis and its advantages for analyzing the theater play. The follow up section explains the general story of the play and its history. The third, and final, section clarifies which exact version of the play is the working material for the analysis.

3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis is a familiar methodology for qualitative research for a variety of modes of media. The value of discourse analysis lies in its ability to "take into account the intertextual and interdiscursive relationships [...] between utterances, texts, genres, and discourses" (Wodak, 2008, p. 2). A discourse analysis should therefore reveal the "the reciprocal relationship between discursive action and political and institutional structures" (Wodak, 2009, p. 9). Critical Discourse Analysis specifically "focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce or challenge relations of *power abuse (dominance)* in society" (Van Dijk, 2015, p. 467). The analysis takes into account the play's multiple semiotic modes - visual, textual, audial – and the ways in which they interact and complement each other to cohesively form a coherent message which supposedly resonates with the message's audience (Van Leeuwen, 2015, pp. 447-448).

For this analysis I transcribed the theater play and utilized the resulting text for a content and qualitative analysis. A content analysis gives insight into the play's essential messages by examining cumulative appearances, while the qualitative analysis deals with specific utterances in the play and their relation to the contextual whole. The qualitative analysis of the play's visual signs focused on their interaction with the textual messages. The study includes stills made from the recording to complement the argument. Relevant (spoken) texts are included in the body of the text or in the footnotes, all the translations are my own.

3.2 Introducing the Play

In its most simple form, the story revolves around the Tang dynasty princess Wencheng, who, after a marriage proposal by Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo, undertakes a journey to reach Tibet

and marries Songtsen. The marriage between Wencheng and Songtsen Gampo is commonly known in China and Tibet. Scholars researching the histories of Wencheng and Songtsen often divide between a 'Chinese version' and a 'Tibetan version', which, Cameron Warner explains as "dichotomous, co-constructive, and inherently false" (2011, p. 239). Several studies investigate how both versions differ from each other, usually arguing that the discrepancies derive from employing different historical sources. Each side actively frames the available historical accounts to suit their own purposes (Slobodník, 2006; Powers, 2004, pp. 30-38; Warner, 2011).

In a nutshell, the Chinese version focuses on Wencheng as a vehicle for bringing civilization to Tibet, while the Tibetan version emphasizes Songtsen's quest to spread Buddhism and therefore married the Buddhist princess Wencheng. Powers explains the origins of the two versions as follows: the Chinese writers rely on "Chinese dynastic sources that portray neighboring countries as barbarians and exalt Chinese culture as the apex of civilization", while the Tibetan writers follow their "indigenous histories, which were generally written by Buddhist clerics" and were intentionally written for the glorification of Buddhism (Powers, 2004, p. 36). As Slobodnik aptly summarizes, "the divergent interpretations of this event reflect their different ideological frameworks" (2006, p. 273). In spite of all efforts, a study by Hugh Richardson concludes that Wencheng was "a dim figure who was probably no more than 18 when [Songtsen Gampo] died, who made no mark on either Tibetan or Chinese history in the remaining 30 years of her life, and whose religious affiliation is uncertain" (1997, p. 8). That the current adaption of the story of princess Wencheng might differ to a large extent from earlier adaptations of the story is not peculiar, as Linda Hutcheon states: "Stories also evolve by adaptation and are not immutable over time. Sometimes, like biological adaptation, cultural adaptation involves migration to favorable conditions: stories travel to different cultures and different media. In short, stories adapt just as they are adapted" (2012, p. 31).

3.3 The Source Materials

The source material used to analyze the play of princess Wencheng is a recording of a theatre production performed at the Beijing's National Grand theatre in 2008.[8] However, once analyzed I

[8] The recording can be found on YouTube, URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhMjjmkxA5k&list=LLkE3YAMp4V9Xu94d4zp8DeQ&index=2&t=2658s

consider the play within the context of an open-air theater performance in Lhasa. In 2012 the Chinese government built a 750 billion yuan open-air theatre in Lhasa, specifically designed for the theater play of Princess Wencheng. The 20th of April 2019 marked the start of the 7th year the play is performed in Lhasa, where it has been performed over 1000 times, with more than 2,1 million visitors (Li & Wang, 2019). The recorded play in Beijing and the performance in Lhasa are similar to a high degree: song texts seem to be entirely unchanged, although have been cut shorter here and there. The costumes, stage attributes, and the entire mise-en-scene are highly similar. The open-air theatre play is somewhat shorter in time, mainly achieved by cutting songs shorter and the Lhasa theatre play contains one or more 'ethnic' dances than the Beijing version, depending on which running year one looks at as the Lhasa 'version' underwent several small changes over the years. Nonetheless, as both 'versions' of the play are, to a high degree, similar in content, both visually and textually, I consider the recording of the Beijing play a fine substitute for the play performed in Lhasa.

4.0 The Analysis: Exploring the Present in the Past

This chapter delves into the results of the empirical analysis of the play. The analysis reveals two important themes which are central to the play's message: one, 'Civilizing Tibet'; and two, 'Eternal Tibetan and Chinese unity'. Several smaller narratives constitute each of those larger themes, for readability and clarity each of those smaller narratives are discussed separately. Although the chapter's first section concerns the narrative 'Civilizing Tibet', this does not in any way imply that one of the narratives is more prominent than the other, each narrative complements the other in surprising ways.

4.1 'Civilizing Tibet'

Before starting off with the several subsections that each form a part of the larger theme of 'Civilizing Tibet'. This section discusses the visual means by which the play constructs a notion of 'Us versus Them' in the sense of 'Civilized versus Uncivilized'.

The adaption of literary 'texts' to visual 'texts' entails that the individual imaginary of each person who reads the literary 'text' is dismissed by the materialized imaginary of the producers of the adaption. The visual 'image' of what a certain character, people or place looks like, becomes static as it is manifested into the visual adaptation of the literary text. Consequently, one can hardly remember the image of one's own imaginations (Hutcheon, 2012, p. 29). The story is thus made 'real'. More importantly, the transformation from the textual to the visual leaves the producers with the possibility to add or retract signs, and shape the message of the play accordingly.

Figure 1. Left is 'Tibetan'. Right is 'Chinese'.

The images in (Figure 1) are taken at the beginning of the play and are the first time the play presents the audience with its representation of 'Tibetan' and 'Chinese' through the chorus.

Instead of considering the chorus a 'background' entity on the stage, Bethany Hughes calls for an understanding of the mutliple functions a chorus[9] serves in a play, one of which is as a "manifestation of community". The chorus "achieves the simultaneous performance and presentation of community by virtue of its presence on stage" (Hughes, 2013, pp. 263,264). In the images above the 'Chinese' chorus is numerous, brightly coloured, and structured. In addition, the chorus stands higher, on the steps of the imperial palace. Contrastingly, the 'Tibetan' chorus is placed relatively lower, less numerous, and their garments are dark-toned. Before the 'Tibetan' chorus appears on stage, the 'Chinese' chorus sings a song which is a recital of a poem written by emperor Taizong, it describes a banquet feast to which the 'barbarian tribes' surrounding the Tang are invited. Once the Tibetan minister Gar has made Songtsen's marriage proposal to Taizong, Wencheng, accompanied by a number of similarly dressed women, enters the stage. The five remaining 'Tibetans' on stage look at them in awe. Meanwhile the Chinese chorus remains as static and unmoving as before.

The play includes two 'traditional Tibetan' dances. Notably, throughout the play, the 'Chinese' never perform any dances. The 'happy, dancing minority' is an often repeated trope in studies researching China's minority/majority dichotomies (Nyiri, 2007, p. 29). Such 'otherworldly' dances (Figure 2) not only reduces Tibetanness "to a visual, consumable commodity" (Oakes, 2016, p. 303), but also invokes the idea of a "religious mystique" (Nyiri, 2007, p. 29). Ann Anagnost notes that in China that the category of 'superstition' functions as the oppositional other of 'civilization', as it fits into the "semiotic chain of signifiers" that divides between the 'backward' western regions, and the 'advanced' eastern regions of China (1994, pp. 224, 239). The dances, as 'otherworldly' performances, fit right into the play's visual message which establishes a civilized/uncivilized dichotomy. As Sebesta comments: "choreographic markers are not just performed *signifiers* […], they are also *performative* enactments" (2013, p. 149, emphasis in the original).

[9] In addtion, the chorus is a special kind of character, all-knowing and often serves as an interlocuter between the main actors on stage and the audience, guiding both the main characters and audiences through the play by giving the audience insights into the main characters feelings and thought (Hughes, 2013, p. 271).

Figure 2. The two dance performances.

At the very last moment before the curtain fall the entire company is gathered on stage. A large part of the characters hold up a scarf, while a few 'Tibetan' characters at the front hold a stack of barley (Figure 3). Nearly all the actors raise a *kha btag*, a Tibetan scarf which expresses that "one's intentions towards the recipient are pure" (Harris, 2005, p. 194). Although a well-known symbol of 'Tibetanness', the scarf's use within the context of the play is notable due to a contested story of origin. The 'official' Chinese story is that the first emperor of the Yuan dynasty introduced the *kha btags* to Tibet, while the Tibetan version states it is an indigenous custom (Harris C, 2005, p. 193). The play seems to contradict its own Chinese story, as the depicted events happened at least 500 years before the Yuan dynasty. Some of the 'Tibetan' characters also hold a stock of barley in their hands. Legends tell that barley was brought to Tibet by princess Wencheng (Harris, 2012, p. 192). The Tibetans call themselves the *tsampa*[barley]-eaters, barley thus forms a considerable part of their cultural identity, which the play, again attributes to Chinese influence (Shakya, 1993).

Figure 3. Characters holding barley and the *kha btags*

4.1.1 Transforming Tibet: A Contemporary Desire

The most important subsection of the 'civilizing' narrative are the statements made in the play concerning the many 'improvements' ignited by the coming of princess Wencheng. Throughout the play the following text (1) is sung a total of seven times, interchangeably by Songtsen, Wencheng and the chorus (in which case 'I' (我) is omitted):

(1) 'I desire life far removed from famine' (我想要生者远离饥荒)
'I desire sick persons far removed from distress' (我想要病者远离忧伤)
'I desire old persons far removed from feebleness' (我想要老者远离衰老)
'I desire death to be calm and serene' (我想要逝着从容安详)

The above mentioned text is followed by sentence (2) four times in the play:

(2) '[I, We] want Tibet to become paradise on earth' (想要吐蕃成为人间天堂).

The use of 'become' (成为) and 'want' (想要) here is noteworthy. The use clearly signals a break with the 'current' state of affairs laid out in text (1), and the desire to *become* a 'paradise on earth'. The text in (1) is sung for the first time by Songtsen after Wencheng questions his character, subtly implying the 'civilizing' influence of princess Wencheng. As those desires (or dreams) only arose when the Chinese princess came into Songtsen's life.

The use of 'want' (要) in sentences (1) and (2) is remarkable. Maria Cheng considers the modal verb *yào* (要) a "dynamic modality", which "represents the 'volition' or 'inclination' of the speaker" (2019, p. 179). At first sight, the sentences, stating a desire to change Tibet for the better, seem natural. However, modal verbs and modal adjectives are almost entirely absent in the text of the play. The use of *yào* (要) in conjunction with *xiǎng* (想) is entirely limited to the sentences in (1) and (2). Moreover, the absence of any perfective aspect or tense in sentences (1) and (2), in combination with the modality of 'volition', points to a sentiment that the expressed desires/wishes have never been realized, at least not in this story. Once Wencheng has reached Tibet and married Songtsen the play stops, thereby excluding any displays of the realization of the

wishes. The absence of any lexical, grammatical, or narrative elements signaling that the 'desired change for Tibet' were in any way realized, leaves its completion to the future.

The sentiments of the text in sentences (1) and (2) may be explained more thoroughly by examining them within the current socio-political situation of Tibet and China. The wishes expressed by Songtsen and Gampo may very well be desires relating to the modern history of Tibet. China's depiction of Tibet's situation before 'liberalization' in 1959 is documented extensively. Tibet is portrayed as a 'hell on earth', with a feudal system systematically oppressing large parts of society, while the upper classes enrich themselves. Thomas Heberer quotes a school book which describes the situation in Tibet before 1959 as follows: "Serfs were susceptible to the widest possible variety of torture: beating, flogging, flaying, blinding, and the cutting off of tongues. The Tibet of old was a *hell on earth*" (2001, p. 140, emphasis added). Such description are commonly contrasted with the 'developments' of Tibet after 'liberation', such narratives of transformation were pertinent in, for example, communist films of the 1950s and 60s (Frangville, 2009).

Such views of the 'old Tibet' are communicated by the government up until this day. As 2019 will mark the 60th year anniversary of the 'liberation of Tibet', the CCTV documentary channel released on the 1st of April 2019 a five-part series called 'Moving Towards the Light: Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of Democratic Reform in Tibet '(走向光明: 纪念西藏民主改革 60 周年). The documentary series is exemplary for how the Chinese government wishes to tell its 'official' version of the history and development of Tibet. Its first episode is fittingly called 'The Old Tibet of Darkness and Backwardness' (黑暗落后的旧西藏), the episode effectively frames the 'history of Tibet' before 1959 by employing personal stories, historical footage, and interviews with scholars. The other side has joined in on the lingo as well, in an interview in 2009 the Dalai Lama dubbed Tibet after 1959, contrastingly, a 'hell on earth' (Wong, 2009).

The statements made in the play about 'transforming Tibet into a paradise on earth' (2) and the desires/wishes of what to transform (1) can be brought into the modern context. The use of 'paradise on earth' in the play is characteristic for modern discourse on the development of Tibet, especially in its dichotomous relation to 'hell on earth'. In such a way, the old story of princess Wencheng suddenly seems very modern, and directly connects to contemporary metadiscourses of 'development' and 'rejuvenation'. The play becomes a discursive formation firmly established

within the realm of China's ideologies, as Qian Zheng states, such entextualizations on the one hand reproduces the "authoritative and canonical status" of metadiscourses while imbuing them "with power and authority." On the other hand, "such recontextualizations create a sense of maintaining policy continuity" (2012, p. 34).

The four lines in (1) also form the 'post-ending' of the play, in which the entire cast is present on the stage and the main actors bow while receiving the audience's praise. While the moment is sometimes disregarded as not belonging to the play *de facto*, Terence Hawkes argues that the 'curtain fall' is not the end point at which the semiotization of the audience stops. Hawkes states that almost no event occurring on stage[10], prevents an audience from terminating their constant act of semiotization (1981, p. 356). Indeed, as Keir Elam asserts, the audience assumes "every detail is an intentional sign" (1980, p. 6). Derek Miller states on the repeating of a previously heard song during the 'post-end': "The simplest way to bring closure to the theatrical event is simply to restate the central theme of the musical, usually with a single song" (2017, p. 5). The 'post-ending' operates in that particular moment at the finale of each play when representation meets reality. Miller states 'bow music' adds a "last moment of semiotic representation that draws on and revises what we have experienced in the rest of the show" (2017, p. 8).

Thus, the bow music expresses that, once again, the 'improving Tibet' theme is essential to the play's message. Functioning as the last message, which the play hopes, is remembered by and resonates with its audience, even after the audience leaves the theatre. The still below (Figure 4) shows the stage during the 'bow music', all the actors, Tibetan and Chinese, are on stage singing the sentences in (1). Hereby combining the visual message of unity, with the textual message of advancement.

[10] Hawkes states such events range from the casual "pimple on the nose of the actor", to an actor breaking his leg; "nothing short of a total collapse of the building itself (not even that, perhaps) could prevent an audience from closing with those eventualities as if they were part of some extremely sophisticated "reading" of the play" (1981, p. 356).

Figure 4. Still during Bow Music.

4.1.2 Which Palace?

One of the statements that recur throughout the play is that the Potala Palace was built for the arrival of princess Wencheng. The first time this message appears, the chorus sings: 'Songtsen will built the Potala palace as the new home for the Tang princess' (赞普将建造布达拉宫作为大唐新房). Throughout the play the following sentence is sung 7 times: 'building up Potala to welcome a beautiful young women' (筑起一座布达拉迎来一个天仙).

While indeed it is generally recognized that Songtsen Gampo built a palace during his reign, this original palace was considerably smaller than the contemporary Potala Palace, and destroyed in subsequent centuries (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2019). The building recognizable today as the Potala Palace was built several centuries later, with the construction of the White Palace starting in 1645. In 1694 the construction of the Red Palace on top began (Kapstein, 2006, p. 139). Be that as it may, the play leaves it's audience with no possibility to which Potala Palace it is referring (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Stage open-air theater Lhasa. Image taken from ctrip.[11]

The play directly brings itself into the present by displaying the most recognizable building of Tibet, which, so the play tells the audience, was constructed for to the arrival of a Chinese princess. In the same vein as the section above, the tale is brought into the present. In chapter 5 returns to the importance of this material link between the past and the present.

4.1.3 Importing Culture

Another trope belonging under the category of 'Civilizing Tibet' is the story that during the reign of Songtsen the Tibetan script was invented, ignited by the coming of princess Wencheng.[12] Historical records do seem to support that somewhere around the time of Songtsen's reign the Tibetan script in its characteristic form was created. However, the simple causal relation the play presents is primarily based on Tibetan legends. Moreover, those questionable legends, attribute its creation to the minister Tönmi Sambhota, and do not mention the connection with Wencheng that the play presents (Kapstein, 2006, pp. 58-59).[13]

[11] See: https://piao.ctrip.com/ticket/dest/t1411109.html
[12] 'I am ready to use this auspicious script. Writing books for Tibet is a glorious aspiration. I am ready to use this noble script. To record [write down] the endless memories of princess Wencheng' (愿我能用这吉祥的文字. 书写出对吐蕃美好的心愿. 愿我能用这高贵的文字. 记录下对文成公主无尽的思念).
[13] Adherents to the Bon religion claim that they used the Tibetan script centuries early, though that claim does not have any historical support, too (Kapstein, 2006, p. 59).

An important part of the story of princess Wencheng is that the Chinese princess brought Buddhism to Tibet.[14] However, there are no historical records which prove claims of Songtsen's support for Buddhism . The story that princess Wencheng brought Buddhism to Tibet is also accepted in Tibetan legends, though the Tibetan legends equally credit the Nepalese princess Tritsün, the second wife of Songtsen Gampo, for bringing Buddhism to Tibet. The legend goes that both brought statues of Sakyamuni with them to Tibet (Figure 6).

Figure 6. The play prominently shows the statue of Sakyamuni being brought to Tibet.

In the play the chorus repeats the phrase 'Golden cinquefoil, brightly colored golden cinquefoil' (格桑梅朵 鲜格桑梅朵艳) a total of 18 times. The use of the golden cinquefoil is symbolically complex. The Chinese word *Gésāng méiduǒ* comes from the Tibetan name for the flower which is '*skal-bzang me-tog'*, skal-bezang meaning 'happiness', me-tog meaning 'flower' (China Tibet Online, 2011). The Chinese flora information website *huabaike* explains that the Gesang flower in Tibet is "used as a token for the spread of Buddhism"(那么格桑花就是用来传达佛教的一种信物) (Huabaike, 2017). A Tibetan saying dictates that anyone who finds an eight-petaled cinquefoil, will find happiness. The flower blooms in the period between spring and summer, which is considered the period when all Tibetan girls will go outside 'smiling and happy'. Those who find a

[14] 'The emperor has decreed. Tang's national treasure, Sakyamuni. To travel along with the Princess, the gold's weight equivalent a twelve-year old. The honest and cautious Sakyamuni blesses Gampo. Blesses the Princess. Blesses Tibet. Luck for eternity' (圣土有旨. 大唐国宝 释迦牟尼. 十二岁等身金像 随公主同行. 愿佛祖加持赞普. 加持公主. 加持吐蕃. 万年吉祥).

cinquefoil thus not only find happiness, but also love (Huabaike, 2016). The golden cinquefoil thus refers to four concepts: 'Tibetan', 'Happiness', 'Love' and 'the spread of Buddhism'. Especially the flower's reference to the spread of Buddhism is important in the larger context of the play.

4.2 'Eternal Tibetan and Chinese unity'

The following three section each constitute to the second major theme of the play, which is that the bond between China and Tibet made during the Tang dynasty is eternal. The first section specifically deal with how the play presents Tibet and China as being 'one'. The following two sections elaborate on the eternity of this bond, and this bond being Tibet's own choice.

4.2.1 'We are One'

Around 1 hour into the play Songtsen and Gampo jointly sing: 'We are the born from the same root of the snow lotus, together we will flourish in the paradise of the world' (我们是同根连理并蒂雪莲, 一同盛开 仙境人间). The sentiment is exemplary for how the play wishes to convey its idea of Chinese and Tibetan unity. Moreover, the reference to the lotus flower[15], as *the* expression of Tibetan Buddhism is telling. In Chinese and Tibetan culture, by way of how the lotus grows, it signifies how out of something dark, something light emerges. Integrating the theme of 'improvement' right into the theme of 'unity'.

The two phrases in (3) are sung throughout the entire play and are essential to the message of unity that the play hopes to convey to its audience.

(3)[16] 'nowhere on the world is a faraway place' (17x 天下没有远方)
'anywhere on the world is a hometown', (9x 人间都是故乡)

Although 天下 and 人间 both mean 'the world', the contextual narrative of Wencheng strongly

[15] In Tibetan historical accounts, Wencheng is sometimes also called "the lotus of the sea" (Slobodník, 2006, p. 274).
[16] This sentiment appears in the following context. The second act of the play largely focusses on the long and arduous journey Wencheng has to undertake to reach Songtsen. Leading to homesickness of her hometown in the Tang, Chang'an. However, at a moment of deep despair for Wencheng, she comes to the oft-repeated revelation in (3).

points to the notion that 'faraway place' refers to Tibet, while 'hometown' refers to China. In Alon Confino's studies on use of the German 'heimat', which shares a similar meaning and sentiment with 故乡, Confino argues that the commonality of such terms is essential to the ways in which its use constructs feelings of nationhood. After all, everyone in the nation has a 'hometown', the use of it thus cuts across "regional, political, class, confessional and gender" differences, and is therefore "abstract enough to collapse differences into similarities" (Confino, 1993, p. 51). The Chinese government recognizes the strength of regional sentiments as well. After reform and opening-up the Chinese government revived the republican-era slogan "*aixiang aiguo, jianxiang jianguo* (love the village, love the nation; build the village, built the nation)" to incite overseas Chinese to return 'home' (Sinn, 1997, p. 389). Lutgard Lams identifies such terms as the 'family metaphor' which promotes a "sense of cohesiveness". Lams' study found that in Chinese discourse on issues of sovereignty the use of terms such as 'homeland' is commonplace. Moreover, the "repetition of this metaphor is part of a slow habituation process, where the more frequently it is uttered, the stronger value it receives as an assumption" (2019, p. 453). The constant use of 故乡 in the play is thus supposed to convey a sense of cohesiveness. Within the context of the play and its narrative the constant repetition of the text in (3) shapes the social perception of China's geo-body, firmly rooting China' contemporary territoriality in the past. Likewise the Potala Palaca, the story of Wencheng is used in such a way as to provide a linear history of national becoming, legitimizing its claims over territory through history.

During the last song (*finale ultimato*) the chorus repeatedly sings the text in (3). During the *finale ultimato* the entire company comes together for the final song, the stage is filled with the 'Chinese' chorus, the 'Tibetan' chorus, the lead players, and all other characters that occurred on stage during the play. Such a final coming together is an act that Scott McMillan calls the "ensemble effect", which is "making the drama occur through the spread of song and dance to the entire company" (2006, p. 80). Essential to the ensemble effect is that "the drama lies in the build-up itself", in such a way that "the expansion of a number into a united ensemble is the voice of the musical making itself heard" (McMillin, 2006, p. 80). The coming together of all Chinese and Tibetan actors, while repeatedly singing the phrases in (3), leads to the epitome of excitement for the audience at the end. The ending of the play derives its strong resonance in that the "sentimental message coordinates with the means of its performance" (McMillin, 2006, p. 88). 'Unity' is not only sung, *it is performed*. Slowly building up through the final song, by adding more

and more people to the stage, until all the actors are present and the audience's excitement is at its highest. It is precisely then, that the story's spirit reveals itself. In the play of Wencheng the final song ends with the entire company singing 'paradise' (天堂) loudly and high-pitched three times. See the stills in (Figure 7) from the end showing how more and more actors enter the stage.

Figure 7. The number of people on stage increasingly grows as the play moves towards its end.

4.2.2 The Ideal of Mandarin Ducks

The play constantly emphasizes that the bond between China and Tibet, established through the marriage, is an eternal and unchanging bond. The oft-repeated sentence (9 times) 'Brilliant Gampo and splendid princess will love one another for ten thousand years' (英俊赞普漂亮公主相爱一万年) is exemplary for this narrative. The play constantly reminds the audience of this message, see for example the following sentence: 'The royal marriage is my eternal promise to you, a thousand years will not change, all the ages unchanged' (和亲是我对你永恒的诺言, 千秋不改 万世不变). Or relating it more precisely to the state relations between China and Tibet: 'To foster cordial relations between the Tang and Tibetan, to coexist for a thousand years' (唐蕃修好, 千秋共存). Also more literary references are used to express the 'eternality' and 'unchanging' nature of the marriage: 'Achieve the pairing together of Tibetan and Tang, everlasting and unchanging Mandarin ducks [affectionate couple]'[17] (成就一对吐蕃大唐 天长地久美鸳鸯).

4.2.3 'It's their choice!'

The beginning of the play shows the Tibetan king requesting a marriage with a Chinese princess, which Taizong initially refused. The play emphasizes that the marriage was only later 'allowed' by the Tang emperor. It presents the context of the marriage proposal in an entirely different manner than historical accounts suggest. Historical records indicate that after an initial refusal by the Tang emperor to a marriage alliance with Songtsen, Songtsen attacked China and forced the emperor's hand. The entire military history, showcasing China's inferior position in the matter, is excluded from the play. The play shows that Tibet *wants* to be with China, upon Songtsen's own request, and that the Chinese agreed to it from a superior position. Such a notion is supported by the emperor's use of the personal pronoun 朕 (zhèn) twice in the context of the marriage proposal. A study by Lee (2012, pp. 79-80) on the use of personal pronouns in Confucius' Analects found that 朕 (zhèn) was only used by the emperor in literary text as referring to himself. A study by Xuehua Xiang on the discourse of personal pronouns states that 朕(zhèn) serves a "distinctive communicative function", indicating "absolute supreme power" (2019, p. 153). Considering its use within the context described above, the section tries to convey a message of China 'in control' and

[17] The reference to the Mandarin duck at the end is important, as it is believed the ducks stay together their entire lives and thus signal an everlasting and unchanging affectionate couple.

not forced by any outside military power. Moreover, the play sends the message that Tibet wants to be with China, after all, 'they' wanted to marry a Chinese Princess.

4.3 Princess Wencheng: A Modern Tale

The narratives and sub-narratives set out in the sections above all contribute to the overarching theme of the play: unity between Tibet and China advances Tibet. The story of Princess Wencheng is not a *de facto* reworking of the history of Sino-Tibet relations, contrarily, the story serves as a framework through which the contemporary socio-political status of Tibet is legitimized by employing a historical narrative of national becoming. The play is exemplary of the process of narrativization in which "political truths are naturalized as 'historical truth or fate'" which "has the effect of eliminating alternative perspectives on political and socio-historical relations or events" (Lams, 2019, p. 455). 'History', after all, has the value that it is static, and remains forever unchanged. The play employs several strategies by which it directly connects contemporary Tibet to the Tubo kingdom of the 7th century, and thereby frames the contemporary political status of Tibet as the natural outcome of historical developments, it is 'fate'.

The plays overarching theme can readily be brought into the present, and is a part of metadiscourses of 'development' and 'harmonious society' (Zhang, 2012). To create a resonating and acceptable story the play employs multiple strategies that are illustrative of process of entextualization. Which has the double function of on the one hand authorising the story specific to the play, and on the other hand the re-occurrence of such metadiscourses adds to their own authority, too. The play is a modern tale concerning a contemporary reality, the 'history' is no more than a narrative framework for the story's actual message, serving not only as a distraction to hide the political message, but also as a vehicle for that message to resonate with its audience. This precisely touches on the function of narrativization: to connect past to the present (and future) by placing historical "micro-events in [contemporary] macro contexts, embedding the present in highly ideological perspectives" (Lams, 2019, pp. 449-450). The interaction between the play and the 'real world' grants authority to the story and its related narratives, explaining the acceptability of the play's message. It is precisely in its process of connecting to the contemporary 'real world' that the story is taken to be 'true'. The function of intertextuality in establishing a 'regime of truth' thus becomes clearer. The sections below explore this process in more detail.

5.0 Routine Encounters: The Road to Hegemony

The previous section concludes that the story of princess Wencheng is a modern tale which is integral to China's contemporary issues and part of modern metadiscourses. However, as the sections on intertextuality argue, a 'text' is both constituted by former discourses *and* constitutive of future discourses. The story of princess Wencheng, too, functions as a productivity. The sections below discuss how the story of princess Wencheng serves as its own reference. In short, the sections argue that the story of princess Wencheng is decontextualized and recontextualized in multiple ways and through a variety of speech genres. Through the cumulative effect of continually encountering the story of princess Wencheng, it increases the 'truth' of its own story, which in turn increases the 'truth' of its own narratives. Such a circular movement should, theoretically, ultimately result in hegemony, a 'regime of truth'. The final section explores, briefly, the broader implications of the processes laid out in this study.

5.1 The Unescapable Power of the Tale

From history books in schools (Powers, 2004), theater plays and tv series to actually visiting those sites one has been taught the 'histories' about. The story of princess Wencheng and its related narratives seem to pop up everywhere its discursive presence is deemed necessary.

The analysis of the play points out that the contemporary building recognizable as the Potala Palace is recontextualized within the story of princess Wencheng. The TAR government website, introducing the Potala Palace writes: 'it was originally built for the marriage of Songtsen Gampo to Princess Tritsün and princess Wencheng' (它最初是松赞干布为迎娶尺尊公主和文成公主而兴建的) (The Tibet Autonomous Region People's Government, 2019). Other Chinese websites, too, mention the connection between Wencheng and the Potala Palace.[18] That visitors indeed do incorporate this story of princess Wencheng becomes clear by looking on the Chinese social travel-sharing website *Mafengwo*, where travelers share their experiences of a certain tourist attraction.[19] Already in the second review the website shows, the reviewer concludes by stating that "[I] will only remember the many treasures that princess Wencheng brought here' (只记得这

[18] See for example: Ctrip (https://piao.ctrip.com/ticket/dest/t3117.html); Baidu Encyclopedia (https://baike.baidu.com/item/布达拉宫/113399).
[19] See: http://www.mafengwo.cn/poi/5869.html

里面有很多文成公主带来的宝贝). Another reviewer comments that after his visit to Potala he finally seemed to 'understand the love story of Songtsen Gampo and princess Wencheng' (懂得了松赞干布和 文成 公主的爱情故事). Finally, a third reviewer remarked upon the long history of the Potala Palace that 'because of the marriage of princess Wencheng this piece of land was slowly merged into the history of the Chinese nation' (这片土地因为文成公主的出嫁慢慢融进了中华民族的历史). Although many reviews do not mention Wencheng at all, its presence throughout the comments leaves no possibility that the Potala Palace, reconfigured as a tourist attraction readily brings the narratives of princess Wencheng into the picture.

The Potala Palace, in such a way, becomes a material expression of the 'combined history' of China and Tibet. More importantly, the Potala Palace 'realizes' the strategy of nation-building, to go back in history and provide a linear tale of national becoming. Framing the building within the 'civilizing narrative' of princess Wencheng, additionally, brings into play that the Potala is the materialization of the advances coming forth from the unity between Tibet and China. The story of Wencheng is entextualized into the Potala Palace. On the one hand the material presence and long history of the Potala Palace authorize and strengthen the story, and by extension the narratives, of princess Wencheng. On the other hand, the familiar story of princess Wencheng frames the Potala Palace in such a way that it allows a certain version of history to be retold, the 'correct' Chinese version. The Potala Palace is decontextualized from its 'dry history' and recontextualized within the 'exciting' story of princess Wencheng.

The basement of the Potala Palace houses a museum where once the Dekyi Ling prison was situated. The entire collection presents "the Tibetan past as repugnant" with videos showing the suppression of the serfs and the torture happening inside the prison (Harris, 2012, p. 200). Such and other depictions of pre-1959 Tibet are contrasted with contemporary 'views' in side-by-side photographs.[20] Which presumably reminds "Tibetans that modern amenities are one of the benefits of Chinese Communist policies" and that "the material wealth previously enjoyed by only a privileged few in pre-1950 Tibet" is now shared by many (Harris, 2012, p. 201). Although this narrative is somewhat connected to the story of princess wencheng, such 'physical' discursive

[20] Which have the notable aspect to be regarded as mere copies of reality, instead of *re*-presentations of reality.

practices show that the process by which narratives come to be embodied in physical sites is not exclusive to the story of princess Wencheng alone.

The Potala Palace is not the only sight in Lhasa where the story of princess Wencheng is present. The Jokhang temple, the most important temple in Tibet, is said to have been built to house the Buddha statues of Sakyamuni the Chinese and Nepalese princesses brought with them. Today the Jokhang temple has statues of princess Wencheng and Songtsen Gampo.[21] The Ramoche Temple is said to be built on orders of princess Wencheng.[22] The Barkhor square in Lhasa, the spot were several violent protests broke out, most notably in 2008, is at the moment "bordered by metal detectors, riot-squad vehicles, fire-extinguisher teams (to prevent self-immolations) and rooftop surveillance" (Lonely Planet, 2019). In a particularly fine example of placemaking, on the southern enclosure of the square stands an old willow tree stump which is said to have been planted by princess Wencheng and Songtsen Gampo, with right next to it a stele concerning the alliance between the Tang and Tibet (Zhou, 2014). Even in such a politically sensitive area there are symbols and texts invoking the story of princess Wencheng and its related narratives.

On the Tibetan Plateau one encounters princess Wencheng primarily at sites where she supposedly passed by on her journey to Tibet. An interesting example of such a site is Songpan[23], where a statue of Wencheng and Songtsen Gampo is situated right in front of the old city entrance. Donald Sutton and Xiaofei Kang's insightful analysis of the statue is as follows:

> "Princess Wencheng […] though physically dominated by her cloaked and wild-haired husband she stands upright – not the dutiful wife of Confucianized late imperial China but a smiling partner. Made out of a single block (of pink sandstone), they are indivisible – just as (by implication) the Tibetans and Han are today. [… Songtsen] is portrayed facing north, with right hand raised. Behind him on the city wall stand facsimiled guns and siege weapons, and two armed statues of cavalrymen flank the tunnel-like gate entrance. It is a reminder perhaps that the Tibetans (unlike in Republican times) are now permitted to live within the city walls. For the Han Chinese he is "one of us," a minority within the all-embracing

[21] See: http://www.xizang.gov.cn/xzly/msgj/200612/t20061222_3783.html
[22] See: http://www.xizang.gov.cn/xzly/msgj/200612/t20061222_3775.html
[23] Songpan is a village on the Sino-Tibetan borderlands, in the old Tibetan province of Kham in Western Sichuan.

> Chinese national history. [...] Located firmly within China, the statue signifies not the Chinese-Tibetan confrontation of the Tang History text, copied, on a signboard, but wishful Han-Tibetan cooperation suitable for the current regime of ethnic harmony under the Han-dominated party-state" (Sutton & Kang, 2010, p. 117).

Sutton and Kang's analysis of the statue reveals similar narratives as those pertaining to the theater play. The uncivilized Songtsen next to the civilized Wencheng: united but different. Sutton and Kang insightfully comment that as the founder of the Tibetan kingdom, Songten's marriage to Wencheng entailed that his descendant had a "genetic relationship to later Chinese" (2010, p. 117). Sutton and Kang's analysis shows that the entextualization of the story of princess Wencheng into the statue resulted in the physical visual expression of narratives. Another site which invokes the story of princess Wencheng is in the south-eastern corner of Qinghai, near city of Yushu, where the 'Princess Wencheng temple' is situated (Figure 8). The legends tell that this was the place where Wencheng stayed the longest on her journey to Tibet, and 'spread the culture of the Han peoples to the Tibetan masses' (向藏族群众传播中原地区汉族人民的文化) (Baidu Encyclopedia, 2019). Then there is Changzhu monastery, which, so the legends tell, Wencheng advised Songtsen to be built and served as their winter residence. Inside the palace there are many historical artefacts referencing Wencheng. There is a pot/stove which was used by princess Wencheng, if one touches the stove only once, they will immediately be able to make delicious meals (Zhang, 2009). At the Kumbum Monastery in Xining (Qinghai) there are a few artistic butter flower sculptures, one of which depicts the departure of princess Wencheng from the monastery.[24]

[24] See: https://baike.baidu.com/item/塔尔寺酥油花

Figure 8. The 'Princess Wencheng Temple', the main part of the temple is situated inside the rock face. Image by author.

These are just a few of the examples in which the story of princess Wencheng is invoked, each invocation granting the story, and its related narratives, more authority. In touring the country, princess Wencheng becomes a 'routine encounter', each site seems to have some connection to Wencheng. In each case the site not only frames itself within the story of Wencheng, but also depicts that Wencheng had some driving force for the site to come about, and a lasting force at that. These stories of Wencheng often merely perpetuate the narratives of 'civilizing' and 'unity'. The narrative of Wencheng is entextualized into numerous speech genres, from butter flower sculptures, to a willow stump in Lhasa. There seems almost no escape from princess Wencheng. Its manifestations are myriad, each adding to the story of Wencheng and the many ways in which Wencheng improved, and *is improving* Tibet. As the story of Wencheng is commonly known, and even taught in schools, each routine encounter not only reinvigorates the story and its connected narratives, but also authorizes the story itself. Which leads to a circular process in which the story, and its narratives, become increasingly accepted as 'truth'. The transmediality and interdiscursivity, which, the sections above explain as essential means by which narratives become hegemonic seem exemplary for this process in which a story is consistently reiterated

across a variety of genres and media platforms. I argue it is especially the physical presence of the story which highly adds to its authority, after all, one cannot just see and visit Wencheng, one can *experience* Wencheng. The Tibetan plateau is littered with sites referencing her passing-by, ending in the epitome of Lhasa, where almost all main sights in some way connect to Wencheng, and then there is the massive theater play as well. Princess Wencheng is not something one *can experience*, princess Wencheng, by its sheer massive presence, *must be experienced*.

5.2 The Omnipresence of Discourse

The section above shows that the story of princess Wencheng is present in a large variety of speech genres and media platforms, in each case the discourses on civilization and unity are entextualized in some way as well. The stories are 'made real' by their physical presence, not only to be visited, but experienced. Although this study predominantly focusses on the story of princess Wencheng and its myriad manifestations. I argue that such processes are much more widespread.

The section above cites Sutton and Kang's analysis of a statue in Songpan. This is, however, certainly not the only place where one can experience the 'physicality' of discourse. About 90 kilometers northwest of Chengdu is a monument remembering the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. An article by Schneider and Hwang details how the aftermath of the earthquake was effectively framed in a campaign exhibiting the relief efforts of the Chinese government (Schneider & Hwang, 2014). The monument is a collapsed building with a broken clock in the front and the date of the earthquake, remarkably there is a Chinese flag perched high above the collapsed building (Figure 9).

Figure 9. The 2008 earthquake memorial. Image taken from Baidu Encyclopedia.[25]

The site also houses a small interactive museum in which the tourist can 'recall and learn the great spirit of disaster relief' (缅怀学习伟大的抗震救灾精神). The site is expansive and a full analysis goes beyond this study's argument. The site is just one example in which narratives, likewise princess Wencheng, are brought into the physical world, and become a part of a tourist path, a site where the narrative can be experienced.

The Long March, too, is remembered in many places throughout the country. Near Songpan there is an entire theme park dedicated to this narrative of 'national becoming' for the Chinese Communist Party (Sutton & Kang, 2010). Ma'erkang further north in western Sichuan has a massive mural depicting the journey of the Long March (Figure 10). Going north from Shangri-la, throughout western Sichuan there are barely any villages that don't have some reference to the Red Army passing their village.

[25] See: https://baike.baidu.com/item/映秀地震遗址

Figure 10. The Long March mural in Ma'erkang. Images by author.

Although the examples above are all situated on the Tibetan Plateau, its practice is certainly not exclusive to that area. In the northeastern city of Harbin the sight 'Unit 731' was a Japanese chemical and biological warfare research center during the second world war, where the atrocities commited by the Japanese army are showcased (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Dioramas depicting Japanese atrocities during the Second World War. Images by author.

An info-sign at the start of the museum leaves no question to the purpose of the museum (Figure 12).

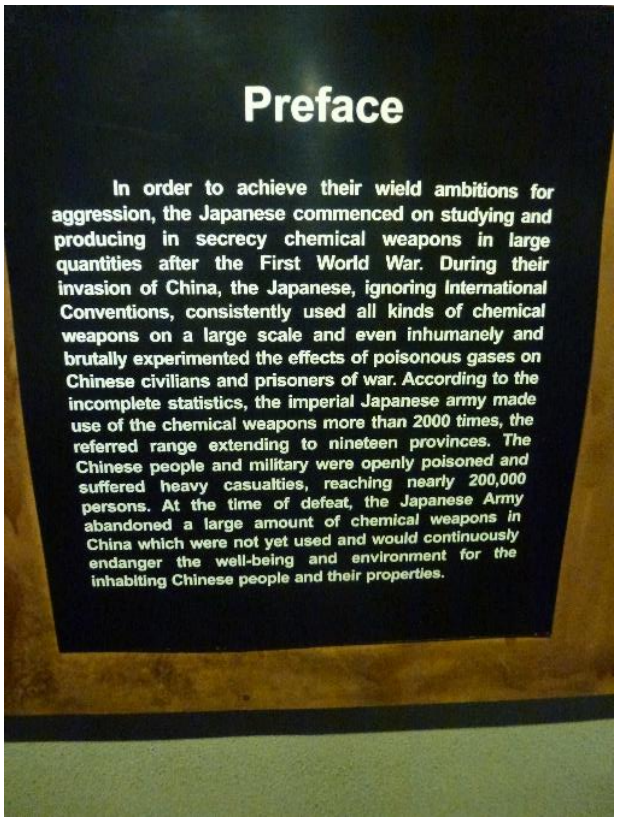

Figure 12. Info-sign at Unit 731. Image by author.

In the same vein as the examples above, 'Unit 731' serves as the physical manifestation of a narrative, to be experienced. Firmly situated on the tourist path, and also free to visit, indicating the local government's support for this museum.

The monument, the mural, and the museum are just a few of the examples in which the 'correct' versions of stories are 'made real'. Likewise princess Wencheng, the examples above seem to embody the process in which "happenings, occurrences, or incidents are gradually transformed into events, stories of a particular kind, and fully-fledged worlds or storyworlds" (Nünning, 2010, p. 211). The stories, or 'histories', that are commonly known in China are physically present. At these sites, the 'histories', and their integral narratives, are materialized. The narratives can be experienced, the physical site, if correctly framed, adds to the authority of the story, it makes it 'real', and thus also makes it 'true'. That anyone touring China, has the opportunity to visit such sites, echoes the earlier comments that transmediality and its related interdiscursivity are essential to the ways in which a story becomes a readily accepted 'truth'. In the case of Wencheng, symbols referencing her, and her story, abound in Tibet. There sometimes seems to be barely any

site left where one is not directly encountering state-supported narratives. Although the discussion above is brief, and more research is needed into the process laid out above, I argue that the process by which narratives integral to stories can become hegemonic, is not unique to the case of princess Wencheng.

6.0 Conclusion: Touring China, Building the Nation

When touring China, there seems to be almost no escape from discursive formations. Everywhere one looks one encounters the 'correct' framing of a building, a history, a sight, a play, or a story. Echoing remarks on hyperreality[26], Graham Allen lucidly notes "in a culture dominated by codes so pervasive that they appear natural, the intertextual, viewed as the presence of these codes and clichés within culture, can cause a sense of repetition, a saturation of cultural stereotypes, the triumph of the doxa over that which would resist and disrupt it. […] intertextual codes and practices predominate because of a loss of any access to reality" (2011, pp. 177-178). This statement touches right upon the empirical analysis of this study. Stories are important in China, they, and their narratives, are manifested in myriad ways. As China's domestic tourism industry continues to grow, understanding tourist attractions and the tourist path becomes increasingly important. This study argues that the tourist path is littered with sites of 'physical narrativity', where the tourist can visit, and more importantly, experience, the stories, and their related narratives, he/she has heard of his/her entire life. Especially in the case of princess Wencheng, symbols referring to the story's narratives seem to be omnipresent in Tibet. Through 'routine encounters', the story becomes 'real', adding to the narrative's authority and its related metadiscourses.

The analysis of the princess Wencheng play and the related tourist sites shows that the narratives integral to a story also come into play in the representation of that story in physical places. Merely by touring the country one experiences state-supported discourses, firmly rooted in commonly known stories and familiar metadiscourses, which explains the acceptability of the message with intertextuality as one of its defining elements. Each narrative (which is also a reference in and of itself) builds on a multitude of references which only refer to other references themselves, consequently these references take over from 'reality', and become a thing of their own. Indeed, I argue that the story of princess Wencheng is a prime example of hyperreality, in which a 'system of references', from school books to butter flower sculptures, makes the story real. Meanwhile the story also incorporates contemporary Chinese metadiscourses, adding another layer to the story's recognizability and acceptability. As those who experience the story of princess Wencheng are familiar with the themes of national unity and harmonious society, the story is merely another

[26] The foremost example of this is the image (representation) of Jesus, about whom no actual descriptions or pictures exist, the image we all know as the image of Jesus is no more than the outcome of a cohort of images. The important works on the notion of hyperreality are Boorstin (1964), Baudrillard (1988), and Eco (1986) .

small part of that larger discourse, however this time framed within the issues surrounding contemporary Sino-Tibetan relations. As the story replaces the reality, and literally becomes the 'new reality', so too the story itself changes from fiction to non-fiction, and becomes readily accepted as 'the truth'.

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