

Research Articles

Beyond Institutional Separation: Educational Migration, Kinship Transformation, and Transcultural Identity among Himalayan Youth from Mustang and Dolpo, Nepal

Anna Szymoszyn

Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poznań
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0014-8123>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2218/himalaya.2026.10902>

Abstract

The article describes the lived experiences and structural practices associated with educating children and youth from the Himalayan borderlands in environments that are foreign to them, across different cultures and national contexts, and far from their ancestral communities. These experiences shape the construction of the modern transcultural identities of young people who have grown up under these conditions. They constitute a new, self-fashioning group. The article draws on observations made during ethnographic fieldwork in India and Nepal between 2004 and 2009, as well as an analysis of social media and “insider” ethnography—a method that I employed between 2004 and 2022. My research focused on a selected group of young people from Bön families.

Keywords

Dolpo and Mustang youth; transcultural identity; transnational education; subaltern group; kinship disruption; migration

Recommended Citation

Szymoszyn, A. (2026). Beyond Institutional Separation: Educational Migration, Kinship Transformation, and Transcultural Identity among Himalayan Youth from Mustang and Dolpo, Nepal. *HIMALAYA*, 45(1), 5–21.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Research objective and methods

The article examines the complex consequences of children from Himalayan communities being sent to boarding schools located far from their homes, including schools in Tibetan refugee settlements in India and the Kathmandu Valley. This form of educational migration can be understood as a form of forced migration, as parents' decisions are often constrained by socio-political and economic circumstances, while children have little agency in the process. The article explores identity formation among young people raised in these institutions, separated from their parents, without their direct influence. In doing so, it examines how this institutional separation alters foundational kinship relations and redefines the obligations traditionally embedded within Himalayan family structures (cf. Craig 2020). Many of the young Nepalis shaped by these experiences subsequently undertook a second, voluntary, migration in the context of an increasingly globalized world characterized by large-scale population movements. I argue that this migration reflects not only economic factors but also the transcultural identities formed through their earlier educational experiences. This analysis draws on fieldwork conducted during research stays in India and Nepal between 2004 and 2009, supplemented by later conversations and follow-up observations of selected representatives of this group living abroad. Field research and informal observation were carried out in the Tibetan refugee camp at Dolanji, Himachal Pradesh, India, and in Lower Mustang and Kathmandu, Nepal. I conducted 20 biographical and semi-structured interviews with adults aged 18–28 (12 women and 8 men), all of whom I had known since their childhood. Interviews took place in India, Nepal, Poland, and the United Kingdom, as well as via instant messaging. The study also incorporates participant observation, follow-up ethnographic research, and analysis of both existing and elicited sources. In addition, my work as a volunteer teacher for a non-governmental organization provided opportunities to engage with children and

adolescents and to observe their everyday experiences.

Given the longitudinal nature of this ethnographic research, ethical considerations regarding the involvement of minors were paramount. The study adhered to strict safeguarding protocols, ensuring that all interactions with children were conducted with full respect for their dignity, privacy, and developmental readiness. No formal interviews or structured surveys were conducted with minors. Instead, interactions took the form of casual, spontaneous conversations, similar to everyday teacher-student exchanges. To ensure a safe environment, these interactions always took place in the presence of the children's formal guardians or relatives. Furthermore, children aged 8–16 were treated not as passive subjects, but as active and respected interlocutors whose emotional well-being was prioritized. It is worth noting that the study's conclusions do not derive directly from these casual remarks; rather, they are rooted in long-term participant observation, ongoing dialogue with young adults, and a reflexive analysis of the migration and cultural transformation experiences of my own children.

Long-term research using multiple methods allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of these processes and informed my scientific reflection. This also enabled me to observe the emergence and growth of a new social trajectory; the mass migration of young Nepalis beyond Nepal and India.

The websites and social media forums of young Nepalis belonging to the Dolpopa (Dolpo) and Lopa (Mustang) Himalayan ethnic groups were another source of information. I analyzed the networks maintained by former pupils of the institutions I studied as they established themselves as migrants. This research allowed me to gain insight into the lives of children and adolescents and the challenges they faced as a result of expectations placed upon them at an early age. I describe this approach as ethnography “from the inside.” It combines autoethnographic, biographical, and multisited ethnographic methods. It is a form of

engaged anthropology (see Pomieciński 2009; Kaczmarek 2016) in which the ethnographer moves from “co-participation” to “collaboration.” The method of ethnography “from the inside” consists of observing a selected person or a small social group for many years, establishing friendly or even family relations with them, which result in regular conversations about everyday life, such as those that take place in a family or among friends. By entering such close relations, one can gain an intimate understanding of the phenomena and their actors. The ethnographer participates directly in the lives of the people being studied, inevitably influencing them through a long-term presence in their lives (see Trempała and Harwas-Napierała 2000). The person observed by the researcher becomes a real partner and significantly influences the final interpretation presented in the analysis. In this article, I illustrate my arguments with the example of a boy from Mustang belonging to the Bön religious tradition¹.

State of research on the educational migration of children and youth in the Nepal Himalaya

Although highly relevant, this topic became a subject of interest to only a few researchers in the second decade of the twenty-first century. This migration pattern is relatively new, and the geographical regions from which the children come remain extremely inaccessible. The first doctoral dissertation on the subject was completed at Kathmandu University in 2012 and examined the new phenomenon of youth migrating to study abroad, mainly to the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, in the context of globalization (Acharya 2012). However, this work focused mainly on Nepalis who did not come from Himalayan minority communities. The publications of Sara H. Smith and Mabel Gergan, which examine on Himalayan youth living in ethnic diasporas and studying in Kathmandu and Indian cities, are particularly noteworthy. They analyzed the processes of cosmopolitan identity formation and national belonging (Smith and Gergan 2015).

The migration of children and young people from Himalayan villages to boarding schools in Kathmandu was studied by Adrian A. Khan and Jennifer Hyndman, who drew attention to the need to send children from the Himalayas far from home because of the threat posed by Maoist groups and the lack of appropriate schools. As a result, these young people experienced separation from their families and long-term migration and, unlike the older generation, came to adopt a lifestyle based on seasonal or permanent migration (Khan and Hyndman 2015; Khan 2018, 2021).

Recent ethnobiological research by Elizabeth A. Quinn, Jhangchuk Sangmo, Sara Burack, and Geoff Childs on the possible biological effects of the migration of Himalayan children from the Nubri Valley in Gorkha District, Nepal, to schools located in the lowlands of Kathmandu has highlighted the relationship between increased body weight and height and educational migration among children from ethnic groups of Tibetan origin living in their home communities and those living away from home. During the interviews, the researchers noted that sending children away to school is widespread and associated with the belief that they will not only be better educated but also better fed (Quinn, Sangmo, Burack, and Childs 2023). This strategy was previously identified by Geoff Childs, who, together with Sienna Craig, Cynthia M. Beall and Buddha Basnyat, studied the regions of Mustang, Gorkha, Nubri Valley, and Tsum (Childs, Craig, Beall and Basnyat 2014). Expanding on this, Craig (2020) demonstrated how international and domestic migration routes reshape kinship networks, transforming traditional practices of care, belonging, and intergenerational duty among the people of Mustang. The above researchers drew attention to the depopulation of Himalayan villages as a result of sending children far from home for long-term education and the negative effects of such depopulation on local agriculture, health care, fertility, and population aging. Childs, together with Namgyal Choedup, published a monograph in 2019 in which they addressed this problem not only

from a demographic perspective but also from a social one, examining the strategies adopted by residents of Himalayan villages and the effects of increasingly intensive child migration, including its influence on local households, families, social positions, and cultural and ideological changes (Childs and Choedup 2019). While my observations are consistent with this body of research, I specifically focus on how these shifting kinship dynamics manifest among children and youth belonging to Bönpo families educated in India².

This article makes a distinct contribution to the emerging literature on the educational migration of Himalayan youth by introducing a new analytical perspective, a novel methodological approach, and original empirical insights. Through this work, I seek to shift the analytical lens in two important ways. Topically, this article is the first to specifically explore the experiences of the Bönpo religious minority educated in India, demonstrating how early forced educational displacement fosters a transcultural identity that subsequently shapes voluntary global migration in young adulthood. Methodologically, I depart from traditional cross-sectional studies by employing a longitudinal, multi-sited ethnography spanning almost two decades. By utilizing my concept of ethnography “from the inside”—which synthesizes biographical interviews, engaged anthropology, and autoethnographic reflection rooted in my roles as a teacher, volunteer, and guardian—my analysis provides an intimate, nuanced, ethically grounded “thick description” of identity formation and the renegotiation of kinship ties. My aim is for this study to contribute to a critical approach to migration literature by demonstrating how childhood institutional separation from family transitions into proactive transnational mobility, reshaping both personal identity and extended kinship networks in a globalized world.

Bönpo population

The unstable political situation in Nepal at the end of the twentieth century, the civil

war (1996–2006) and the tragic earthquake in 2015 were the crucial external causes of the mass emigration of children and youth from villages located in the high Himalayas, especially from Mustang (Lo) and Dolpo³, to Kathmandu and outside Nepal.

In this group, a significant percentage of people came from the Bön families, a religious minority among the Himalayan and Tibetan populations. This community remains united thanks to the activities of the two cultural and spiritual centers established in Nepal (Triten Norbutse, in the Kathmandu Valley) and India (Menri, in Dolanji, Himachal Pradesh). The fact that this is a small group, which could potentially become dispersed among the overwhelming majority of Buddhists within Tibetan and Himalayan migrant communities, is one of the reasons why the Bön spiritual leaders made a revolutionary decision, given the circumstances. Since the end of the twentieth century, they have been encouraging families to send their children to Bön centers outside their home districts for educational purposes. One of the main goals was to raise children within a cohesive Bön community and to maintain the vitality of Bön culture and religion for future generations. As a result, between 1987 and 2016, more than 800 children were sent to one of them alone⁴. Of course, families also sent their children to monastery schools in Nepal, and some to the few local educational institutions located in Himalayan towns before 2015 (e.g., Jomsom in Lower Mustang and Dunai in Dolpo). However, I was interested in the consequences of sending children to schools outside their home area.

During my fieldwork in 2009, I noticed how widespread these migration strategies had become among the inhabitants of the Himalayas. In the town of Jomsom in Mustang (Upper Nepal) and the surrounding hamlets almost every family had a child or children who had been sent away for education outside the district.

Population censuses and demographic studies conducted by the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala do not

distinguish the population of Bönpo families from the wider population of followers of Tibetan Buddhism⁵. Conducting such studies would be very difficult, not least because together with Tibetan refugees from Bönpo families, members of Himalayan ethnic minorities from Nepal also live in these camps. Even though Nepalese citizens are not refugees, they are counted alongside Tibetan refugees in the census, thereby inflating the official statistics of Bön followers in exile. Therefore, it would be necessary to trace which families are not refugees (that is, those who do not come from Tibet but from the Himalayas). However, this is a delicate social and political issue, so the Tibetan authorities in exile have generally avoided doing so. The Nepalese government also does not distinguish between individual schools of Tibetan Buddhism in its statistics and treats Bönpos like other inhabitants of the Himalayas, counting them as Buddhists⁶. The only data distinguishing individual Tibetan traditions concern the number of monks and nuns in exile⁷, with Bön practitioners accounting for 3.16% of the population⁸. It should be noted, however, that this population also includes members of Himalayan ethnic minorities who are citizens of Nepal⁹.

Statistical studies conducted in China included data on religious affiliation. Among the 4.6 million Tibetans living in the Tibet Autonomous Region and the provinces of Qinghai and Sichuan, there were nearly 160,000 Bön followers. This amounts to 3–4% of the population (Baumer 2002: 16¹⁰). As the proportion of Bön followers was higher in eastern Tibet than across the region as a whole, I use this figure as the upper limit of the estimated range. However, Krystyna Cech (1987: 11) stated that the Bönpos constituted about 1% of the entire Tibetan population¹¹. Considering that the Bönpo families who emigrated from Tibet came mainly from central and western Tibet rather than the east, I assume that the value given by Cech represents the lower limit of the percentage scale. Thus, including the Himalayan Bönpo families, mainly from Dolpo and Mustang, the entire Bönpo population in the Himalayan and

Tibetan areas is estimated to be between 1 and 4% of the population of these regions. It is a low rate in the entire Tibetans and the Himalayan groups of Tibetan origin population. Therefore, the anxieties of the Bön religious leaders regarding the “absorption” of their culture and community by the dominant Buddhist culture are understandable. Consequently, community leaders emphasize the need to strengthen and preserve Bön identity through education, self-presentation, and dialogue.

Narrowing the statistical analysis to Mustang, where Bön culture is recognized as indigenous, it becomes clear that sending children to educational centers of various kinds (secular and monastic, representing different denominations) is a widespread practice. In 2014, about 4,120 children and youth between the ages of 0 and 19 lived in this district, of whom almost 1,000 were enrolled in educational institutions outside Mustang (more than 24% of the population in this age group)¹². The situation is similar in Dolpo but official statistical information does not, for some reasons, reflect the actual situation. According to 2014 data, more than 18,000 children and youth aged 0–19 lived in Dolpo, and only 11 were permanently residing in educational centers¹³. The inaccuracy of this data is demonstrated by the fact that at the Bönpo camp in Dolanji in India alone, about one-third of the children living there between 2004 and 2014 came from Dolpo (an average of 500 children lived in Dolanji annually during this period). A similar proportion was observed among children from Mustang. Therefore, I conclude that in Dolpo the percentage of children and youth being raised and educated outside their homes is also high and exceeds 20%. From the perspective of migration studies, this is an impressive figure. It demonstrates the potential for significant socio-cultural changes among young adult Nepalis from the Himalayas.

How many of these children are from Bönpo families? Assuming that Bönpos constitute approximately 3% of the Himalayan ethnic groups of Tibetan origin, and taking into account only the population aged 0–19 in

Dolpo and Mustang (approximately 22,185 people), the estimated number is approximately 665 children. Therefore, according to these calculations, at least 160 children from Bönpo families (24%) were raised and educated far from home in 2014. These data are consistent with information collected in the field. Since the 1990s, Bönpo monks have regularly encouraged families to send their children to Bön educational centers. Every year, they arrange for a group of approximately 20–30 children to travel for educational purposes to Dolanji and Kathmandu. The network is well organized, cooperates with the local government and district authorities, and has its own leaders and financial resources. Therefore, I assume that, as a result of this institutionalized recruitment process, the percentage of children from Bönpo families leaving for education is higher relative to the total Bönpo population than the corresponding percentage among Buddhist families.

Concluding the statistical analysis, this small religious group sends at least a quarter (if not more) of its children to be raised outside their region of origin. Consequently, this means that they are separated from the influence of parental upbringing. Over the 30 years that the educational centers in the Tibetan refugee camp in Dolanji have existed, about 1,000 children have been admitted, most of them from Dolpo and Mustang. Given the small populations of these two Himalayan regions, it is evident that practically every family has sent at least one of its children to India for upbringing and schooling.

The mass education of children in residential educational centers outside their family homes has encouraged the formation of close peer bonds, which later develop into migration and social networks in adulthood. Observing the first generation of young Lopa (the proper name of the inhabitants of Mustang) and Dolpopa (the inhabitants of Dolpo), one can see that over the last decade, using the available tools of global communication, they have built an extensive network of connections based on childhood acquaintances. It serves them

mainly to support identity formation and facilitate migration related to study and work.

Himalayan parents' educational strategies

The custom of sending Himalayan children for education outside their home districts intensified at the end of the 20th century. From the second half of the century until almost the end of the first decade of the 21st century, there was an international system of assistance for Tibetan refugees residing in India and Nepal. However, there was no such system for the marginalized inhabitants of the Himalayas. Not only did they belong to the poorest segment of the population in one of the world's poorest countries—Nepal—but their limited access to education resulted in a high rate of illiteracy. The former Kingdom of Nepal did not invest in the development of these remote areas because of their extreme climate, geographical conditions, and low population density. A significant factor in the neglect of the Himalayan regions was the Nepalese ethnic policy, under which groups belonging to the Tibetan ethnolinguistic family had a lower status than others. They were not recognized as fully Nepalese because of their ethnic background and physical appearance (East Asian), culture (Tibetan origin), languages (Tibeto-Burman), religions (Buddhism and Bön), and customs, traditions, and history. Nepal incorporated some Himalayan valleys into the state relatively late (for example, the Kingdom of Mustang in 1976). The memory of independence and self-determination remained vivid there; therefore, those Himalayan ethnic groups were regarded by the Nepalese government as unlikely to integrate fully. The Himalayan population required support from NGOs, yet only a few NGOs worked regularly with these communities, focusing mainly on assisting Tibetan refugees.

The Himalayan people¹⁴ decided to use their resemblance to the Tibetans¹⁵ to benefit from the NGO assistance. The center in Dolanji that I studied is one example of this

strategy. The Tibetan refugee camp in this Indian village is intended for Tibetan Bönpo families. However, it also began accepting children from Bön families in the Himalayas into the local school, and the monastery. To enroll them at the school, register them at the center and receive subsidies on their behalf, the center's leaders registered them as Tibetans, changing their place of origin in the register, and sometimes their names as well (if they did not sound Tibetan enough). In this way, the center grew, received higher government subsidies and attracted growing number of Western sponsors. In return, it offered free, high-quality education at the primary school level and, from 2009, at the secondary school level, up to the matriculation examination. The children did not require any financial support from their families, which meant that more and more parents sent their children there. Another important motivation for sending children outside Nepal was the civil war of 1996–2006. Especially during the period between 2001 and 2007 the largest number of children arrived in Dolanji. The Maoist guerrillas were based in the Himalayas, mainly in Mustang and Dolpo, and regularly abducted members among the population, including children. To protect the children, they were sent to schools in Kathmandu and India.

Initially, the inhabitants of Dolpo and Mustang, as well as the neighboring Himalayan areas from Nepal, sent only boys to monastic schools. Since 1983, they had been sent to Menri Monastery in Dolanji for education. However, in 1985, a lay school for Tibetan refugees was opened in Dolanji. Several monks began intensive missionary and recruitment activities in Tibet and the Himalayan villages. As a result, in 1987, the first dozen or so lay teenagers came to Dolanji, where they lived in a hut near the school. This is how the Bön Children's Home (BCH) at the Tibetan Refugee Camp was established. In the following years, young children aged 4 to 6 years, both girls and boys, began to be brought there. In just one decade, from 2004 to 2014, around 500 migrant children lived in Dolanji each year, including around 300 children in the

secular BCH center (boys and girls), 140 boys in the men's monastery, and 60 girls in the women's monastery. The vast majority were not Tibetan refugees, but Nepali Himalayan children.

During the aforementioned civil war, several Western aid organizations began operating in Nepal. Foreigners also established organizations locally, mainly to save street children. However, it was only after the disastrous series of earthquakes in 2015 that Nepal received large-scale structural aid. Hundreds of NGOs began working in and for Nepal, which resulted not only in the reconstruction of the country but also in development of new road, electricity, telephone, and internet infrastructure, as well as a network of schools, including in remote villages. As a result, in the years following the disaster, the Himalayan population gradually moved away from sending young children to India for education on a large scale and instead enrolled them in schools closer to home, which were usually free of charge and maintained by international organizations (by 2017, there were only 150 children in BCH, compared with more than 300 in 2007).

The strategy of sending Bönpo children away from their home communities, driven by the prevailing political situation, economic deprivation, and religious considerations described above, is, according to the community, shaped by three dominant factors. The first is religious affiliation. The inhabitants of Dolpo and Mustang follow Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayana), mainly the Nyingmapa and Sakyapa schools, as well as the Bön religion. However, the boundaries between these religious traditions are often fluid and many homes maintain both Bön and Vajrayana images and altars. Although this syncretism has deep historical roots, the intensive missionary activities of Buddhist monks in these Himalayan regions during the twentieth century further intensified the blending of religious beliefs and pantheons.

The second factor is the history of Tibet and the Himalayas. After 1959, most of the prominent Tibetan monks emigrated from Tibet to Nepal and India. Among

them were Bönpo monks, nuns, and their families. Two main Bön monasteries in Tibet were demolished during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Since the Bönpo community in Tibet was a relatively small religious minority, the Bön leader in exile decided to unify this community to protect Bön culture, religion, hierarchy, and traditions from being absorbed into the larger Buddhist population. The 33rd Trizin of Bön rebuilt Menri Monastery in the Tibetan refugee camp at Dolanji, Himachal Pradesh, India. Construction began in 1967, and the first group of monks also arrived that year. The second monastery, Yungdrung Ling, was transferred to Triten Norbutse Monastery in the western part of Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, and was built in 1987. Bönpo Tibetans moved from various refugee camps in India and Nepal to these two monasteries. In this way, Bön culture survived as an integrated whole. Now, a significant number of Tibetan Bönpo families in exile live in the Dolanji and Kathmandu communities, where they coexist with Himalayan Bönpo children and youth who were relocated from their villages for educational purposes. In Dolanji, the Indian Central School for Tibetans has operated since the end of the 1980s and, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, has offered a full twelve-year secondary schooling programme.

The last factor is Western support for Tibetan refugees through various non-governmental organizations and a system of individual sponsors during the last 20 years of the twentieth century. As mentioned above, Western assistance for Tibetan refugees did not extend to the indigenous people of the Himalayas before 2015. At the same time, Western and Indian officials did not recognize the differences between the ethnic and religious groups of Tibet and the Himalayas because these communities spoke very similar languages, looked alike, dressed the same, ate the same foods, and prayed in similar ways. Toward the end of the twentieth century, Tibetan monks from refugee camps in India, where they were raising the children of Tibetan refugees,

began to expand their religious mission among the people of Dolpo and Mustang. I will not discuss the missionaries' motivations here. The fact is that one of the major effects of their activities was making the Lopa and Dolpopa aware that they could use the monks' contacts in India to improve their household income. Nepalese schools are fee-paying, so the best way to obtain an education was to send the children to Tibetan schools in India supported by the Indian government, the Tibetan government in exile, and Western sponsors. In this way, the children from the Himalayas could be educated, supported, and brought up under better conditions than at home and without placing a financial burden on their families. Since the Bön monks are well known to the locals in Mustang and Dolpo, many children were sent to the refugee camp at Dolanji and enrolled in the two organizations I have already mentioned: the Bön Children's Home and the monastic Bön Children Welfare Center. The "trick" of registering them as children of Tibetan refugees, although it deceived the Indian administration and the Tibetan administration in Dharamsala, enabled many children from the least developed areas to receive a relatively good primary and secondary education.

Educational diversification of Himalayan children and identity formation

The collective decision to send at least one child from almost every family to study outside the Nepalese Himalayas has consequences for educational and social diversification. The effects can begin as early as the preschool stage. As a result, children from Mustang and Dolpo are raised in five different systems, each acting as a distinct cultural regime:

1. In a Tibetan monastery in Nepal,
2. In a secular local Nepalese school,
3. In a secular school for Himalayan groups in Kathmandu,
4. In a Tibetan monastery in India,
5. In an Indian school for Tibetans in a refugee camp in India.

In an extreme case, the situation may be as follows: one of the children graduates from a local Nepalese primary school or even completes secondary education. His/her native and first language is Lowa or Dolpowa. He/she speaks Nepali competently, even fluently if he/she has attended secondary school. Another child in the family—usually the second boy—is sent to the nearest monastery—a Tibetan Buddhist Sakyapa (in Mustang) or Nyingmapa (in Dolpo) monastery—where they are educated in Tibetan culture but in the Nepali language, so that Nepali eventually becomes their first language and the Lhasa dialect of Tibetan their second. The family language is mostly forgotten. The child is trained in Nepalese national culture and Tibetan religious culture.

The third child is sent to the Bön monastery in Kathmandu (where he/she is educated similarly to a sibling in a Buddhist monastery), or to Dolanji, India in a Tibetan refugee camp, where a completely different education system operates: the child lives in a Tibetan monastery among not only relatives but also Tibetans from Tibet and residents of North Kinnaur, India¹⁶. The lingua franca of this community is the Tibetan Lhasa dialect. Children learn this language in the monastery and at the Indian Central School for Tibetans. After a few years, Tibetan becomes the first language, replacing the mother tongue. Hindi becomes the second language, serving as the school language and the primary means of communication with the surrounding Indian community. They forget numerous words of Lowa or Dolpowa, retaining only basic vocabulary, as well as a few words in Nepali. They grow up under the influence of strong Tibetan nationalism, Tibetan culture, and religion, but also within the Indian education system, under the influence of Indian mass and global culture¹⁷.

Another child from the family is sent to Dolanji to the secular Bön Children's Home, where he or she grows up and attends the Indian Central School for Tibetans. The child is subject to the same cultural and social changes as his or her sibling in the

nearby monastery; however, the religious indoctrination is much weaker, and the influence of Indian and global culture is stronger. The supremacy of Bön religious and cultural identification over ethnic identity is strongly promoted in Bön centers in exile. This is reflected in the structural system of the camp, its socio-religious activity, and the religious teaching of children and youth. Nonetheless, clan, ethnic, and national divisions persist in the centers, building informal structures similar to those found in their homelands. The response to these traditional divisions has been to unify education and upbringing in all Tibetan schools in exile in a spirit of Tibetan patriotism. In this way, Tibetanness deeply influences and becomes permanently intertwined with the process of constructing the individual identities of Himalayan youth growing up in a Tibetan social environment. To this complicated mix must be added the impact of global culture transmitted through modern Indian media and lifestyles, which affects children and teenagers every day at school and during their leisure time. This complex cultural hybrid leads many boarding school graduates to define their own identities as multicultural.

The last child of the family may be sent to a Nepalese school for Himalayan minorities in Pokhara or Kathmandu, run by Nepalese and international NGOs, such as the Himalayan Children Foundation or the Snow Lion Foundation. This child is raised within Nepali national culture. Nepali becomes their first language, alongside the native local language, which is used only to a limited extent when communicating with peers from the same region of origin. At the secondary level, English becomes the third language.

This educational diversification is the main reason for the development of different identities within one family, driven by complex socio-political factors, geopolitical histories, and Western NGO funding networks. This institutional model has disrupted traditional large families and parental child-rearing. Currently, most families raise their children for only 4–6

years before sending them away, keeping only one child at home to help sustain the household. This modified model of a small family is now replicated by many families in Dolpo and Mustang, despite their still high fertility rates. It can be observed that those adults who were raised outside the home, despite being aware of the disadvantages of such an upbringing and their own childhood traumas, also prefer the small family model and send some of their children (and sometimes all of them) away for education and upbringing outside the Himalayas.

The biographical trajectory of Phuntsok¹⁸, a youth from Upper Mustang whom I have observed since childhood, vividly illustrates the profound identity shifts generated by these fragmented educational regimes. Sent to the secular Bon Children's Home and the Indian Central School for Tibetans in Dolanji, Phuntsok grew up immersed in a unique process of linguistic and ideological hybridization. While a sibling who remained in Mustang retained the native Lowa language and communicative Nepali, Phuntsok's mother tongue was quickly replaced by the Lhasa dialect of Tibetan—the *lingua franca* of the refugee camp—and by Hindi, his primary means of interacting with his Indian surroundings.

Furthermore, during his school years, Phuntsok was subjected to overlapping cultural regimes of subordination. As a minor from an ethnic Himalayan minority, he was subjected to the authority of Tibetan superiors; simultaneously, as a member of a Tibetan refugee camp, he was treated as a lower-status minority within the broader Indian educational environment. Concurrently, Tibetan leaders instilled in him a potent sense of Tibetan nationalism. Consequently, at the age of 15, he identified himself as “Phuntsok Bön” on social media platforms. Despite coming from Mustang, he self-identified primarily as Tibetan, heavily influenced by his religious education. He explained this by stating that he came from Upper Mustang, close to the border with Tibet; that his ancestors had migrated from Tibet; and that the Kingdom of Lo had always been Tibetan, belonging

to the Bönpo. His idol was the 14th Dalai Lama, and his main teacher was the Bön Lopon Rinpoche. He loved Bollywood musicals and American action films. In the Indian primary school for Tibetans that he attended, the teaching of geography and history was permeated with the so-called spirit of Greater India. This meant that the knowledge he received in these subjects was presented from an India-centric perspective, omitting the sovereign political history of Nepal. In practice, Phuntsok and his peers did not know, for example, that Nepal was a separate country¹⁹, and that their country of origin was part of the Nepalese state. They only became aware of this as teenagers. The children regularly learned about Bön and Tibetan culture, as well as the origin and fate of the Tibetans, during religious education and monastery ceremonies. Difficult relations with Indian teachers, the distinctiveness of the language they used to communicate, and cultural and anthropological differences led the children to perceive themselves as Tibetan rather than Indian. Tibetan leaders instilled in them the idea of the Tibetan nation and the so-called Tibetan cause as a kind of chosen mission. They were raised in the spirit of Tibetan nationalism while, at the same time, being permeated by Indian mass culture as the more modern one. This distinct duality of early experience fosters a shared tendency among these children toward a flexible, relative, and occasionally indifferent attitude regarding rigid national belonging.

Re-entry, kinship transformation, and the path to self-representation

The structural tension of this upbringing manifests itself fully during late adolescence, when young people return to the Himalayas. When a family is reunited after a decade of separation, siblings realize they no longer share a common language, culture, or worldview. Their relationships remain bound by blood ties, but intimate social connections are often irreversibly fragmented. As my observations indicate, the breakdown of family relationships between siblings and between parents and

children constitutes a profound fragmentation of traditional kinship structures, presenting serious psychological challenges. Conversely, this profound reconfiguration of kinship ties and the resulting lack of conventional domestic bonds contributes to a more flexible, detached approach to traditional family obligations. Paradoxically, this alienation grants young adults the personal freedom to chart independent transnational migration routes and embrace flexible lifestyles. Those who decide to stay in Nepal, learn Nepali but maintain relationships and social contacts primarily with peers from schools and educational centers. This is one of the forces that influences the process of identity development toward inclusive transcultural and transnational values. But it does not come easily. Many of them could identify with Amin Maalouf's (1998) question: "Would I be more authentic if I amputated a part of myself?"

Those who stay longer in Mustang or Dolpo find it easier and quicker to engage in the social challenges they see in their villages and surroundings than either the older generation or their peers who have not left the region. Some provide periodic refresher courses for local children or offer courses on hygiene and safety, while others create clubs and associations. Many young adults who were brought up and educated outside their native environment, far from their homes and families, discover upon returning to Nepal that they do not know or sometimes even understand their own country at all.

They often retain vivid memories of the trauma of being separated from their mothers and leaving home as children. During adolescence, these memories often become more acute. They begin to rebel against those who removed them from their families, identifying them with authority figures or guardians. They seek to reconnect with their roots, rebuild ties with their families, and better understand their own identities. At this stage, however, many are unable to define who they are, often moving from one form of identification to another. Returning to the place

of their childhood is a profound shock on many levels. They are initially captivated by the beauty of the Himalayas and enjoy reuniting with their family members, but this initial joy soon fades. Apart from practical challenges such as the need to acclimatize to a different geographical and climatic environment and initial gastrointestinal problems due to a different diet, they face more serious problems: limited ability to communicate fluently with their families because of a poor command of the local language or Nepali, limited understanding of the needs and aspirations of local residents, different everyday habits and expectations, a standard of living that is often lower than that experienced in Kathmandu or India, limited access to technological and communication infrastructure, and what many describe as "cultural boredom" ("There is nowhere to go here"). They try to fit in, look for an active niche for themselves, and some—as I mentioned—get involved. After a few weeks or months at home, most do not envision a permanent future there. But they do not leave the place with empty-handed. The most important process in building their new adult identity usually ends successfully: they discover their roots, accept them and incorporate them into their identity.

This does not mean that everyone copes so well and recognizes the advantages of their migration experiences. It is important to remember that a significant proportion of this generation was raised in care homes governed by the rules typical of orphanages. The limitations, dysfunctions, and even pathologies resulting from this situation did not bypass this social group and affected their development and the challenging process of building self-esteem. In this respect, psychological and pedagogical observations are a crucial part of the analysis of young people's behavior, their choices, and their cultural and social self-definition. However, in this article, I present a general tendency in the process of building transcultural identity that I observed while analyzing conversations with young people and their migration trajectories.

Teenagers are at an age when their childhood identity has already disappeared, and their adult identity is still being built. They often do not know who they are: Lopa/Dolpopa, Nepalese, Tibetan, “global” Indians, or perhaps someone else, similar to those who received international scholarships thanks to their Western sponsors or invitations from relatives and emigrated to Europe, the United States, Japan, or South Korea. They spend 1–4 years in cultures and realities so different from their own that some of them come to identify partially as “American,” “English,” “French,” or even “Polish,” as in the case of some students.

This painful process of deconstructing an exile-built self-identification—what Maalouf (1998) called a “dead identity”—is clearly visible in Phuntsok’s transition to adulthood. At the age of 16, he returned to Mustang for a summer vacation and discovered his local Lopa roots. However, the institutional hegemony of the central state confronted him when applying for official documents: residents of Mustang are legally forced to adopt “Gurung”—the name of a southern ethnic group—as their official surname. Seeking to fit into the national framework, he changed his online profile to “Phuntsok Gurung.” Yet, his persistent feeling of alienation prompted him to return to Nepal after high school, where he spent a year learning fluent Nepali while maintaining his closest social ties with his former boarding-school peers.

The ultimate crystallization of his identity occurred after the tragic 2015 earthquake. The shared trauma of the cataclysm and the death of a childhood friend transformed his socio-cultural capital into proactive civic agency. Rebranding his digital identity to “Phuntsok Lopa,” he began leveraging his extensive network of connections in India and the Tibetan settlements to organize spontaneous aid campaigns for his local community. Today, he actively lobbies for legal changes that would allow Mustang residents to reclaim their authentic ethnic names as official surnames. At the same time, he embraces a broader identity, drawing on the cultures in which he has

lived. His diverse socio-cultural capital has made him a conscious citizen with broad horizons, who can demand equal rights for ethnic minorities in the Nepalese state on the one hand, while also remaining flexible about opportunities for work and migration throughout Asia, and perhaps beyond. Growing up in culturally and socially diverse environments and searching for his identity has distanced him from the idea of drawing clear boundaries around it. By becoming more flexible, he has learned to make use of all his experiences.

Phuntsok’s case demonstrates how youth initially subjected to a strict regime of structural subordination—as a silenced or muted social group navigating both age-based coercion and cultural dislocation—eventually mobilize the very educational tools acquired during displacement. Rather than remaining passive subalterns, they emerge as highly educated, multilingual cultural brokers and civic leaders. Through the lens of Homi Bhabha’s “Third Space” (1991), their trajectories represent a dynamic transition from structural speechlessness to active self-representation. By navigating the boundaries between multiple countries, languages, and traditions, this rising generation constructs an inclusive, transcultural identity that fills, reshapes, and thrives within the spaces in between.

This article does not provide space for a broader discussion on the interpretation of the concept of transnationality in the case of the young people I studied. I can only note that I draw on Homi Bhabha’s concepts of “transnationality” (1994) and “hybridity” as the “Third Space” (Bhabha 1991) to better understand the spaces emerging between established cultural patterns. In this context, rather than framing these youth solely through the lens of rigid subalternity (cf. Spivak 1988), I view their trajectory as a dynamic process through which an initially marginalized and structurally silenced group acquires the educational tools and civic agency necessary to transition into fully-fledged self-representation. Through globalization, education and processes of democratic and civic activation, they

acquire the tools to engage in dialogue with the “center” and find its place.

Self-identification among this group of young people indicates the transcultural²⁰ nature of their identity. This process is all the more complicated because it clashes with the markedly different identities of their relatives. We can say that they experience identity pluralism, which contributes to the even deeper individualization and flexibility of their self-identification. This multiculturalism of their upbringing also means that, as they become adults, they quickly choose their own life paths and begin to take on social roles within their own communities, starting with collective actions through social forums and the public articulation of their identification. They leave the silenced group, finding their voice, assuming a self-representative role, and contributing to the development of civil society on a local scale.

This does not mean that it is an easy process, devoid of dramatic moments, burdens, and failures. Some struggle with who they are or do not feel the need to define themselves. Others manage to retain and accept all the elements that have shaped their identities. They coexist and lead individuals to perceive themselves as integrated with many communities and cultures, while remaining extremely original and unique, which they also communicate to the outside world. In these cases, we can talk about an identity that is no longer simply transcultural, but also multicultural.

Over the last decade, such geographically mobile young people have become the first generation of Nepalese educational and labor migrants, combining study with work, primarily in India, but also in the United States and Europe. Out of the approximately 150 children born between 1993 and 1999 and raised in BCH whom I have personally met, several dozen have completed their studies in India and now work there. About 14²¹ of them study and/or work in Europe, the United States, Japan, and South Korea. The rest live in Nepal. Some of them pursued higher education in Kathmandu

and Pokhara and, after completing their studies, took up work in the capital.

To show how multifaceted and complex this identity-building process is among the lifelong migratory generation of young Himalayans, I will mention an interesting aspect related to travel documents. Two years after the earthquake, a new practice emerged. Some people bought documents from Tibetan refugees in Nepal and went to the European Union, claiming refugee status as Tibetans for economic reasons. They live in exile in a mixed Tibetan-Himalayan community, presenting themselves as Tibetans to their employers and to local immigration authorities. This practice probably also influences the way they portray themselves publicly.

Conclusion

Observing how the identity of the young Himalayan generation born in the 1990s is being shaped raises critical questions about the interaction of various developmental factors—biological, emotional, educational, cultural, political, sociological, and religious. Having grown up in a foreign cultural and national environment far from their homes, these young people from Dolpo and Mustang embody a new, self-creating group. This deep biographical displacement forces them to confront and negotiate often opposing tendencies. Ultimately, they face the profound challenge of deconstructing aspects of their childhood socialization to build a new, transcultural reality. Because they are much better educated than their older relatives, they emerge not only as cultural brokers for their communities but also as leaders and socio-cultural spokespeople, introducing new qualities and global influences into the existing local culture. They speak three or more languages, use English fluently, are highly proficient in modern digital communication technologies, and maintain a worldview far broader than that of the older generation. They participate actively in global mass culture and are consequently less bound by traditional cultural obligations.

At the same time, a large proportion of this generation was raised in care homes governed by institutional structures akin to orphanages. The limitations, dysfunctions, and institutional traumas resulting from this long-term separation have undeniably shaped their psychological development and self-worth. Crucially, my study demonstrates that this educational displacement results in profound disruptions to kinship. The years spent apart shatter conventional domestic bonds and traditional expectations of familial care. Paradoxically, however, this very fragmentation of family structures grants young adults a unique form of personal detachment and flexibility. This relative freedom from rigid family dependencies allows them to easily navigate global networks, adapt to diverse environments, and independently chart their own voluntary transnational migration routes.

Through the theoretical lens of Homi Bhabha's concepts (1991, 1994), these young people successfully carve out an autonomous space between large, imposing cultural, social, and political systems. While these institutions initially positioned them as a structurally marginalized and silenced social category, as they reach adulthood, they mobilize the very educational tools acquired during their displacement. They effectively transition from a speechless or muted group into an active, self-representing one. Although they remain part of a minority, they learn to navigate the globalized world on an equal footing with dominant groups, creatively filling the spaces in between. To paraphrase Amin Maalouf, what defines their specific and authentic identity is precisely this unique, flexible position—living and thriving at the intersection of multiple countries, languages, and cultural traditions (Maalouf 1998).

Acknowledgements

My ethnographic fieldwork, conducted in 2004, 2006, and 2009, was partially funded by the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

I would like to thank my interviewees, research partners, and all the alumni of the Bon Children's Home whom I had the pleasure of meeting. I am especially grateful to the BCH management for their assistance in gathering materials and information. Language editing by Catriona Child.

Endnotes

1. On the Bön religion, see Urbańska-Szymoszyn (2004, 117–133). For additional sources, see *Bon Bibliography* (2011) and Martin (1997).
2. Bönpo is the name given to a community or person who follows the Bön religion.
3. Mustang, a former kingdom located in the Central Himalayas and currently an administrative district of Nepal; Dolpo, a Himalayan area to the west of Mustang, a separate district of Nepal.
4. Data were estimated based on my observations and census data provided by the managers of one educational center in Dolanji (Himachal Pradesh, India).
5. See Bhatia, Tsegial Dranyi, and Rowley (2002); *Demographic Survey of Tibetans in Exile* (2009). The Central Tibetan Administration's census, conducted in 2009, included Tibetans in exile residing in India, Nepal, Bhutan, and other countries, recording a total population of approximately 130,000. <http://phayul.com/news/article.aspx?id=24426&article=CTA+to+conduct+second+demographic+survey+of+Tibetans+in+exile%22>.
6. See *Population Census*, 2002, for an analysis of the results of the 2001 Nepal population census, see Dahal (2002).
7. See data from the official website of the Central Tibetan Administration (formerly the Government of Tibet-in-Exile), "Religion and Culture Affairs," www.tibet.com/Govt/rel-cul.html, published May 12, 1999.
8. Tanka Subba (1990: 25) conducted research among Tibetan refugees in the eastern Indian Himalayas, but in interviews conducted in 1987, he did not include Bön as a separate religious category, or the respondents did not reveal their affiliation

with it. Among the 80 households he surveyed, 7.5% of interlocutors did not state their religious affiliation. It is possible that some Bönpos were in this group.

9. For a detailed quantitative analysis of the Bönpo population, see Szymoszyn (2017: 75–77).

10. Baumer refers to Ma Rong's research published in Kvaerne (ed.) (1994: 509).

11. In the mid-1980s, when Cech conducted research in Dolanji, the total number of residents was about 500, the vast majority of whom came from Tibet. She estimated, based on conversations with Tibetans and her fieldwork, that about half of all Bönpo families in exile lived in the Dolanji camp. Against the background of the approximately 100,000 Tibetan refugee population at that time, this constituted 1%.

12. See http://cbs.gov.np/image/data/Population/VDC-Municipality%20in%20detail/42%20Mustang_VDCLevelReport.pdf, accessed October 16, 2016.

13. See http://cbs.gov.np/image/data/Population/VDC-Municipality%20in%20detail/62%20Dolpa_VDCLevelReport.pdf, accessed October 16, 2016.

14. The term Himalayan people refers to all ethnic groups that have inhabited the Himalayan region for centuries and speak languages belonging to the Tibeto-Burman language family.

15. Their similarity to Tibetans, the inhabitants of Tibet north of the Himalayas, now within the territory of China.

16. The monastery also accepts sons from families in North Kinnaur, where Buddhism and Bön predominate, in contrast to South Kinnaur, which is predominantly Hindu.

17. There are many definitions of globalization and numerous attempts to describe it. In its narrow sense globalization is associated with the sudden intensification of social relations on a global scale (Nederveen, 1994: 164), with the inevitability of participation in these transformations (Giddens, 2001: 31). For a review analysis of the concept of globalization, see Dębska (2002: 45–57).

18. Name changed for personal data protection reasons.

19. Nepalese people often cross the Indian border without documents, as both countries have signed a visa-free travel agreement. As a result, children who were taken from the Himalayas through Nepal to India did not notice that they were crossing an international border.

20. Transculturalism is a concept developed by Wolfgang Welsch, who reconceptualized multiculturalism by breaking away from the idea of culturally separate spheres and introducing a network model characterized by the hybridization of cultural elements (Muniak and Skrzeczkowski 2008).

21. Data from the Nyatri Aid Foundation for Children of Tibet and the Himalayas. It is worth adding here that most of the students studying outside Nepal and India are sponsored by their so-called “heart parents”—individual donors from the West, usually followers of Bön or Vajrayana, or supporters of Buddhism more broadly (on transbuddhism, see Bhushan, Garfield and Zablocki 2009).

References

- Acharya, K. P. 2012. *Nepalese Student Migration to Foreign Countries for Higher Education in the Globalized Context*. PhD diss., Kathmandu University School of Education. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14301/271>. Accessed January 7, 2025.
- Baumer, Christoph. 2002. *Tibet's Ancient Religion: Bön*. Graz: Weatherhill.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 1991. Cultural Diversity and Cultural Difference. In *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, edited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, 206–209. London: Routledge.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. The Commitment to Theory. In *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bhatia, Sunil, Tsegay Dranyi, and David Rowley. 2002. A Social and Demographic Study of Tibetan Refugees in India. *Social Science & Medicine* 54(3): 411–422.

- Bhushan, Nalini, Jay L. Garfield, and Abraham Zablocki, eds. 2009. *TransBuddhism: Transmission, Translation, Transformation*. Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Bon Bibliography. 2011. Bon Bibliography. THL Bibliographies. Dharamsala: The Tibetan and Himalayan Library. <http://www.thlib.org/bibliographies/wiki/bon%20bibliography.html>.
- Cech, Krystyna. 1987. *The Social and Religious Identity of the Tibetan Bonpos with Special Reference to a North-West Himalayan Settlement*. PhD diss., University of Oxford.
- Central Bureau of Statistics. 2002. *Population Census 2001: National Report*. Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics.
- Central Tibetan Administration, Department of Religion and Culture. 1999. *Religion and Culture Affairs*. Dharamsala: Central Tibetan Administration. Accessed May 12, 1999. <http://www.tibet.com/Govt/rel-cul.html>.
- Childs, Geoff, and Namgyal Choedup. 2019. *From a Trickle to a Torrent: Education, Migration, and Social Change in a Himalayan Valley of Nepal*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Childs, Geoff, Susan Craig, Cynthia M. Beall, and Buddha Basnyat. 2014. Depopulating the Himalayan Highlands: Education and Outmigration from Ethnically Tibetan Communities of Nepal. *Mountain Research and Development* 34(2): 85–94. <https://doi.org/10.1659/MRD-JOURNAL-D-14-00021.1>.
- Craig, Sienna R. 2020. *The Ends of Kinship: Connecting Himalayan Lives between Nepal and New York*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Dahal, Dilli Ram. 2002. *Social Composition of the Population: Caste/Ethnicity and Religion in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics.
- Dębska, Monika. 2002. Globalizacja – Analiza Pojęcia w Wybranych Koncepcjach Teoretycznych. *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 21: 45–57.
- Giddens, Anthony. 2001. *Nowoczesność i tożsamość. „Ja” i społeczeństwo w epoce późnej nowoczesności*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Government of Nepal. 2014. *National Population and Housing Census 2011: Mustang District, VDC/Municipality Level Report*. Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics. https://docs.censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/Documents/0c25db2e-35e7-4d21-a124-b736d3300df8_42%20Mustang_VDCLevelReport.pdf. Accessed October 16, 2016.
- Kaczmarek, Łukasz. 2016. Między Survey Research a obserwacją uczestniczącą: rozdarcia metodologiczno-tożsamościowe w polskiej etnologii/antropologii kulturowej w XXI wieku. *Etnografia. Praktyki–Teorie–Doświadczenia* 2: 123–136.
- Khan, Asif A. 2018. From the Peaks and Back: Mapping the Emotions of Trans-Himalayan Children Education Migration Journeys in Kathmandu, Nepal. *Children's Geographies* 16(6): 616–627. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2018.1479732>.
- Khan, Asif A. 2021. Embodied Circular Migration: Lived Experiences of Education and Work of Nepalese Children and Youth. *Journal of Youth Studies* 22(4): 470–486. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2021.1902962>.
- Khan, Asif A., and Jennifer Hyndman. 2015. Navigating Civil War through Youth Migration, Education, and Family Separation. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 31(2): 75–84. <https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.40311>.
- Kvaerne, Per, ed. 1994. *Tibetan Studies*. Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture.
- Maalouf, Amin. 1998. *Les identités meurtrières*. Paris: Grasset.
- Martin, Dan. 1997. *An Annotated Bibliography of Articles and Books about Bon (English, French, and German Primarily, but Also Including Some Recent Articles from Tibetan-Language Periodicals)*. Unpublished

bibliography. Śardza Ling Institute Archives, Poland.

Muniak, Radosław, and Mateusz Skrzeczkowski. 2008. Definicje. Narodowe Centrum Kultury. Accessed October 10, 2011. <http://dialog2008.pl/index.php?page=art&artid=265>.

Nederveen Pieterse, Jan. 1994. Globalisation as Hybridisation. *International Sociology* 9(2): 161–184. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026858094009002003>.

Planning Commission, Central Tibetan Administration. 2009. *Demographic Survey of Tibetans in Exile*. Dharamsala: Planning Commission, Central Tibetan Administration. Accessed October 1, 2011. <http://phayul.com/news/article.aspx?id=24426&article=CTA+to+conduct+second+demographic+survey+of+Tibetans+in+exile>.

Pomieczński, Adam. 2009. Pomędzy antropologią zaangażowaną a osobistą. In *Zanikające granice. Antropologizacja nauki i jej dyskursów*, edited by Adam Pomieczński and Sławomir Sikora, 87–102. Poznań: Biblioteka Telgte.

Quinn, Elizabeth A., Jhangchuk Sangmo, Sarah Burack, and Geoff Childs. 2023. Childhood Growth and Education Migration among Ethnic Tibetan Children from Nepal. *American Journal of Biological Anthropology* 180(3): 427–441. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajpa.24652>.

Smith, Sara H., and Mabel Gergan. 2015. The Diaspora Within: Himalayan Youth, Education-Driven Migration, and Future Aspirations in India. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33(1): 119–135. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d13152p>.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1994. Can the Subaltern Speak? In *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 66–111. New York: Columbia University Press.

Subba, Tanka B. 1990. *Flight and Adaptation: Tibetan Refugees in the Darjeeling-Sikkim*

Himalaya. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.

Szymoszyn, Anna. 2017. *Contemporary Bonpo Community in Tibetan Refugee Camps*. *Ethnologia Polona: Himalayan and Tibetan Identities in Contemporary Perspective* 37:2016: 67–82.

Trempała, Janusz, and Barbara Harwas-Napierała. 2000. *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka*. Vol. 2, *Charakterystyka okresów życia człowieka*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Urbańska-Szymoszyn, Anna. 2004. The Spreading of Bon Culture Among Tibetan Refugees: Polish Implications. *Ethnologia Polona* 25: 117–133.

West, Richard, and Lynn H. Turner. 2018. *Introducing Communication Theory: Analysis and Application*. 6th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

Dr Anna Szymoszyn is an ethnologist at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences (IAE PAN), in Poznań, and a Geography teacher in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. She holds MA degrees in Ethnology and Theology from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and a PhD in Ethnology from IAE PAN. She has also completed postgraduate studies in Geography and Education. In 2001 and 2003, she was a Soros Foundation scholar at Central European University in Budapest, and in 2006, she received a fellowship from the Indian National Academy of Sciences at Chandigarh University. In 2007–2008, she was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Virginia. Her research interests include the ethnology of the Himalayan-Tibetan region, migration, transculturation, the ethnology of religion, and local heritage. She co-founded the Nyatri Aid Foundation for Children of Tibet and the Himalayas.