

S H A D O W  
C I R C U S :  
RITU SARIN AND  
TENZING SONAM

E X H I B I T I O N  
08.02.-10.03.2019  
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# C O N C E P T

Since the Communist Chinese invasion of 1949, Tibet has been a country under occupation. The exhibition *S H A D O W C I R C U S* revisits an overlooked chapter in the recent history of Tibet: the armed struggle for freedom that spontaneously erupted in response to the Chinese aggression, which then became entangled in global geopolitics when the CIA got involved in 1956. Code-named *ST Circus*, it was one of the CIA's longest running covert operations until it was abruptly abandoned in the late 60s.

Filmmakers Ritu Sarin and Tenzing Sonam researched the subject for many years and made a BBC – commissioned documentary – *The Shadow Circus: The CIA in Tibet* (1998) – that focused on the CIA's support and betrayal of the Tibetan freedom fighters. They were inspired by Tenzing's father, Lhamo Tsering, one of the leaders of the resistance and the key liaison between the Tibetans and the CIA.

*S H A D O W C I R C U S* re-evaluates the audiovisual material that they gathered over the years, and for the first time presents a re-edited version of their documentary, along with photographs, documents, letters, CIA surveillance maps of Tibet, and excerpts from interviews with former CIA agents and guerrilla operatives.

The Cold War epoch is navigated within a third space, as an 'uneasy alliance' beyond the geopolitical power blocs and bilateral relations to examine forms of intelligence gathering, guerrilla warfare and clandestine resistance in Tibet, that continues to resonate today as part of an unfinished project of freedom.

The filmmakers foreground the subjective position of an intermediary between the CIA and members of the Mustang Resistance Force: Lhamo Tsering, whose personal archive is staged to confront the complexities of an occupied terrain, wherein individual aspirations and national interests fail to provide a symmetrical historic trajectory.

The unresolved nature of the militant image and its ethics of circulation become points of potent inquiry during this pivotal time in Tibet's armed liberation movement and the international 'alliance building' that included one of the most networked intelligence services in the world. The ultimate betrayal of the Tibetan struggle by the CIA was a foregone conclusion but the deeply personal and lasting emotional bonds that formed between Tibetan resistance fighters and their CIA trainers in the course of their brief and unlikely encounter muddies preconceived notions of power relations and demands another line of inquiry.

Photography critic and author Teju Cole writes "In a time of surveillance and snitchery, being looked at far from being the same as being seen is often its exact opposite. Looking is extractive, but seeing is relational. Survival depends on knowing the difference." It is this threshold of invisibility and detectability that becomes animated while annotating secret alliances from the inside of a rebellion; there is only a shifting ground and the camouflage of a rebel identity with a tactical handbook, borrowed names and lives on edge. We ask ourselves, how this archival evidence may speak truth to power by extracting new forms of collective intelligence that are a counterpoint to the extractive condition of surveillance by the world powers. How do we consider this obscured lineage of decolonization in a post-Cold War world rife with nationalist agendas?

## T R A D I N G W I T H T H E D E M O N

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

The history of the 20th century, at least from the vantage point of those of us whose histories have been framed by the wrath and legacy of coloniality, can be characterised by a number of aphorisms relating to some notion of evil: trading with the demon, the better of two evils, and many more. The issue at stake here is neither the ethical, moral, nor spiritual discerning of what evil or demon could mean; rather at the crux is a philosophical question of what it means to collaborate – and for that matter beyond the etymological underpinnings of the term. My people say, "one hand can't tie a bundle" or "scratch my back, I scratch ya back", which both situate the notion of collaboration within the realm of interdependence. Which is to say sometimes to be able to reach certain goals, one might need that extra hand to help in the tying of that bundle or the scratching of that back. And then, if no other hand is available, but the pressure to tie the bundle is excruciatingly gross or the itch of the back is deadening, one would even go as far as taking the hands of the CIA. [...]

The aforementioned examples are largely known. They aren't here for their crassness, but again to exemplify the complexity of the hand that one might call to complement one's own hand in the tying of that bundle. For it is the same CIA that toppled the light that was about to shine in Congo, or that was in the process of getting its glow in Ghana... for it is the same CIA that was bent on disproving that 'a city built on a hill cannot be hidden' as they did in Angola...for it is this same CIA that through the anti-communist Congress for

Cultural Freedom (CCF) – founded on 26 June 1950 in West Berlin – that sought to use culture as a weapon to propagate liberal democracy and combat communism. [...]

Like in the many examples in the beginning of this brief, the interest of the CIA and America was hardly to support the Tibetans in their strives for freedom, but rather in a finding ways of penetrating and gathering intelligence about the Chinese, and b. granting whoever wanted military support in their efforts to combat and contain the spread of communism. The former being the currency and the latter the profit. The fact that the CIA's support was abruptly brought to a halt on the eve of Richard Nixon's historic 1972 meeting with Mao Zedong was not only very detrimental to the Tibetan cause, but also a significant symbol of a self-interest driven collaboration, wherein the scratching of the back is not done for the benefit of one who has the itches, but to the satisfaction of the one who earns the profits. [...]

Even in ruminating on the philosophical question of what it means to collaborate, if the frame of the collaboration is designed by the terms of a bargain that demands literally 'a pound of flesh' à la Shylock – instead of a scratch for a scratch, then the interdependence of collaboration is superseded by the relation of dependence in the line of power. Of course, the case of Tibet was and is a particular one, but the common denominator with Congo, Ghana, Chad, and many other countries around the world was and is the common demon of the trade. [...]

In: Ritu Sarin and Tenzing Sonam, *Shadow Circus*, S A V V Y Contemporary, 2019.

A  
G U E R R I L L A  
H A N D B O O K  
Natasha Ginwala

The letter exchanges between agent GV and Tsering in 1964–65 demonstrate the trap of indebtedness and the character of secret correspondence involving matters of financial administration, paranoid arrangements of meeting points, and stern demands for intelligence in exchange for the sustained benefits of funding and upkeep of the rebel fighters.

Thus, the seemingly inglorious bureaucratic labour of intelligence gathering, fugitive planning, and surveillance comes to the foreground. But more importantly, it provides hard evidence on the loaded role of an intermediary and witness such as Tsering investing in maximizing productivity of the liberation struggle while cautiously fulfilling the appetite of the CIA in keeping a close eye on the so-called 'enemy'.

Thus, the hegemonic nature of exchanges perpetuated by Cold War power blocs become intimately framed as a clandestine conversation between unequal protagonists. In the current state of affairs, since 2003 approximately a third of CIA employees are private contractors. Therefore, we can no longer claim that intelligence is a predominantly state-based activity.<sup>1</sup>

The photographic corpus generated by Lhamo Tsering unravels as a ciné-geography of the militant image and archives secret lives of the Tibetan struggle from daily training rounds to outdoor classroom sessions, marches through Himalayan snow, and numerous moments of communal solidarity. In their Third Text editorial Kodwo Eshun and Ros Gray note:

“Within the multiple contexts of Tricontinental militancy (in the 1960s and 70s), how is the term ciné-geography to be understood? What does the term help to make thinkable? Ciné-geography designates situated cinecultural practices in an expanded sense, and the connections – individual, institutional, aesthetic and political – that link them transnationally to other situations of urgent struggle.”<sup>2</sup>

Apparently, the Chinese do not have a distinctive word for “intelligence” in order to differentiate it from other forms of information gathering. The images of intelligence that Tsering and the guerrillas generate fill the void of translation, repressive silencing, and incarceration that still resound in Tibet today, while further linking to struggles beyond Asia. [...]

The film *A Stranger in My Native Land* (1998) creates a parallel biographical thread by providing a travel account of Ritu Sarin and Tenzing Sonam's first journey into Tibet as an occupied territory, detailing meetings with Tenzing's relatives who stayed back, and the forging of a connection after years of distance from his extended family. The exchange of social values, alienation from vernacular language, and contrasting worldviews marks this as an intimate yet melancholic portrayal that equally speaks of realignments and loss. As the filmmakers traverse through the Amdo province and into Lhasa, the dominant clutches of China over Tibetan terrain become ever more present – capturing a return that is made impossible. Tenzing's father, Lhamo Tsering, moved away from Tibet to study in Nanjing and later trained in the United States before taking command as grassroots coordinator of the Tibetan Resistance with the CIA in Darjeeling, India.

In Tsering's hand-drawn map of his ancestral village, his incredible precision in recalling – 50 years after he had left his home – details from landmarks in the area to an aerial view of the local architecture and topographical

1 Walter Pincus and Stephen Barr, "CIA Plans Cutbacks, Limits on Contractor Staffing", The Washington Post, June 11, 2007, [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/10/AR2007061001180.html?noredirect=on](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/10/AR2007061001180.html?noredirect=on) (accessed: January 8, 2019).

2 Kodwo Eshun and Ros Gray, "The Militant Image: A Ciné-Geography. Editors' Introduction", Third Text 25/1, 2011, p. 1.

details of mountainsides comes into view. It is clear there is an intense yearning from afar that enabled this contour of home ground to be imprinted into memory and reproduced for his son to return there someday. Of the widening gulf between homeland and exile as well as the persistent tug of statelessness, Tenzing Sonam writes: “there was a sense of temporariness, of constantly being told that our real home lay in Tibet, just across the towering Kanchenjunga range in whose shadow we lived.”<sup>3</sup>

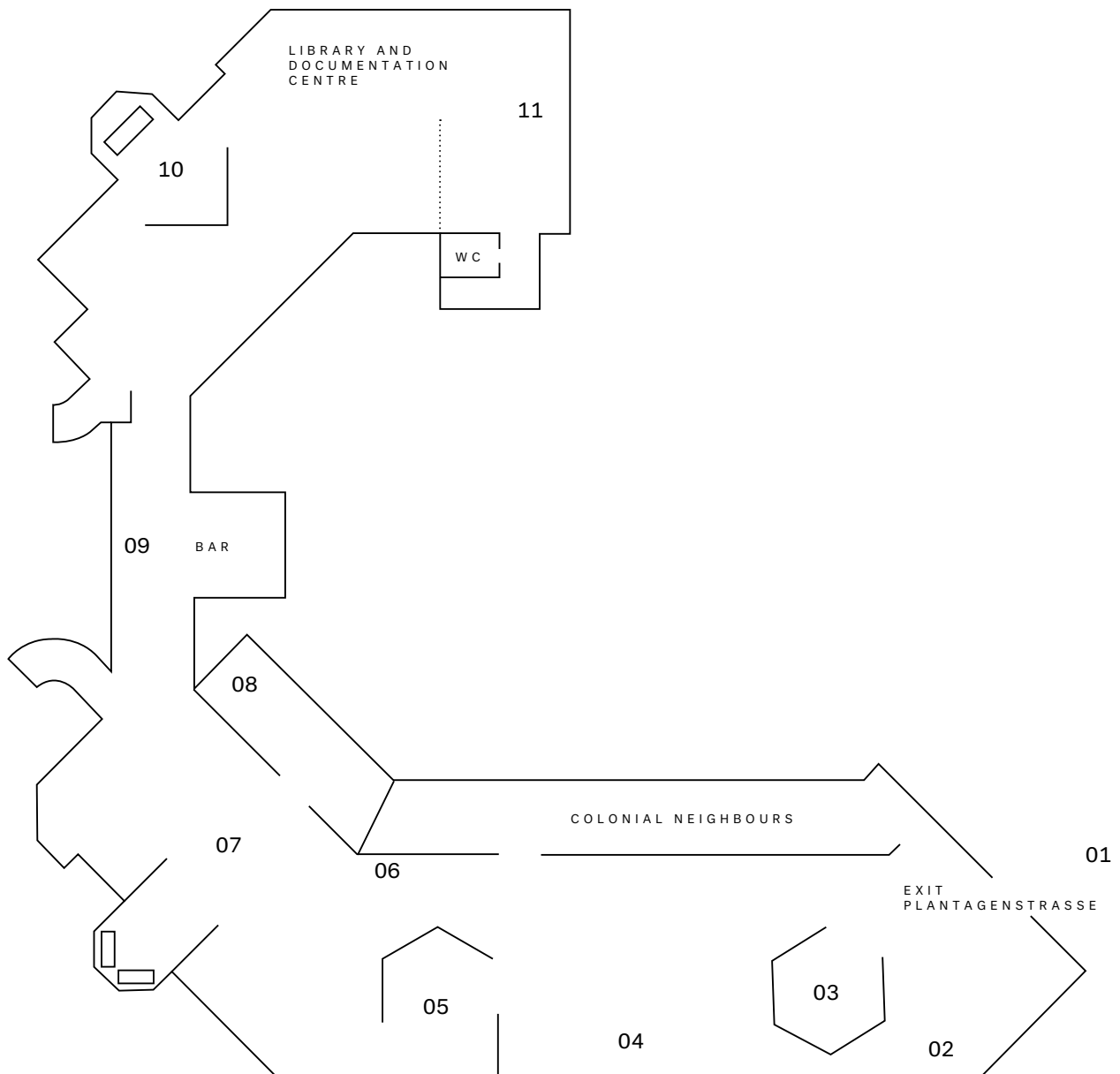
[...]

In: Ritu Sarin and Tenzing Sonam, *Shadow Circus*,  
S A V V Y Contemporary, 2019.

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<sup>3</sup> Tenzing Sonam, “Not on Any Map”, *The Indian Express*, 11 December, 2013. <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/not-on-any-map/1190442/> (accessed: January 8, 2019).

# FLOOR PLAN



01 Excerpts from the Dalai Lama's message to the Mustang Resistance Force 1974 Digitized audio tape, English subtitles 8:35 min

02 CIA-issued camera, binoculars and compass, Lhamo Tsering's personal effects

03 CHAPTER I: DUMRA - THE GARDEN see page 7

04 Images of a CIA-issued radio set, photographs courtesy of Nyima Dorjee

05 CHAPTER II: AIRDROP MISSIONS INSIDE TIBET see page 8

06 Ritu Sarin and Tenzing Sonam, *The Shadow Circus: The CIA in Tibet* 2019 (re-edited version of a 1998 documentary) 50 min.

07 CHAPTER III: THE MUSTANG RESISTANCE FORCE see page 8-9

08 Office of Strategic Services: *Inside Tibet* 1943 40 min. Courtesy: Tibet Film Archives

09 Traditional nomad song from Amdo province of Tibet Singer: Topden

10 CHAPTER IV: A LONG WAY HOME see page 10-11

11 Ritu Sarin and Tenzing Sonam *A Stranger in My Native Land* 1998 Single channel video 32 min.

I was born in January 1959 in a hospital in Darjeeling, the Indian hill station located close to the border of Tibet from where my parents had come. My mother was alone when she gave birth. My father had suddenly left home a few months earlier and she had no idea where he had gone or when he would be back. He returned some months after my birth but did not divulge the details of his travels or the nature of his work. All my mother gleaned was that he was engaged in a secret activity that was connected to the worsening situation in Tibet, where a fragile truce between the Dalai Lama's government and the occupying forces of Communist China was deteriorating. It was only much later that I discovered that my father was a key figure in the Tibetan resistance and its main liaison with the CIA, which had supported the resistance from the late 1950s.

At the time I was born, he was being trained by the CIA in spycraft and guerrilla warfare in the US, first at a military installation in Virginia and then at Camp Hale, a top secret facility high in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. The CIA code-named the Tibet operation ST CIRCUS. Over the next few years, around 250 Tibetans were trained at Camp Hale. Recent refugees from the armed pushback against the Chinese in Tibet, the trainees immediately fell in love with the place, which, with its high mountains, thick forests and alpine meadows, reminded them of their home. They nicknamed the camp, Dumra – The Garden.

At Camp Hale, the Tibetans were given simple American names like Pete, Rocky, Lou – my father's was Larry – and while they were there, they could only address each other by these monikers. They were taught radio operation, guerrilla warfare, intelligence gathering, photography, and parachuting, and lessons in geography, mathematics, and political science. They also had art classes, which were designed for psychological assessment purposes, but which many of the trainees took to with pleasure. Many of them loved to draw and created several charcoal and crayon drawings that recalled their homes and the traumatic events they had recently fled from.

My father's archive of the resistance contains a handbook of guerrilla warfare, handwritten in Tibetan with carefully drawn illustrations, that transmits what the Tibetans learned at Camp Hale.

The trainees proved to be diligent students and impressed their instructors with their quick intelligence, ready humour and martial skill. A close relationship developed. For the trainees, America was their closest ally, the only nation that had come to their aid. The Americans who worked with them would soon be transferred to other operations in Southeast Asia and Latin America, and would recall their time with the Tibetans as the shining highpoint of their careers. The

Tibetans would move on to the next phase of their resistance, one which would involve sacrifice, betrayal, and tragedy.

[Exterior, left to right]

03-1 Chinese Invasion of Tibet, by an unknown Tibetan trainee at Camp Hale 1959-64 Donated by Bruce Walker Collection of DePauw University Object ID: 2004.2.11.

03-2 Drawing of Tibetan monastery with Chinese soldiers, by an unknown Tibetan trainee at Camp Hale, 1959-64 Donated by Bruce Walker Collection of DePauw University Object ID: 2004.2.10

03-3 Miscellaneous declassified US government files on the Tibet situation 1950 to mid-1960s

[Interior, left to right]

03-4 Map of pre-Communist Tibet issued by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in 1942 Facsimile

03-5 Cover of The Sunday Empire, Denver Post February 6, 1972 The cover illustration accompanied an article, "Colorado to Koko Nor," by L. Fletcher Prouty, one of the first to reveal the secret CIA parachute missions into Tibet.

03-6 Pages from the Guerrilla Handbook, produced by Tibetan trainees from Camp Hale early 1960s

03-7 Photographs of Tibetan trainees at Camp Hale, 1959-64 Courtesy Bruce Walker papers Box 2 Folder 3, Hoover Institution Archives copyright Stanford University

03-8 Excerpts from video interviews with former CIA officers 1998 48:44 min.

03-9 & 10 Drawings of Khampa tribesmen, by an unknown Tibetan trainee at Camp Hale 1959-64 Donated by Bruce Walker Collection of DePauw University Object ID: 2016.7.4 and 2016.7.5.

03-11 Excerpts from video interviews with Gyalo Thondup and Lhamo Tsering 1998 21:06 min.

03-12 Excerpts from video interviews with CIA-trained Tibetan resistance fighters 1998 26:07 min.

03-13 Anti-communist propaganda cartoons drawn by Camp Hale trainees early 1960s Courtesy Bruce Walker papers Hoover Institution Archives copyright Stanford University Translation: The bad deeds of Mao, who, like the devil, promises much and delivers little. An illustration demonstrating what happened between 1953 and 1955 [when the Communist Chinese promised much.] An illustration demonstrating how Tibetans in Tibet must act in order to regain freedom.

## 05 CHAPTER II: AIR DROP MISSIONS INSIDE TIBET

In 1992, my partner, Ritu Sarin, and I spent a few months with my parents in Dharamshala, the exile capital of the Tibetan diaspora. At the time, my father was engaged in writing a detailed account of the Tibetan resistance, a monumental task that would occupy him until his death. A meticulous archivist, he now shared with us his collection of photographs, documents, maps, and his own exhaustive notebooks and diaries.

Over the next few years, we tracked down and met many members of the resistance and recorded their stories in as much detail as we could. It was crucial to us that a record existed in their own words of their involvement in the resistance. For many, this was the first time that they had openly spoken about it. We also traced some of the CIA officers who had worked on the Tibetan operation and were surprised that they still felt an emotional connection to the cause and the people they had once trained. In 1998, we made a film for the BBC – *The Shadow Circus: The CIA in Tibet* – that explored this little-known episode.

Of the many incredible stories we heard, accounts of the clandestine air missions into Tibet were particularly fascinating. Between 1957 and 1961, eight Tibetan radio teams were parachuted by the CIA into Tibet to make contact with resistance groups still fighting the Chinese. They were to organize these ragtag forces into modern guerrilla armies and coordinate arms drops for them with the CIA. Although some of the teams successfully linked up with these groups and the CIA did drop some weapons, the missions mostly ended in tragedy. The Chinese overwhelmed the resistance fighters, who were often gathered in large encampments with their families and animals, attacking them from the air and pounding them with heavy artillery. Many of the radio team members were either killed in action or died consuming their CIA-provided cyanide capsules; some made it back to India and a handful were captured by the Chinese.

For the CIA, paradropping radio teams into Tibet was technically and logistically one of the most challenging operations it had attempted. It demanded creative thinking and a range of innovations: a Tibetan telecode system was created from scratch; parachutes were modified to accommodate the high altitude; the B-17 pilots flying the initial sorties only had turn-of-the-century British maps to navigate from (the CIA then mapped Tibet using the U-2 spy plane); even the Kellogg's cereal company was roped in to produce tsampa, the roasted barley flour that is a staple in Tibet, which the men carried with them as rations.

For the trainees, coming as they did from a world where even automobiles were non-existent, the air missions were a leap of faith into the modern world. In the space

of a few months, they had made the transition from fighting on horseback to jumping out of aeroplanes.

[Exterior, left to right]

05-1 Pages from the *Guerrilla Handbook* produced by Tibetan trainees from Camp Hale early 1960s

05-2 CIA issued cloth map of Tibet 1960s

05-3 Photographs of the Mustang Resistance Force, 1959 to late 1960s

[Interior, left to right]

05-4 Map of Tibet showing the areas where the radio teams were dropped

05-5 Pages from the *Guerrilla Handbook* produced by Tibetan trainees from Camp Hale early 1960s

05-6 Excerpts from video interviews with Lhamo Tsering and survivors of the parachute missions into Tibet 1998 41:19 min.

05-7 Excerpts from video interviews with former CIA officers 1998 30:20 min.

05-8 Headshots of 38 of the trainees who were parachuted into Tibet 1957-1960 with brief texts describing the parachute missions

05-9 Pages from the *Guerrilla Handbook*, produced by Tibetan trainees from Camp Hale early 1960s

05-10 CIA-issued cyanide capsule of Camp Hale trainee Kalsang Dorjee photograph by Namsey

05-11 CIA issued cloth map early-1960s

## 07 CHAPTER III: THE MUSTANG RESISTANCE FORCE

In 1974, I was 15 and in boarding school in Darjeeling. One morning, as I scanned the headlines of the daily newspaper pinned on the school bulletin board, my eyes were drawn to a small headline: TIBETAN LEADER HELD IN NEPAL. The leader was my father. I was shocked and perplexed. Why had he been arrested? Why was his name being mentioned in connection with 'Khampa rebels'? As far as I knew, my father worked for the Tibetan government-in-exile and had an office in New Delhi, which was why he was often absent from home. A few days later, my mother came to visit me, distraught, and I learned the details of my father's arrest and the true nature of his work.

In 1959, after successfully escorting the Dalai Lama to India, the Tibetan resistance force – Chushi Gangdrug – retreated as well. In India, its leader, Andrug Gompo



Tashi, met up with the Dalai Lama's elder brother, Gyalo Thondup, who had been key in connecting the resistance to the CIA. They immediately drew up plans to find a fresh base of operations from which to launch a new front, and decided on Mustang, a remote and barren kingdom in northern Nepal that juts into Tibet.

The CIA, which was already involved in airdrop missions inside Tibet, agreed to help. My father took operational charge of the Mustang Resistance Force, planning and coordinating its missions and serving as its liaison with the Americans.

In the summer of 1960, around 2000 resistance fighters unexpectedly made their way to Mustang. The majority of these men had fought in Tibet as part of the Chushi Gangdrug. This upset the plan, made with the help of the CIA, of shifting small groups in phases to the border region and then into Tibet. In response, the CIA withheld aid for several months and the fighters faced great hardship. Eventually, photographic evidence of their condition persuaded the CIA to resume the supply of arms and money. Camp Hale trainees were sent to organize the men and teach them the guerrilla warfare techniques they had learned.

Raiding parties then set out into Tibet and attacked Chinese military targets, while intelligence gathering teams equipped with portable radio transmitters infiltrated the countryside and sent back information. One such raid in October 1961 resulted in the capture of Chinese documents that proved to be an intelligence trove for the CIA. The successful mission would ensure continued CIA support for the next few years.

The CIA suddenly pulled out of the Tibet operations in 1968. Secret rapprochement talks had been underway between the US and China. The Mustang Resistance Force continued until 1974 when the Nepalese government, acting under pressure from China, decided to crack down. My father was detained and used as a bargaining chip to make the guerrillas surrender. But they had decided to hold out against the Nepalese and prepared for battle. The stage was set for a bloody confrontation. Before matters escalated further, an emissary of the Dalai Lama arrived, carrying a tape recorded message in which he called upon the Tibetans to surrender. They felt they had no choice but to comply. My father and six other leaders were sentenced to life imprisonment in Nepal. Tibet's armed struggle against the Chinese occupation had come to an ignominious close.

Sifting through the hundreds of photographs of the Mustang Resistance Force from my father's archives for this exhibition, we were struck by the peculiarly Tibetan characteristics of the guerrilla organisation: religious rituals were a frequent part of daily life; juniper smoke, a traditional offering to the gods, wafted over their parades; photographs of the Dalai Lama were

prominently displayed. Buddhism remained at the core of their activities, a constant reminder that what they were fighting for was beyond politics as we usually understand it; they were fighting to protect their faith and way of life. Many of the guerrillas had been monks before taking up arms and after they disbanded, many returned to religious practice to atone for their violent actions.

[Exterior]

07-1 "The Secret PLA Pouch Heads For CIA's K Building" by Keith Woodcock 2009, [www.keithwoodcockart.com](http://www.keithwoodcockart.com) Donated by Bruce Walker to the CIA Museum, Langley, Virginia facsimile

[Interior, left to right]

07-2 16mm footage of Mustang resistance fighters, commissioned by the Mustang Resistance Force early 1970s

07-3 Facsimile of CIA map of Mustang, Nepal early 1960s

07-4 Photographs of the Mustang Resistance Force 1959 to late 1960s

07-5 Photographs of the Mustang Resistance Force 1959 to late 1960s

07-6 Facsimile of Lhamo Tsering's report to the CIA, mid-1960s

07-7 Monthly salary records of resistance operatives, mid to late 1960s, facsimile

[Table, left to right]

07-8 Facsimile of letter from the CIA case officer in India to Lhamo Tsering mid 1960s

07-9 Lhamo Tsering with Andrug Gompo Tashi, founder of Chushi Gangdrug early 1960s

07-10 Handwritten newspaper Mustang 1960s

07-11, 12, 13, 14 Facsimiles of letters from the CIA case officer in India to Lhamo Tsering mid 1960s

[Wall, left to right]

07-15 Video excerpts from a meeting of four former CIA officers 1998 1 hour 38 min.

07-16 Excerpts from video interviews with former CIA officers 1998 56:48 min.

07-17 Excerpts from video interviews with former Mustang resistance fighters 1998 40:29 min.

07-18 Excerpts from a video interview with Lhamo Tsering 1998 31:24 min.

In December 1980, I was a student in Los Angeles when I received a telegram from my sister. It said: “PALA RELEASED 28TH DECEMBER ARRIVED DELHI 29TH MET HIM AND AMALA”.

Reading that telegram in the azure, unreal light of a Californian winter, alone, far from home, I imagined the excitement and relief of my family, especially of my mother, who had worked so hard to support us during my father's long incarceration. My father was now free, granted amnesty by the Nepalese king after serving nearly seven years in prison.

Following his release, my father continued to work for the Tibetan cause until his death in a New Delhi hospital in January 1999. He served as a minister in the Tibetan government-in-exile and became a respected elder statesman. His lifelong dream of returning to a free Tibet remained unfulfilled.

Ritu and I went to Tibet for the first time in 1995 and were finally able to visit the ancestral homes of both my parents. We were the first of the family to return and reconnect with the relatives who had remained. Our journey was bittersweet, the effects of nearly four decades of Communist Chinese rule were everywhere evident. We later recounted some of our experiences of that trip in a film, *A Stranger in My Native Land*.

My father left his village, Nagatsang, near the famous monastery of Kumbum, in 1945. Travelling to Nagatsang made us realise the enormity of the journey my father had taken, not just geographically but psychologically, culturally and politically. At the northeastern edge of the Tibetan plateau, the region around Kumbum had been settled by Chinese and Muslim migrants from the 17th century onwards and they gradually outnumbered the sparse Tibetan population. Although the Dalai Lama was born in this area, he was a remote figure in faraway Lhasa and his government's authority did not extend to these borderlands, which were under the control of the Hui Muslim warlord Ma Bufang.

While a student at the Institute for Frontier Minorities in Nanjing, my father met the Dalai Lama's brother, Gyalo Thondup, who had also come to study there. The meeting irrevocably changed his life. He became Gyalo Thondup's aide and companion and escaped with him to India in 1949 when the Communists took control of China. During his time in Nanjing, my father also met several Tibetan students from different border areas of Tibet. Their ardent discussions about Tibetan identity and nationalism shaped my father's growing awareness of his connections to a larger nation.

A few months after my father arrived in India, China invaded Tibet. In 1952, he travelled to Lhasa with

Gyalo Thondup. The presence and influence of the occupying Chinese forces was very evident in the capital. The Chinese immediately sought to manipulate Gyalo Thondup to their ends. Realising the dangers of remaining in Tibet, he and my father secretly returned to India.

My father's first language, like the majority of Tibetans from the Kumbum area, was Xining Chinese. In 1956, he met my mother when she came to India from Lhasa as part of the Dalai Lama's elder sister's travelling household. Their marriage was unusual given the geographical and cultural distance between their homes. In 1962, my father, who had kept a journal from the time he was a student in Nanjing, switched from writing in Chinese to Tibetan, a language he had only recently learned. From then on, he would only ever write in Tibetan.

By the end of the '50s, when the Dalai Lama escaped to India and as armed rebellion spread across Tibet, my father found himself thrust into the centre of a resistance movement that would occupy him for the rest of his life.

[Exterior, left to right]

10-1 Lhamo Tsering being interviewed New Delhi 1997

[Interior, left to right]

10-2 Lhamo Tsering's father and brothers Kumbum Monastery early 1940s

10-3 Kumbum Monastery Tibet 1940s

10-4 Lhamo Tsering personal photographs (left to right and top to bottom)

10-4-1 With Gyalo Thondup (left) and unknown in Nanjing, China 1940s

10-4-2 En route to Lhasa, Tibet 1952

10-4-3 In front of the Potala Palace Lhasa Tibet 1952

10-4-4 As a student in Nanjing, China in the 1940s

10-4-5 Map of area around Kumbum Monastery, drawn by Lhamo Tsering in prison (mid to late 1970s) facsimile

10-4-6 With wife Tashi Dolma, Darjeeling late 1950s

10-4-7 Tenzing Sonam and Ritu Sarin in Lhamo Tsering's village 1995

10-4-8 In Mustang late 1960s

10-4-9 In Calcutta early 1960s

10-5 (top to bottom)

10-5-1 Newspaper clipping from *The Statesman*, June 11 1974

10-5-2 Telegram informing Tenzing Sonam when he was living in Los Angeles of his father's release from prison 1980 Facsimile

10-5-3 Lhamo Tsering (standing, centre) soon after his release from prison 1974

10-6 Studio portrait, Nanjing, China late 1940s  
[Table, left to right]

10-7 Lhamo Tsering, Map of his village Nagatsang drawn from memory 50 years after he last saw his home as a reference for Tenzing and Ritu prior to their trip back to Tibet 1995

10-8 Video of Lhamo Tsering drawing the map of his village from memory 1995

All images, objects, video and audio material, except where noted, are courtesy of Lhamo Tsering Archives/ White Crane Films

RITU SARIN AND TENZING SONAM have been working together since their student days in the San Francisco Bay Area. They lived in London for many years working as independent filmmakers, before returning to India in 1996. They are currently based in Dharamshala and Delhi. A recurring subject in their work is Tibet—forming an intimate engagement at different levels: personally, politically and artistically. Through their films and artistic work, Sarin and Sonam have attempted to document, question and reflect on the questions of exile, identity, culture and nationalism that confront the Tibetan people. Another concern is the transformation and transmutation of societies through globalisation.

They have made several award-winning documentary films and video installations. Their documentary, *The Sun Behind the Clouds* (2009), won the Vaclav Havel Award at the One World Film Festival in Prague. They also made the Tibetan feature film, *Dreaming Lhasa* (2005), produced by Jeremy Thomas and Richard Gere, which premiered at the 2006 Toronto International Film Festival. Their video installations have shown at the Contour Biennale 8, Busan Biennale, Mori Art Museum, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (Vienna) and Khoj Studios (Delhi), among other venues. Their most recent work, *The Sweet Requiem* is a narrative feature film with a Tibetan cast and premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival 2018. Sarin and Sonam are also the directors of the Dharamshala International Film Festival, one of India's leading independent film festivals, which they founded in 2012.

NATASHA GINWALA is a curator and writer. She is Associate Curator at Gropius Bau, Berlin and Festival Curator, COLOMBOSCOPE (2019), Colombo. Ginwala has curated Contour Biennale 8, Polyphonic Worlds: Justice as Medium and was Curatorial Advisor for documenta 14, 2017. Other recent projects include *Arrival*, *Incision*. *Indian Modernism as Peripatetic Itinerary* in the framework of "Hello World. Revising a Collection" at Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, 2018; *Riots: Slow Cancellation of the Future* at ifa Gallery Berlin and Stuttgart, 2018; *My East is Your West* at the 56th Venice Biennale, 2015; and *Corruption: Everybody Knows...* with e-flux, New

York, 2015. Ginwala was a member of the artistic team for the 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2014, and has co-curated *The Museum of Rhythm*, at Taipei Biennial 2012 and at Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, 2016–17. From 2013–15, in collaboration with Vivian Ziherl, she led the multi-part curatorial project *Landings* presented at various partner organizations. Ginwala writes on contemporary art and visual culture in various periodicals and has contributed to numerous publications. Ginwala is a recipient of the 2018 visual arts research grant from the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe.

BONAVENTURE SOH BEJENG NDIKUNG born in 1977 in Yaoundé, Cameroon is an independent curator, art critic, author and biotechnologist. He is founder and artistic director of SAVVY Contemporary Berlin. He was curator-at-large for documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel, and guest curator of the 2018 Dak'Art Biennale in Senegal. Together with the Miracle Workers Collective, he will curate the Finland Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2019. He is currently guest professor in curatorial studies and sound art at the Städelschule in Frankfurt.

Recent curatorial projects include: *Geographies of Imagination: Dis-Othering as A Method*, SAVVY Contemporary, 2018; *Whose Land Have I Lit on Now? Contemplations on the Notions of Hospitality*, SAVVY Contemporary, 2018; *The Conundrum of Imagination*, Leopold Museum Vienna/ Wienerfestwochen, 2017; *Every Time A Ear di Soun* — a documenta 14 Radio Program, SAVVY Contemporary, 2017; *An Age of our Own Making* in Holbæk, MCA Roskilde and Kunsthal Charlottenborg Copenhagen, 2016–17.

## MORE INFORMATION

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S A V V Y Contemporary – The laboratory of form-ideas is an art space, discursive platform, place for good talks, foods and drinks – a space for conviviality. S A V V Y Contemporary situates itself at the threshold of notions of the West and non-West, to understand and deconstruct them. S A V V Y Contemporary has realized a kaleidoscope of art exhibitions, performances, film screenings, lectures, concerts, readings, talks, dances. S A V V Y Contemporary has established a participatory archive on German colonial history, a performance arts documentation centre, a library, a residency program, as well as educational projects with schools. The art space engages in its neighborhood's history and socio-political realities which are entangled with the reflections and discourses of the project.

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