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Miranda Fedock  
MUS10200 Introduction to World Music  
Class #16 notes

## TIBETAN DIASPORA: RITUAL MUSIC

### PREP:

- Tibetan ritual Pp

Black = say it

Red = ask it

**Bold = write on board**

*Italics = play it*

ALL CAPS – DO/EXPLAIN IT

Core questions: What are some core beliefs of Tibetan Buddhism, and how do these manifest in ritual instrumental music? What does the study of *puja* ritual music teach us about Tibetan Buddhist musical aesthetics? How can we approach the study of musics with which we have no prior familiarity, that may sound "ugly" or "like noise" to us?

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### ANNOUNCEMENTS:

### HOMEWORK:

- reading – assignments -> unit 4 folder -> lhamo required reading (short, program notes)
  - o (explain optional reading in this folder)
- Discussion board #5
- quiz #3

OVERVIEW: Today we will talk about Tibetan Buddhist ritual music. First talk about music and ritual more broadly, then learn a bit about Tibetan culture and religion, and then listen closely to one ritual piece and learn about four of the different instruments playing. You watched film on Tibetan folk music. Today talking about ritual music, then next class will go back to folk music. doing a Pp today so good idea to keep your eyes on the video (not just my talking head). this Pp is also up under unit 4 folder in assignments.

- Today's participation activity: write answers to some questions on sheet of paper, turn in at end of class with your name on it

### Music and Ritual

- **Question: what is ritual?** Answer: **public act of worship, formal event performed in specific contexts and times. Parts occur in set order, often connect individual to**



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**broader community.** Most incorporate a **symbolic process or actual change of state** that includes **three stages: separation, transition, and incorporation.**

- EG: wedding ceremony often involves separation of bride and groom from their 'single' status, take them through brief transition, and finally incorporate them into society of married couples
- Rituals are integral part of human history and practice. Not always religious but often are – we'll focus on religious rituals in this unit.
- *What does music do in rituals?* Many things. KEEP THIS SHORT.
  - provides clear markers of the stages or parts in the ritual/rite of passage. (EG wedding: certain kinds of music at specific times before, during, and after ceremony). **Shapes and orders** the rituals
  - **Enacts and conveys** ritual's symbolic power and meaning. Multiple layers of meaning in rituals – music just one of the ways meaning is communicated.
  - **Empowers** the participants
    - often through feeling of moving beyond self to merge with broader community
    - and/or through sense of personal connection with deity/the divine
- Today we will talk about Tibetan ritual instrumental music

#### PARTICIPATION

- Listen to musical example – under listening.
- Listen for and make note of at least one thing each for: **rhythm, meter, tempo, melody, instrumentation, timbre of one or more instruments, dynamics.** if you think it doesn't have x thing, fine, say that.
- **also: How would you describe the music overall?** Is it pleasing, soothing, relaxing, or harsh, full of energy, noisy?
- Tibetans hear it as **nyen-po**, we don't, why not? Because we don't understand it or the culture it's coming from, so let's learn more!
- SLIDE: Tibet background (maps)
  - Southwestern frontier of China
  - Average elevation of over 4,000 meters above sea level, "Roof of the world," Highest region of the world
  - Sparsely populated due to mountainous terrain (about 1 million people)
  - Language: Tibetan
- SLIDE: Politics
  - **What is a theocracy?** Political and religious head are same person. Here: HHDL
  - Reincarnated Buddha – HHDL 'stays the same' throughout history, just changes bodies. Other reincarnated lamas find new HHDL when he's a kid, have many tests, etc



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- In 1950s – China invaded, made Tibet part of China (now TAR). Many Tibetans fled and continue to flee. Global Tibetan diaspora. **What's diaspora?—group of people (typically from same country) dispersed around globe**
- Tibetan Buddhism background
  - SLIDE: Tibetan Buddhism
  - Religion central to Tibetan life and culture (much moreso than with Christianity in US). Most Tibetans identify as Buddhist
    - In Tibet, ratio of monasteries to laypeople very high – monasteries center of cultural activities and education
  - History
    - Buddhism spread from India in 7<sup>th</sup> c. CE
    - Prior to this – main religion was Bön
    - For the next few centuries elements of Buddhism and Bön intermingled, to produce Tibetan Buddhism.
  - becoming Tibetan Buddhist means taking refuge in the **Three Jewels**: Buddha Dharma Sangha
  - Tibetan Buddhism is 'vajrayana', distinct from Mahayana (Japan) and Theravada (SE Asia). Of these, Tibetan Buddhism considered the most “elaborate,” the most “esoteric,” places perhaps the most emphasis on symbolism
- Also very ritualistic
  - Rituals key part of Tibetan Buddhism. Laypeople and monks, special occasions but also daily basis, for many reasons (rainfall, harvest, get rid of demons, conquer desire and attachment)
  - Frequently involve act of making offerings to deities,
    - as well as visualizations, chanting, music
    - involve strongly symbolic elements
    - often long and very elaborate
- 1 aspect of ritual music we'll talk about: instrumental music. (there's also chant – important, interesting, no time for it today but you could choose it for final project if you're interested!)
- Puja rituals (another ritual)
  - What you heard music for at beginning of class
  - **Puja = prayer or offering.** Sanskrit word
  - Prayers and offerings made to Three Jewels to request their blessings or help, and as expression of honor, worship, and devotion
  - In monastery, pujas often performed daily for long life and health of their teachers.
    - In our example – for HHDL – offerings made to 3 jewels for his health
  - **FN OF PUJA RITUAL MUSIC: music IS an offering to 3 Jewels.** throughout ritual multiple kinds of offerings made (incense, food, sculptures of butter, etc). music is one of these offerings



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- Instrument breakdown. There's a lot going on in this music! So we'll focus on THREE key instruments. Each instrument represents distinct offering. each instrument has two functions: SYMBOLIC and MUSICAL.
  - in ensemble: aerophones, membranophones, idiophones. no chordophones
  - SLIDE: **Rol-mo**
    - **Organology? Look like anything you know?**
    - Important!
      - Found in almost all Tibetan music, religious or otherwise, and always in ritual music
      - Name is one of the general words for 'music'
    - Have large central cavity/boss, produces deep timbre
    - Playing technique – held horizontally, struck vertically or in circular motion
    - complex mathematical organization of rhythmic structure: begins slowly and increases in speed (like a bouncy ball) – every beat has “after-beats” (shorter and softer). nonmetric (there is a beat, but not steady)
    - main functions
      - **musical fn: timekeeper/ guide other performers** (often at end of phrase/verse of chant text)
      - **symbolic: Mandala offering** – circular playing motion
        - SLIDE: mandalas. circular motion symbolizes mandalas.  
**What is a mandala?**
          - highly symbolic religious art form. left: painted. right: sand. can represent many things, used for many things, every detail has multiple symbolic meanings.
          - EG – Mandala on left: Amitayus Mandala. In middle: Amithaba Buddha. Around him – lineage teachers. Colorful ring = fire/flames of wisdom and compassion to overcome delusions of hatred, attachment and ignorance. 4 “gates” – each has 11 levels representing stages leading to enlightenment.
        - Circular motion of rol-mo playing represents symbolic ‘mandala offering’ (*hold hands out flat and parallel to floor on top of each other, now rotate top one. looking from above – circular/mandala*)
      - BACK TO ROL-MO SLIDE: *Play first 20 seconds*
    - In ritual, only one player
  - SLIDE: **Dungchen**
    - **Organology? Look like anything you know?**
    - In west has become most iconic of Tibetan instruments (album covers etc) **Seen or heard of this instrument before?**



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- Lip-vibrated, low-range metal trumpet, 10-12 feet long
- Produces deep guttural sound
- Played in pairs, but only by youth and only for a year or less (teeth!)
- Outside of ritual context used as communication
  - From rooftops, announce upcoming festivals, morning/evening calls to prayer
- Functions
  - **symbolic:** Inside ritual context, also **communication to Buddha** – call to accept their offerings
  - **music: Transitional** – announce new section of ritual
  - *play excerpt from about :50, raise hand when dungchen come in, listen til 1:15*
- SLIDE: Gya-ling – melodic voice! (before that – dung-chen notation! cool huh?)
  - **Organology? Look like anything you know?**
  - Shorter double-reed horn, metal body, bell richly ornamented
  - Also played in pairs, circular breathing **tell me what that is**
    - Instrument continues to emit sound even while musician inhales
  - **musical fn: Melodic** instrument of group!
    - Remember when you said you didn't hear a melody? Here's the melody! We'll listen in a sec to see if we can hear it as a melody
    - Playing style – cycling through repetitive melodies
    - **symbolic fn:** Here, short and fast fluctuations between neighbor tones, and rising pitches **meant to scare away evil demons** (so melody serves function)
  - *Play 1:05-1:30, listen to gya-ling, listen for melody!*
- (mention OVERVIEW – Kang-ling (cool b/c trad made out of human thigh bone))
- LAST SLIDE: *Play video* – I'm showing this to you last b/c I don't want you to rely on eyes.  
POINT OUT THINGS THROUGHOUT

SUMMARIZE MAIN POINTS OVERALL (WHICH ARE WHAT?)

- sound, setting, significance!
- what does this teach us about Buddhist beliefs & aesthetics: **symbolic function super important!** this is what makes it sound nyen-po, the fact that eg dung-chen is communicating w/ Buddha, etc. **music as OFFERING not as artistic event!**

HAND IN PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY SHEETS!



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