

Pema Tsenden's Cinematic Techniques: Analyzing Ethnic Representation in "Tharlo"

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Abstract

With the globalization of the film industry, ethnic minority films have been developed and studied by many scholars for their special ethnic representation. The film "Tharlo" directed by Pema Tsenden carefully explores the identity anxiety of a Tibetan shepherd. Through the connection and separation between the protagonist and traditional culture, it shows a complexity of modern ethnic identity for minority people. This study explores what kind of cinematic techniques and symbolic elements the director uses to shape ordinary characters, build a narrative space, and show ethnic representation. This paper puts forward a theoretical framework combining cinematic quantitative methods with qualitative narrative and semiotic analysis, aiming to deepen our understanding of cinematic techniques and ethnic representation, and provides a new perspective and profound insights for discussing the complexity faced by ethnic minorities in contemporary films. This study finds that Tsenden's "Tharlo" successfully portrays the complex transformation of Tibetan cultural identity in the context of globalization and modernization through cinematic techniques such as fixed camera positions, long take and black-and-white cinematography, combined with the use of symbolic elements like mirrors, lambs and identity cards.

Keywords: *Tharlo, Ethnic Representation, Film Narrative, Cinematics*

1. Introduction

The rapid development of science and technology has led to the vigorous development of the film industry in recent years. The films are becoming more and more diverse in terms of genre and themes. Among them, the exploration of individual identity, especially racial identity, has become a key field of film research. The film "Tharlo" skillfully captures the Tibetan minority by using black-and-white cinematography with strong impact to show the Tibetan landscape, it depicts the life experience and traditional cultural attributes of the Tibetan community. It helps the audience to understand the socio-cultural background and historical context of the ethnic group, and provides an insightful perspective for them.

1.1 Research Background and Content

Pema Tsenden (万玛才旦) was born in 1969 in Ando Tibetan district, a film producer, director, author, and cultural activist. His achievements have earned him worldwide acclaim and honors, with his artistic career highlighted by his notable “Tibetan Trilogy” films: “The Silent Holy Stones”, “The search” and “Old Dog” [1]. They concentrate on the effects of modernization on the lives of Tibetans. His films “Tharlo”, “Jinpa” and “Balloon” explore the conflicts between traditional Tibetan culture and modern society, emphasizing identity recognition and cultural values. He is committed to developing the Tibetan film industry and strives to create a production team composed entirely of Tibetans, aiming to produce films solely in Tibetan. His works combine traditional storytelling with modern cinematic aesthetics to provide an informed glimpse of Tibetan culture and Humanistic care. Through his work, he not only showcases the richness of Tibetan culture to a global audience but also highlights profound themes of ethnic representation. This paper will take “Tharlo” as the research object. Figure 1 shows release posters of the films from a Google search.



Figure 1. Posters of “Tibetan Trilogy” films and other films

Old Dog (2012), The Search (2009), The Silent Holy Stones(2005),Tharlo (2015), Jinpa (2018),Balloon (2019)

* The Films Score in Douban: <https://www.douban.com/>; The Films Score in IMDb: <https://www.imdb.com>

The film “Tharlo” which debuted in the Orizzonte section at the Venice Film Festival, has garnered several prestigious awards, and attests to the scholarly and critical recognition of its richness both thematically and narratively. Several honors including the Best Adapted Screenplay Award at the 52nd Golden Horse Film Festival and Awards (2015) commend not only its technical and artistic achievements but also its profound engagement with themes of identity and modernity within the context of Tibet. Pema Tsenden, who is recognized as a pioneer of “Tibetan New Wave Cinema”, crafts a narrative that explores the profound tensions between traditional Tibetan lifestyles and the encroaching forces of modernization. This thematic focus is the core of this study, because it resonates with the broader concerns of how ethnic identities are portrayed and perceived in contemporary films. The IMDb score of “Tharlo” is 6.8, which is one of the most popular and authoritative source for film, TV shows and celebrity content for finding ratings and reviews for the newest movie and TV shows. And the Douban score is 7.7 that it is a highly recognized website that offers movie introductions, ratings, and reviews in China. The critical recognition highlights its relevance and contribution to discussions of ethnic representation and identity, which forms a substantial part of the background against

which this study is situated. This film expresses complex themes in an innovative and resonant way, providing a valuable case study for the meticulous portrayal of ethnic minorities.

The film tells the story of Tharlo, a Tibetan shepherd in his forties, who is known for his unique “ponytail” hairstyle. Although he doesn’t know his age, but he is capable of reciting Chairman Mao’s “Serve the People” and meticulously manage his sheep. During his meeting with Police Chief Dorje, he was informed to obtain an identification card, which became the starting point of his identity crisis. In the town, Tharlo encounters the fashionable hairstylist Yangtso, whose modern charms sparks Tharlo’s curiosity and longing for the unknown world. When he returned to the mountains, his flock of sheep was attacked by a pack of wolves. Faced with the challenge of making a living, he is forced to sell his sheep and take the proceeds to her. However, his pursuit came to a disappointing end when he discovered that she had run away with his money. After experiencing a profound setback, he returned to police station to get his ID card, but he rejected due to his new hairstyle not matching the photo on the card, a poignant metaphor for his changed identity. The movie ends with him lighting a firecracker on a mountain, an open ending that depicts his inner changes and deeply reflects the complexity of personal and cultural identity of modern Tibetan people.

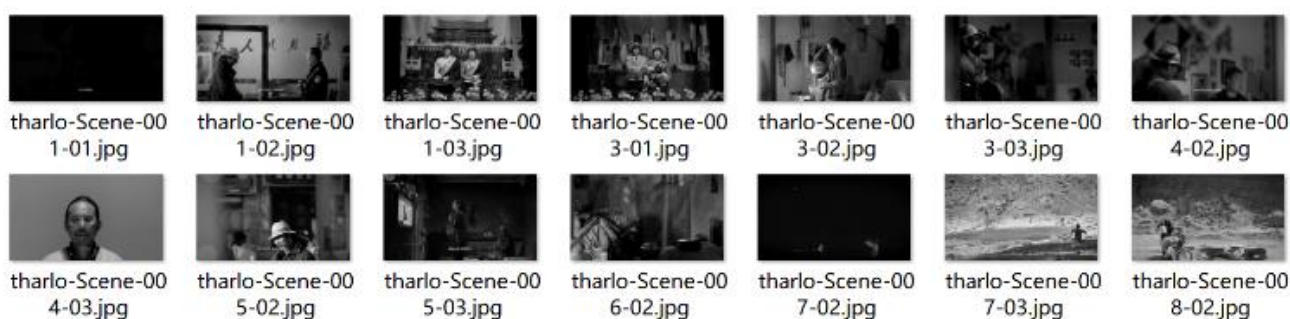
This study aims to examine the cinematic techniques and symbolic elements employed in the film, to reveal its narrative strategy through quantitative research methods and explore how these elements reflect the ethnic representation of Tibetan groups. The research will deeply explore the impact of modernization on individual and collective identify, especially through the challenging transformation of the protagonist Tharlo in social changes. The core issue of the research is: how to show Tibetan culture through screen and symbols to explore the impact of modernization on identity, and how does the combination of quantitative study and semiotic analysis enhance the interpretation of the narrative strategy of the film and the reproduction of ethnic identity? It will be answered through a detailed analysis of film scenes and character development, paying special attention to the interweaving of traditional and modern elements and their embodiment in the film. Cinematics will be used to quantitatively analyze shots and scenes, while content analysis will be used to check text elements, such as symbols in the film.

1.2 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed methodology to combine empiricism and constructivism to create a nuanced framework for analyzing film text. Empiricism emphasizes the significance of observation and measurement, it is concerned with establishing propositions through the establishment and comparison of data, which are assertions about observed phenomena [2]. Constructivism improves comprehension by means of qualitative assessment. It considers the implications of theoretical frameworks for understanding the world, emphasizing how these frameworks shape our interpretation and understanding of data. Galtung’s exploration highlights the philosophical underpinnings of these methodologies and discusses their application in the social sciences, suggesting a need for a mixed or integrated approach that considers both empirical data and theoretical

constructs in scientific inquiry. This integrated approach enables a comprehensive exploration of both the explicit and underlying themes of the film, addressing how modernization impacts Tibetan cultural identity. Quantitative studies may focus only on the quantity and length of the lens, missing the subtle narrative and symbolic analysis, while qualitative research may ignore the objectivity of quantity analysis, so the quantitative analysis used in this study is based on empiricism, by objectively measuring the photographic techniques of the film, the film lens is quantitatively analyzed, at the same time, influenced by a constructivist perspective, explore the national characteristics of the narrative in depth, focusing on the sociological and cultural interpretations of the narrative and symbols present in “Tharlo”.

The study utilizes the PySceneDetect program to automatically segment the film into individual scenes by detecting changes in visual elements, such as variations in camera angles, lighting, or settings, to ascertain the boundaries between consecutive shots. It employs two methods for detecting scene transitions: “detect-threshold” and “detect-adaptive”. The former method detects scene changes by comparing each frame to a predefined black level, while the latter method evaluates the ratio of each frame’s score to that of its adjacent frames. This tool is crucial for comparative cinema studies as it accelerates the research process, enabling researchers to handle longer or numerous videos. Despite the efficiency of the automated approach, to ensure accuracy, researchers meticulously review the output of the automated scene detection to confirm the precision of the shot boundaries and make any necessary corrections. This step ensures the reliability of the shot segmentation, thereby assuring the validity of the subsequent analysis. The samples of split-video segments refer to Figure 2.



*PySceneDetect, an open source program that can be used for scene detection. <https://www.scenesdetect.com/>

Figure 2. PySceneDetect Screen Shots in “Tharlo”

Once the film has been accurately segmented into shots, the *Cinematics* is used to classify and label them. It is software designed for the quantitative analysis of film that allows researchers to code various aspects of each shot, such as its length, the type of shot, and other relevant characteristics. This detailed, structured representation of the film facilitates a comprehensive quantitative analysis. The outcomes of this quantitative analysis provide empirical data to support conclusions regarding the film’s narrative strategies and symbolic elements. Previous studies reveal that researchers can better examine the narrative pace and its effect on

audience involvement and emotional reaction by dividing the film into scenes [3].

Subsequently, the qualitative analysis evaluates the cultural symbols and characters in the film through textual analysis and a semiotic perspective. The textual analysis focuses on exploring how the film's audio-visual elements shape character development and construct ethnic representation. It further draws on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory [4] to analyze the connotative and denotative meanings of the symbols presented in the film, investigating how they represent Tibetan culture and identity, and how they reflect broader themes such as modernization and identity crises. By integrating quantitative and qualitative methods, this study offers a new perspective for cross-cultural inquiry in film studies. It not only reveals the explicit narratives and underlying cultural encodings in the film but also discusses how audiences perceive minority cultures and the impact of modernization. The findings of the study are expected to enrich academic discussions on ethnic representation during the era of global modernity, providing the academic community with an in-depth understanding of the complex dynamics between cultural identity and modernization.

2. Related Works

In the film studies, the analysis of ethnic representation and the application of cinematic techniques, particularly the use of *Cinematics*, are critical for gaining a better understanding of how films depict minority cultures [5]. This section aims to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical application by investigating how visual and narrative forms are employed in film to represent ethnic cultures. It focuses on the integration of quantitative techniques provided by *Cinematics* to organize and analyze cinematic elements systematically. Such an inquiry is critical to enhancing our comprehension of how minority cultures are portrayed in films and building a strong framework for assessing the impact and accuracy of these representations.

2.1 Ethnic Representation

Ethnic representation refers to the portrayal, construction, and diffusion of specific ethnic images and identities in cultural products, such as films, television, and literature using various symbols, expressions, and depictions [6]. This notion has been studied in a number of interdisciplinary domains, including sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and media studies. Hall delves into the essence of cultural representations, with a particular focus on the practice of signifying within cultural studies. Hall posits that cultural representations do more than reflect reality; they also influence the very formation of culture itself. In the cultural sphere, representation involves creating meaning by using words and symbols to depict elements within a context. These mechanisms shape how identities and realities are perceived across different cultural settings. Hall places a significant emphasis on the role of language and symbols in creating meaning within a culture. He stresses the importance of understanding representation by examining how language and symbolic systems convey, alter, and negotiate meanings [7]. This process actively generates meanings that shape our perceptions

and interactions with the world, going beyond a mere reflection of existing realities. Hall's insights offer a framework for analyzing how films, such as "Tharlo" depict and communicate identities and narratives. This framework can be utilized to explore how the film employs various techniques and narrative approaches to express and investigate culture and identity, especially in relation to the forces of modernization and globalization.

Edward Said's seminal work, "Orientalism" has had a significant impact on this discipline by critically analyzing the West's manufacture and perpetuation of "Orient" stereotypes by cultural representations [8]. His comments shed light on the power dynamics at play in the depiction of ethnic groups, which is important for understanding how Tibetan culture is portrayed in worldwide film. Similarly, Homi K. Bhabha's "The Location of Culture" presents the concept of the "third space", which means a hybrid cultural arena that incorporates aspects from both the originator and target cultures [9]. The "third space" is defined as a space of enunciation where cultural meanings and identities are constructed through the negotiation and interaction of diverse cultural influences. Bhabha's theory strengthens our analysis by providing a lens through which to observe the complex interaction of cultural identity and representation in "Tharlo," emphasizing the negotiation of Tibetan identity in the face of external cultural influences. In applying these theoretical frameworks to this study, we take into account a variety of research viewpoints and approaches in the field.

2.2 Application of Cinematics in Film Studies

Since the 1960s, film studies academics have increasingly used social science theories such as psychology, feminism, psychoanalysis and semiotics to delve deeper into film content analysis, moving away from a narrow concentration on filmmaking techniques [10]. This transition has led to a renewed emphasis on exploring the medium itself, resulting in the emergence of innovative method that combines film theory with data analysis, extending beyond examination of cinematic style and form. It enhances the theoretical understanding of film ontology through the use of data visualization tools and fosters interdisciplinary integration of academic models and data exchange. Cinematics, created by Yuri Tsivian and Gunars Civjans at the University of Chicago, is a platform designed for the collection, storage, and processing data related to film editing. Its distinctive feature lies in the systematic counting and analysis of cinema shots, which allows academics to objectively evaluate variables such as shot duration, editing pace, scenes, and sequences with precision and verification [11].

Cinematics enables researchers to measure and assess the characteristics of films in a systematic manner, providing a comprehensive and unbiased understanding of the medium. By integrating film theory with numerical data, Cinematics opens new avenues for film studies and deepens our understanding of cinema as both an art form and a cultural institution [12]. Barry Salt's Cinematics-based research has shed light on how editing and narrative trends have evolved over time in cinema history, offering empirical evidence to support theories about the evolution of film styles and narratives in tandem with cultural changes [13]. Additionally,

Cinematics has been applied in various studies to reveal the cultural and historical relevance of films, demonstrating its versatility in bridging data with cultural interpretation [14].

Despite offering new perspectives and methods for examining films, Cinematics has faced criticism. Some academics argue that the method is overly reliant on data-driven quantification, potentially neglecting the nuances and cultural factors that distinguish film as an art form [15]. To address these concerns, it is crucial to integrate Cinematics with film theory and cultural studies, which can enrich our understanding of how films, as cultural artifacts, express social and cultural ideals. For example, George and Meneses used Cinematics to examine the works of Pedro Almodóvar, quantifying characteristics such as shot time and scene transitions while also investigating the themes and character development [16]. In the context of evaluating the film "Tharlo," Cinematics allows for an assessment of storytelling techniques and editing decisions, delving into how these elements interact to shape Tibetan identity and its reflections on modernization. By combining qualitative assessments, the study aims to uncover the dynamics of Tibetan culture and identity as portrayed in the film offering deeper perspectives on ethnic representation in cinema.

3. The Narrative Strategies and Ethnic Representation of "Tharlo"

This chapter analyzes Pema Tseden's film "Tharlo" to understand its narrative techniques and portrayal of Tibetan culture. The study uses Cinematics to investigate how Tseden represents Tibetans through visual and symbolic elements, highlighting his directorial approach to depicting Tibetan identity within modernization. The analysis includes a comprehensive examination of both visual and auditory film components, such as dialogue and music, to provide a thorough understanding of the film's narrative strategies and ethnic representation.












3.1 Visual Narrative and Tibetan Ethnic Representation

"Tharlo" employs its visual narrative to powerfully express the essence of Tibetan life and the pervasive influences of modernization [17]. Tseden's black-and-white cinematography eliminates the color distractions, focusing the viewer on the textures of daily Tibetan life. This choice is both artistic and symbolic, illustrating Tharlo's experience with the dramatic differences between tradition and modernity. The minimalist visual approach emphasized themes of isolation and alienation, while the precise framing of Tibetan landscapes and dwellings demonstrates Tharlo's deep connection to his surroundings. These elements authentically portray Tibetan folk culture, showcasing traditional customs, clothing, and lifestyles while maintaining its intrinsic value and aesthetic significance.

Cinematics-based quantitative film analysis provides a more in-depth understanding of the film's narrative rhythm, visual style, and ethnic representation. Cinematics is an innovative method in film study that quantifies the structure, rhythm, and form of film narratives [18]. Before presenting the data, it is required to define terms to distinct shot scales or closeness of shot. There are a number of categorizations in the field of film studies regarding scene categories; this study uses the Cinematics for analyzing, so Salt's categorization

was chosen, and other opinions will not be discussed in detail, for consistency here included Full Shots in the Long Shot category as illustrated in Table 1 [19].

Table 1. Terms of Scale of Shot

Graph	Category Name	Abbreviation	Description
	Extreme Close-up	XCU / ECU	Shows one aspect of a subject
	Big Close Up	BCU	Shows only the head.
	Close Up	CU	Shows head and shoulders.
	Medium Close Up	MCU	Includes body from the waist up.
	Medium Shot	MS	Includes from just below the hip to above the head of upright actors.
	Medium Long Shot	MLS	Shows the body from the knee upwards.
	Long Shot/ Wide Shot	LS	Shows at least the full height of the body.
	Very Long Shot	VLS	Shows the actor small in the frame.
	Extreme long shot (or very wide angle shot)	XLS/ELS	Shows the full height of the body, included in the Long Shot category.
			
			

This table categorizes shot scales typically used in movies depending on their degree of proximity or scale, adhering to conventions widely established since the 1940s. It simplifies understanding and serves as a common reference for discussing shot composition in film analysis. Scenes in “Tharlo” were first recognized automatically with the PySceneDetect program, and then manually verified. It was discovered that the film contains 89 shots, excluding the final one allocated for credits. Data from Cinemetrics was then categorized and entered into the database, yielding the results shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Database of “Tharlo” on Cinemetrics

Type	CU	FS	LS	MCU	MLS	MS
NoS	7	9	32	15	10	14
LEN	04:36.5	04:13.3	21:18.7	16:25.7	21:03.8	52:06.1
ASL	39.5	28.1	40.0	65.7	126.4	223.3
MSL	21.1	23.1	27.9	38.6	105.4	98.7
MSL/ASL	0.53	0.82	0.70	0.59	0.83	0.44
MAX	129.0	64.8	131.9	202.3	386.5	659.3

MIN	4.2	6.9	8.0	17.1	14.7	14.3
Range	124.8	57.9	123.9	185.2	371.8	645.0
StDev	42.2	19.1	32.6	53.4	112.1	211.8
CV	1.07	0.68	0.82	0.81	0.89	0.95

(Note: NoS: numbers of Shots; LEN: length of the Shots; ASL: average shot length; MSL: median shot length; MAX: Maximum; MIN: Minimum; StDev: Standard Deviation; CV: coefficient of variation)

In the Figure 3, the x-axis indicates time-codes for shot commencement, measured in minutes and seconds. If the length of the code allows, it is repeated repeatedly. It refers to the shot indicated by the little arrow on its left side. The y-axis displays the duration of each shot in seconds, with horizontal gridlines appearing at ten-pixel intervals. The duration of the shot is determined by the vertical resolution, which is set to a default value of 10 pixels per second. The default display of the graph is a linear trend line with an order of 0. The graph visualization defaults to a linear trendline (order=0). It can be manipulated using the Step and Order buttons. It depicts the many shot variations and draws each shot type’s bar in a distinct color.



*Cinematics: a cinematic metric tool to quantify shots. <https://cinematics.uchicago.edu/>

Figure 3. Graph of shot changes

The analysis of “Tharlo” utilizes a systematic quantitative approach to uncover how Tsenden’s cinematographic decisions and narrative approaches mirror Tibetan cultural and social processes. The film’s sluggish pace, characterized by an ASL of 82.6 seconds, effectively engrosses spectators in the Tibetan location, providing a stark contrast to the quicker edits commonly found in traditional cinema. The significant variance in shot durations, as evidenced by a high CV of 1.45 and a MSL of 38.6 seconds, emphasizes different emotional and narrative moments.

The film has significant passages that emphasize issues of identity and solitude, such as a 659.3-second continuous shot of Tharlo's conversation with the police head and a 223-second medium shot of Tharlo by himself on the Tibetan plateau. The inclusion of these prolonged shots enables a profound level of audience involvement with the storyline and underlying themes conveyed in every each frame. The variable shot length in the film successfully reflects the protagonist's changing emotional state and the external forces he faces. This nuanced portrayal captures the dynamics of cultural transformation and human development in the face of contemporary challenges and traditional values. This research enriches the thematic complexity of "Tharlo" and adds to wider conversations on ethnic portrayal in film, providing valuable perspectives on the convergence of cinematic craftsmanship and cultural heritage.

Tharlo is depicted as an individual grappling with the process of modernity, encountering feelings of unease and internal turmoil. The monochrome palette allows the audience to focus on the plot and character development without being distracted by color [20]. It captures the intricate emotional state of the subject and aligns with the central idea of the film. The director used the technique of juxtaposing light and shade to accentuate the profound emotional depth and intricacy of the character's internal realm. The still images of the natural surroundings and everyday activities of the ethnic minorities not only encourage viewers to engage with the vibrant culture of this community, but also underscore the film's central themes of legacy and identity. The static setting encourages the viewers to contemplate the characters' circumstances, enriching the complexity of the documentary and enabling them to attain a more profound comprehension of Tharlo's personal odyssey, which transitions from inertia to transformation with the arrival of Yangtso. The visual method employed effectively communicates the film's examination of emotions and concerns.

The film has a minimalist composition that incorporates symmetrical framing to specifically guide the viewers' focus towards the progression of the plot and the characters illustrated in Figure 4. The director utilizes distinctive cinematography techniques to effectively convey deep emotions and delve into intricate issues. These tactics include the use of reflective imagery and voyeuristic viewpoints to highlight the importance of identity and cultural heritage within modernization. This technique not only narrates the story of Tharlo, a Tibetan shepherd grappling with the consequences of modernity, but also vividly portrays the impact of modernization on Tibetan traditional culture.



a) 0:26:28:00



b) 01:11:33:13



c) 01:20:49:13

Figure 4. Timeline of Shots

3.2 Auditory Narrative and Tibetan Ethnic Representation

The auditory elements of the film, such as dialogue, ambient sounds, and music, play a crucial role in reinforcing its ethnic representation and narrative depth [21]. These elements work synergistically with the visual components to immerse the audience in a culturally rich Tibetan setting, while also highlighting the protagonist's internal and external conflicts.

The auditory landscape of "Tharlo" intricately contrasts the turbulent metropolitan sounds with tranquil country soundscape, highlighting Tharlo's isolation. The film's opening is dominated by urban cacophony as Tharlo enters a bustling town, contrasted with the calm, rural landscape accented by natural sounds, underscoring the dramatic contrasts between his old and new lives. The film uses music to symbolize the clash between traditional Tibetan culture and modern influences. A scenario in which a Tibetan singer performs at a concert combines traditional themes with modern rap, highlighting the cultural change and Tharlo's estrangement. Diegetic sounds, such as Tibetan folk tunes and ambient nature sounds accurately depict Tibetan culture, yet the intentional use of modern music in venues such as karaoke bars highlights the tension between traditional ideals and modern demands. Degai Tsering's sound design heightens significant narrative moments, such as Yangtso cutting Tharlo's hair, where the increased sounds of the electric clippers and falling hair emphasize Tharlo's emotional depth and departure from his past. Non-diegetic music by composer Wang Jue is subtly integrated, in keeping with director Tseden's objective of ensuring that the music complements rather than distracts, mixing perfectly with environmental sounds to enhance the film's genuine tone. This precise audio method complements the film's thematic investigations of identity and cultural upheaval, transforming "Tharlo" into a comprehensive ethnographic and cinematic exploration of Tibetan life and culture.

4. Symbolic Representation in "Tharlo"

Tseden's inquiry of Tibetan cultural identity continues in "Tharlo", which follows the protagonist's journey for self-awareness in the midst of a battle between modern civilization and traditional culture. This chapter explores the identity narratives and cultural metaphors used in the film, demonstrating how they shape its themes and symbols.

4.1 Mirror Imagery and Identity Narrative

The use of mirrors in films often serves to explore a character's self-identity, inner conflicts, and psychological state [22]. Through the reflection in the mirror, characters engage in a symbolic dialogue or confrontation with their own image, illustrating their internal fragmentation or identity crisis. This visual technique not only deepens the psychological layers of the characters but also enhances the thematic expression of the film.

In "Tharlo", mirrors serve as more than reflections, operating as metaphors for cultural representation and the Tibetan struggle with modernization. Tharlo's encounters with mirrors symbolize the broader cultural and

internal conflicts of the Tibetan people. His self-reflection scenes, including those in a car's rearview mirror and a barbershop, illustrate his evolving cultural identity and psychological journey. The interaction between Tharlo and Yangtso through mirrors, especially during a haircut, epitomizes the clash between modern life and Tibetan traditions. The use of a segmented mirror in this pivotal scene accentuates Tharlo's challenging transition from tradition to modernity, underscoring the turmoil and contradictions inherent in cultural change. These scenes can be seen in Figure 5,



Figure 5. Mirrors in the Film “Tharlo”

Mirrors are extensively utilized in the film “Tharlo”, serving multiple purposes. Firstly, mirrors are used to reflect images of the real world, capturing numerous scenes through mirrors including glass and water surfaces. These physical reflection results in the alteration, contortion, opacity, and aesthetic phenomenon known as “alienation”, which undermines the certainty of reality and introduces an imperceptible visual obstacle to the real world. Additionally, mirrors can be employed for the purposes of monitoring. The figure depicts the scene of Tharlo and Yangtso enjoying ice cream outside the barber shop, as seen from the interior towards the street. This perspective corresponds to ubiquitous urban social surveillance. Moreover, mirrors serve as a means to convey one’s identity and cultural conflict. When Tharlo visited the police station to obtain his identity card, the words “Service to the people” on the wall were arranged in reverse order. This produced an ironic juxtaposition between the visual and textual elements. This perspective assumes the form of a “peeping angle” and serves a crucial function in articulating one’s identity and addressing cultural clashes. Essentially, the mirrors in the film “Tharlo” serve not only for visual appeal, but also to communicate many issues including identity, cultural clashes, and societal monitoring.

4.2 Cultural Metaphors and Ethnic Representation

“Tharlo” vividly portrays ethnic characteristics by depicting the identity anxiety of a minority shepherd amidst modernization. The film incorporates extensive Tibetan dialogue and cultural elements, such as Tibetan Buddhism, Thangka paintings, and Tibetan architecture, integral to Tibetan cultures. Moreover, the portrayal of Tharlo highlights the identity and cultural conflicts faced by minorities in the modernization process. Additional details in the film, such as the traditional Chinese characters and English subtitles using the Wylie transliteration for Tibetan names, demonstrate the director’s attention to detail and respect for Tibetan culture. “Tharlo” powerfully incorporates distinct ethnic features through various means and skillfully weaves into the film’s narrative.

Rich metaphors and symbols are used in “Tharlo” to illustrate the intricate and multifaceted elements of Tibetan culture. Every symbol possesses a profound cultural significance, in addition to serving as a visual

component. Tharlo aligns with Tibetan culture and rejects modernity with "Little Braid" and "Lamb". Cutting the braid and killing the lamb symbolize the cultural identity loss and internal strife. His search for an ID card illustrates the Tibetan culture's struggle with identity in the face of globalization. This journey shows how cultural collisions change thoughts and how modernism affects traditional ways of living.

Yangtso, the film's protagonist, mentors Tharlo in the city and helps him adapt to modern technology and culture. Despite her urban identity, Tharlo has little urban experience or Tibetan culture. She encourages Tharlo's curiosity and actions, creating a complex relationship. The director uses mirrors and cultural symbols to show modern society's personal worries and minority cultures' struggles in an interconnected world. This technique helps us understand the film and its portrayal of minority cultures today.

In addition, the director depicts the individual's anxieties in contemporary society and the difficulties and changes experienced by minority cultures in an increasingly interconnected world. This is achieved through the use of mirrors and cultural symbols as artistic tools. These observations not only deepen our comprehension of film narrative, but they also offer valuable insights and illuminating information on the representation of minority cultures in the contemporary world.

5. Conclusion

This study explores the issue of Tibetan cultural identity in the context of globalization and modernization through a thorough analysis of Pema Tseden's film, "Tharlo". It utilizes quantitative analysis techniques and qualitative narrative analysis methodologies to examine how the narrative strategies and symbolic elements in the film portray the cultural identity transformations of both individuals and collectives. The film effectively conveys the dynamics of identity and cultural tensions through its narrative structure and the use of rich symbolic imagery, such as Tharlo's evolving haircut and his interactions with modern culture. Furthermore, this study measures the narrative rhythm and visual composition of the film using tools like PySceneDetect and Cinematics, providing additional evidence of the film's narrative strategies' success and complexity. The film not only showcases the distinctive cultural traits of Tibet but also provides a deep analysis of the societal transformations occurring in Tibetan culture due to the impact of modernization.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study of Pema Tseden's "Tharlo" has illuminated the profound ways in which the film employs both visual and auditory narratives to articulate the complex interplay between traditional Tibetan culture and encroaching modern influences. The study employed Cinematics to analyze Tseden's use of cinematographic techniques, demonstrating how extended shots and a contrasting black-and-white color scheme enhance the thematic representation of cultural isolation and identity conflict. The results highlight Tseden's skill in incorporating symbolic elements and narrative strategies that resonate with the Tibetan endeavor to preserve their traditional identity in the face of growing modernization. The auditory analysis further enriched our

comprehension by illustrating how the film's sound design harmonizes with its visual narrative, creating a multi-sensory depiction of Tibetan life that accentuates the cultural tensions experienced by the protagonist, Tharlo. The integration of traditional Tibetan music with modern sounds symbolizes the cultural fusion and identity anxiety faced by indigenous communities today.

This research endeavors to contribute to the field of film studies by integrating quantitative data analysis with qualitative perspectives, offering a nuanced exploration of ethnic representation in cinema. The study proposes a paradigm that may assist in the academic evaluation of films addressing cultural and identity themes through both technical and narrative dimensions. It is hoped that the insights presented could inform and inspire filmmakers and cultural analysts, potentially enhancing their approach to storytelling, particularly when depicting the complexities of cultural transformations.

5.2 Study Limitations and Recommendations of the Future Research

Cinematics is an innovative research approach that broadens the scope of study for filmmakers. It overcomes the deficiencies of traditional film and television methods, promotes the visualization of film research, and facilitates evidence-based studies. It enables a novel perspective for understanding films and discerning the patterns of cinematic creation. It is important to acknowledge that while film metrological analysis provides a relatively objective, data-driven approach, films are fundamentally expressions of cultural and aesthetic values. Thus, the examination of films from a metrological standpoint should be considered as only one of several potential approaches in the field of film studies, rather than the ultimate or conclusive one. An overemphasis on quantification can disconnect research from the essence of film and its artistic subtleties, reducing it to a simply data-driven pursuit. In order to effectively harness the potential of extensive datasets, it is crucial to incorporate film theory, history, and the principles of artistic creativity.

This study recognizes the constraints of investigating the broader Tibetan cultural context and analyzing the responses of audiences from varied cultural backgrounds, despite the in-depth investigation of narrative and symbolic approaches in the film "Tharlo." To overcome these constraints, future studies should include cross-cultural comparative analysis, longitudinal studies of audience reception, and ethnographic fieldwork to enhance our comprehension of the film and its cultural manifestations. These diverse study methods will not only allow for a more thorough assessment of the film's cultural influence in the context of globalization but also broaden the scope of film theory research. Moreover, this will improve our practical comprehension of cultural portrayal and storytelling techniques in film productions.

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