

# **China and Tibetan Identity: Issues of Nationalism and Resistance, 2008-2014**

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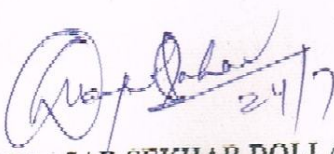
DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "China and Tibetan Identity: Issues of Nationalism and Resistance, 2008-2014" submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

  
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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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*Dedicated to my Aba and Ama*

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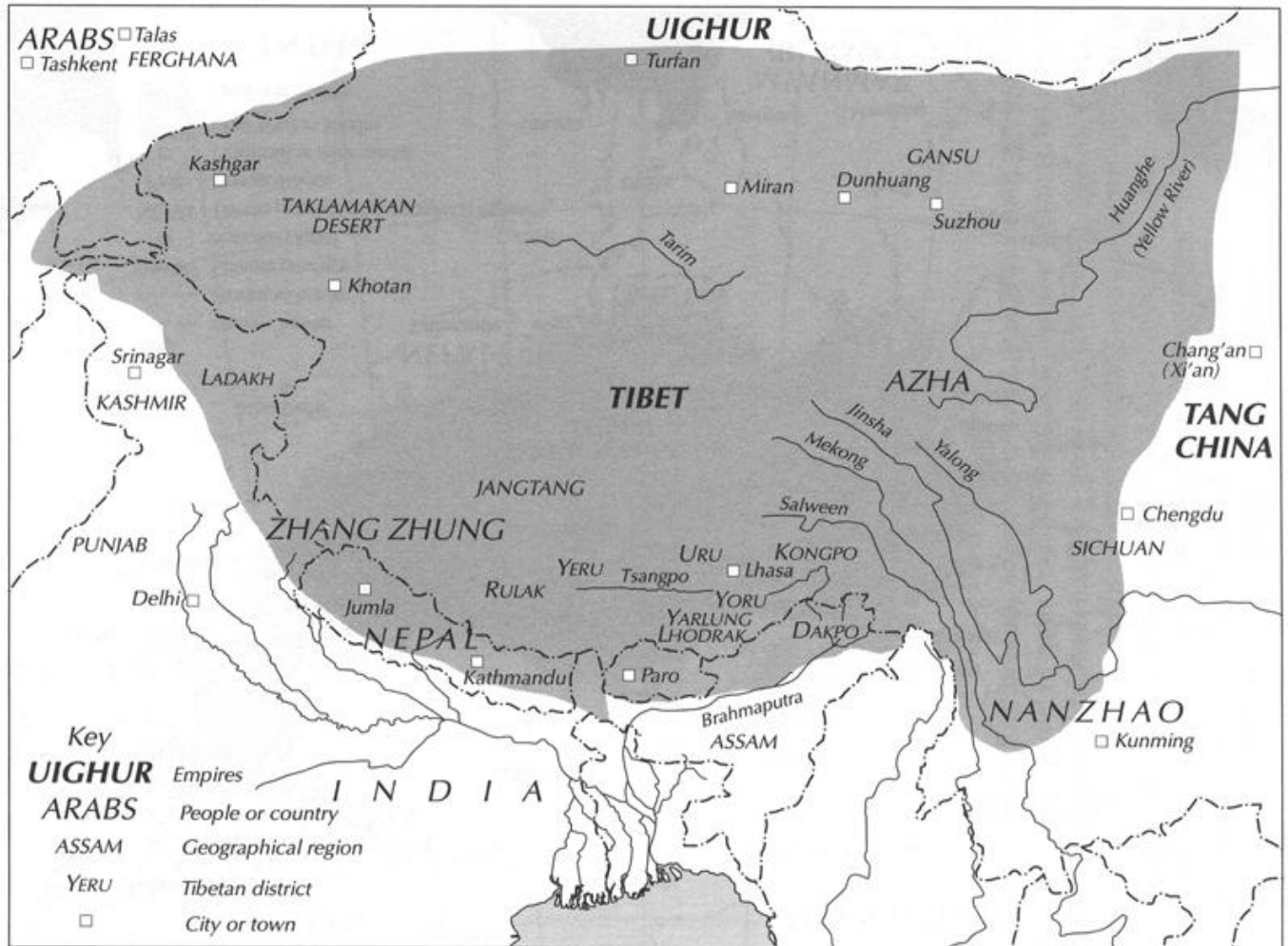
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## **List of Abbreviations**

PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
KMT	Kuomintang (Nationalist Party)
PCART	Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region
TAR	Tibet Autonomous Region
PLA	People's Liberation Army





**Map 2** The Tibetan Empire, late eighth–early ninth centuries (with modern borders for reference)

**Source:** Kapstein, 2006



Source: Schwartz, 1994

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

Nation despite its historical novelty is asserted by nationalists as a perennial entity. Its very existence in the imagination of its members are not only based on what they remember, which is their historical memory, but also based on what they forget (Renan, 1992). This process of selective memorialisation produces in today's time, a myth of political cohesiveness, sharing collective historical continuity among the national members since time immemorial. This root-seeking essential aspect of nationalist thought turns the pre-historic hunter-gatherers into incipient national members. However bulk of recent research on 'nation' and 'nationalism' has shown us that 'nation' as imagined political community is recent phenomena (Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 2006; Hobsbawm, 1991; Norbu, 1992; Smith, 1991, 2009), possible only within a certain external objective conditions, such as technological advancement, increased mobility (thus social interaction) and colonisation in third world context. Tibetan nation is no exception to these world-wide phenomena and as it would be shown in this dissertation, is a recent historical construct. The decades long nationalisation process has today completely altered the way Tibetans see themselves and their past, both self and past are imagined within a framework of nationalist thought, where expressive deviation from the nationalist hegemonic discourse is ontologically problematised. The term 'Tibetan' (*Bod-pa*) today is the product of particular politicised environment whose derived meaning is generalised over the long period of history thus either creating historical simplification or historical confusion, depending upon once vantage point. In the following passages, we outline those simplifications or confusion arising due to our attempt to understanding history from the modern political vocabulary.

### Who Are Tibetans?

Today 'Tibetans' are ubiquitously known as '*Bod-pa*' in their indigenous language and the nationalist expression of their collective identity is centred on the idea of '*Bod kyi bDagpo Bod-pa yin*' (Tibet belongs to Tibetans). However historically the term '*Bod-Pa*' was used restrictively for the people of central Tibet or sometime specifically for people

of Lhasa, depending on where one is located (Shakya, 1993). This peculiar historical usage of term '*Bod-pa*' illustrates not only the historical internal diversities of Tibetan world (ibid) but also points out to the nature of 'new' contemporary collective Tibetan identity, imagined in response to external 'others'. Traditionally 'Tibetans' in the absence of 'external others' identified themselves along the regional or sectarian line such as '*Khampa*', '*Amdowa*' or '*Sakya*' etc, and there was no popularly identified single indigenous term that could encompass the whole of today's Tibetan populations. Such absence of in-group collective identity among Tibetans before the emergence of modern nationalism leads to inevitable historical in-congruencies, especially when trying to understand diverse collective past through the modern day homogenised identity-vocabulary. For instance, how do we understand the historical references, in traditional Tibetan sources, such as 'in 13th century, *Phagpa* of *Sakya* was granted de-facto control over '*Bod Chol-Kha sum*' by Kublai Khan', does it includes the territory of eastern Tibet? Since despite today's understanding of '*Chol-Kha Sum*' as constituting '*U-Tsang*', '*Kham*' and '*Amdo*', during the period of Sakya-Mongol rule over Tibet (*Bod*), *Chol-kha sum* constituted the three regions of '*Ngari*', '*U*' and '*Tsang*' (see Petech, 2013). Thus how would we today accurately write about 'Tibetan' history, if at all we are to use the term 'Tibetan' at the cost of over simplification? We have to remember that historically there is no 'singular' group (self-categorised) that can accurately be called Tibetan. Moreover in today's understanding of the term, 'Tibetan' is defined along the political lines, which is the product of modern Tibetan nationalism, where even the populations that share common ethnicity are excluded from the national membership. The people of Ladakh, Bhutan, northern Nepal, Tawang tract, belongs to externally categorised identity of ethnic Tibetans. Since the term 'Tibetan' as it was earlier used by westerners, was to denote a population sharing a common history, tradition, worldviews and myths about their origins, thus the term 'Tibetan' is earlier western understanding included population from beyond the modern day Tibetan political boundaries (Shakya, 1993). Tibetan nation in today's sense has been carved out from its ethnic base, mainly as a result of earlier incorporation of these peripheral territories into neighbouring states and remaining being later colonised by Chinese, thus Tibetan identity as we understand today is partly a colonial construct. Nevertheless it must also be noted that despite historical diversities

among Tibetans, there seems to exist a sense of loose knit-cultural collectivity (see Chapters 3). This sense of 'commonness' was along the ethnic line and has no corresponding political manifestation---their historical sense collectivity never got translated into desire for single state, let alone 'nation-state'.

### **What is Tibet?**

In addition to the complexities surrounding the Tibetan identity, the terrain of Tibetan political landscape is also highly contested. The Tibetan nationalist imagination of Tibet is that of compact territory with singular political identity consisting of three historical province (*Chol-kha sum*) i.e. *U-Tsang*, *Kham* and *Amdo*. It is claimed that this Tibet existed at least since 7th century and has its historical continuity of over a thousand years. However a closer look at the history gives us a far more differing complex picture than the over-simplified nationalist portrayal of Tibet. Historically during the empire period, the constituent of Tibet was far beyond its present claimed boundaries, The tripartite geographical division of Tibet then was (1) "Three circuits" of *Ngari* in the west, (2) the "four horns" of (the "centre") *U* and *Tsang*, and (3) the "six ranges" or "three realms" constituting the eastern province of *Amdo* and *Kham* (Kapstein, 2006). For instance, the "three circuits" of *Ngari* in the west includes modern day Lhadakh, Baltistan areas. Moreover for centuries in post Empire period there was no singular unified political entity called 'Tibet', the plateau was politically divided into various smaller geopolitical entities. The Tibet (*Bod*) of ancient empire in post disintegration period, lost its peripheral regions to local chieftains, who then on for centuries established themselves as a de-facto independent states. Traditionally the *Sakya* hierarch is said to have unified Tibet (*Bod*) under its leadership around mid 13th century but the recent evidences suggest that the territorial expanse of *Sakya* rule was limited within the central Tibetan regions and the areas west or east were outside the sphere of their political rule. '*Bod*' it seems during the period was referred to the domain of *Sakya* rule (Petech, 2013) and the ethnic Tibetan areas beyond those were identified as being a part of '*Bod-chen*', or more commonly as '*Kham*' or '*Amdo*' region. Then on, apart from a brief period of "unification" of the whole of Tibet under the 5th Dalai Lama, there has never been in Tibet, a singular political centre, Tibet culturally and religiously had a centre in the form of Lhasa but the

equivalent centre in politics was virtually absent in traditional Tibet. Thus the nationalist claim of unified continues political history of Tibet is problematic, like any other nation, the meaning of a term '*Bod*' over its long period of history has undergone a considerable changes. '*Bod*' historically referred to a particular centre, whose gradual territorial expansion and later territorial loss has changed its constituent parts, thus by the beginning of 20th century the eastern Tibetan regions, which were politically independent of Lhasa rule, identified '*Bod*' specifically with Lhasa's dominion states. This '*Bod*' (Tibet) during a different historical period was referred to differing political entities whose territorial composite and even political centre<sup>1</sup>, was ever changing (see Samuel, 1995). Therefore it is imperative for the researchers on Tibet that they begin their work, especially historical work, with a clear explanation of what they mean by Tibet and Tibetans or at least to be less ambiguous.

Scholars such as Goldstein and Richardson while making a clear distinction between 'political' and 'ethnic' Tibet (see Goldstein, 1994; Richardson, 1962), they argues that political Tibet refers to a Tibetan areas under Lhasa's administration and 'ethnic Tibet' refers to Tibetan areas of *Kham* and *Amdo*, outside the purview of Lhasa administration. However such particular understanding of 'Tibet' unnecessarily privileges Lhasa centric view point and takes into consideration only a certain period before Chinese occupation. The distinction of 'political' and 'ethnic' Tibet also depoliticises the eastern Tibetan regions and present them as a mere passive actor in history of Sino-Tibetan political interactions. The use of term 'Tibet' in this dissertation encompasses a territory, which today includes *U-Tsang*, *Amdo* and *Kham* and this particular choice despite the earlier emphasised historically diverse Tibetan experience is mainly for analytical reasons. Since it is these regions of 'ethnic Tibet' that is today politicised and thus became a contested political entity within the Sino-Tibetan conflict. 'Ethnic Tibet' in this context would refer to the Tibetan areas beyond the present 'politicised boundaries', which includes Ladakh, Bhutan, Sikkim, northern Nepal and Tawang tract, whose people share a same ethnicity with the Tibetans. When speaking about Lhasa ruled Tibetan

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<sup>1</sup> Lhasa was political centre during the empire period (7-9th century) and then for over 700 years (9-17 century) the political centre of central Tibet was shifted to Sakya , Tsang and finally to Lhasa during 5th Dalai Lama's rule in mid 17th century

areas, it uses a term 'central Tibet' and 'eastern Tibet' for areas encompassing *Kham* and *Amdo*. Therefore 'instead of Goldstein's (and others) assertion that Tibet was occupied by Chinese force in Oct 1950, this dissertation would use more specific term 'central Tibet', thus the assertion that "central Tibet was occupied by Chinese in Oct 1950, whereas the *Kham* and *Amdo* areas were incorporated into People's Republic since 1949. With these clearly specified terminological distinctions, we can avoid both over-simplifications and historical confusions.

### **Research Questions and Hypothesis**

This paper attempts to explore answers to certain questions such as 'when did Tibetan nationalism emerged? What transformative changes it brought about in Tibetan society, especially in relation to Tibetan identity? What is the role of the modernisation, if at all, in the formation of Tibetan national identity? It will also attempt to see what kind of identity exist among Tibetans at the time of Chinese colonisation and how did it affect their 'collective' anti-colonial resistance? Historically was there any sense collectivity among 'Tibetans' and if so, how different it is from the modern sense of collective identity? Whether similar to western experience, did nationalism entails a loss of cognitive hold over the minds of national members? What role does religion plays in Tibetan nationalism? And above all, it will examine what identity transformation Tibetans in side Tibet are going through in the post-2008 national uprising?

The hypotheses are that, Tibetans before Chinese colonisation has some form of loose knit-collective identity and it is upon this loose-knit sense of collectivity that the modern Tibetan nation is formed. Another hypothesis in this paper is that post-2008 uprising, the Tibetan sense of collective identity has undergone a radical changes to a point where individuals are increasingly identifying themselves as a national members imagined in opposition to their colonisers.

### **Research Methodology**

This research would be based on deductive reasoning drawing inferences from the whole range of literature. It aims to define the meaning of ethnicity and nation and analyse the historical development of national consciousness among the ethnic Tibetans

and the identity negotiation between Tibetans and the Chinese state. Focusing on both primary and secondary sources (mainly later), this paper seeks to answer the various dimensions of research questions. The primary sources include policy papers and official documents from both Chinese and Tibetan sources and various Tibetans songs and poems. Secondary sources will include published works in form of books, academic journals, articles, newspapers, publication of think tanks and internet sources. Both 'Chinese state' and 'its policy on Tibet' are identified as independent variables and the dependent variable would be 'Tibetan identity' and 'nationalism'. The intervening variable that alter the otherwise 'normal' course of action are 'Chinese coercive policy' and 'modern technology'. Thus this dissertation seeks to study the impact of colonial presence of 'Chinese state' and 'its policy' on the formation of 'Tibetan identity' and 'nationalism'. It will also examine the role of intervening variables such as 'coercion' and 'modern technology' in understanding the changing coursing of Tibetan identity world-view.

### **Chapter Outlines**

During the course of my research, it has been realised that, for the proper understanding of Tibetan nationalism, its historical trajectory needs to be particularly explored, especially the nationalisation process in exile. Thus in the following dissertation, this paper focus more on the historical aspects of the identity formation in Tibet and discuss the post-2008 period in the sections of the final chapter. The evident timeframe incongruence is highly regretted, nevertheless, it is hoped that the historical focus of this research will helps us to better understand Tibetan nationalism and the formation of pan-Tibetan national identity.

Chapter 1 deals with the different theories of nationalism, broadly classified within the tripartite division of 'Primordialist', 'Modernist' and 'Ethno-symbolist'. It outlines the key arguments from the each group and critically analyse their problems and relevancies to the experience of nationalism in Tibet. It discusses some of the most sought after questions such as 'when is nation?' and 'does nation has an ethnic roots?' and by doing so, it highlight the problems of euro-centrism in the field of nationalism studies, where non-western experience of 'imposed modernity' rather than European experience of 'gradual evolution' plays a dominant factor in the emergence of nationalism. Nationalism



it argues is the product of certain external objective conditions, which through mass politicisation creates nation. However contrary to the 'modernist' claim, this paper maintain that the Tibetan experience illustrates the fact that modern nation has a deep ethnic root and is not merely a product of elite 'invention' thus falls within the purview of 'ethno-symbolist' approach. In conclusion we rework the ethno-symbolist framework in this chapter by outlining some of the problems in the approach and thereby redefining terms such as 'nation' and 'nationalism' in congruence with the Tibetan experience.

In Chapter 2, the attempt to set the grounding work for the overall understanding of Sino-Tibetan conflict is made. It does so by first outlining both the modern PRC's claim over Tibet as well as the Tibetans claim to independence. These modern claims are juxtaposed against the traditional understanding of the Sino-Tibetan relations in their respective historiographies and it is through such process we come to the understanding that the modern Chinese claims of 'Tibet's integrality' and nationalist Tibetan's claim of 'complete independence' are the product of imposed modern European knowledge system of statehood and sovereignty. Moreover this chapter attempt to contextualise the overall Sino-Tibetan relations within the larger inner-Asian power struggle, Manchu and Mongols being the crucial factor necessitating Sino-Tibetans closer relationship. It also attempt to understand the internal and external factor that necessitated Tibetan's closer relationship or reliance upon the external armies, mainly that of Chinese. The crucial task of differentiating Chinese, which is Han, from the other ethnic minorities that ruled over both China and Tibet is also undertaken in this chapter thus underlining the problems of Chinese historical claim over Tibet based on both Mongol's or Manchu's domination over Tibet. This chapter also outlines the history of communist dealings with Tibetans, starting with their promises of self-determinations for "national minorities" to their modernist violent incorporation of Tibet within the camouflage of Chinese nation-state. Contrary to the Chinese Communist claim of proletarian rule, this chapter highlights the history elite Tibetan cooperation with the Chinese colonisers and how the Tibetan masses were pursued only after the failure of elite co-option. It also outlines the overall history of PRC's rule over Tibet and how with the change in centre, which is Beijing, the policies in Tibetan areas also undergo substantial changes. On the whole, this paper attempt to

provide a general outline of Sino-Tibetan conflict in this chapter, which would serve as a grounding work for later part of this dissertation.

After the broad general overview of the Sino-Tibetan relations, in chapter 3 the paper attempt to show the diverse identities among the Tibetans throughout its history, which it does so by first outlining the critical history of Tibet, especially focusing on internal (regional/sectarian) conflicts, which contributed immensely toward the formation of intra-ethnic identity differences. Those historical narratives are included, which contributes to the overall narratives of the formation of identities in traditional Tibetan societies such as the 17th century sectarian conflict between *Gelug* backed Mongolians and *Kagyue* backed *Tsang* rulers. Since it is during this conflict period that the contesting identities gets crystallised and becomes a dominant factor in individual's life. Moreover the history of 'central Tibet' and that of '*Kham*' and '*Amdo*' is dealt separately, in order to highlight their different lived social and political experiences, both as mentioned before existed as a de-facto independent states for over a thousand year, except for brief interval period of the 5th Dalai Lama's rule. This chapter also analyse the nature of Tibetan polity along the galactic state model and argues that the Tibetan state-system was essentially different from that of today's modern western state, where the polity is conceptualized in terms of 'bounded space' within which the state has complete monopoly over the means of force, whereas in the Tibetan polity, the spatial constitute of the state is 'centre-oriented' thus, characterized by the shifting and blurred boundaries. It argues that that before Chinese final military invasion in 1949, there was no politically unified entity called 'Tibet' but a series of contesting and diffused political 'centres', each with their own further subunits, the culture and political boundaries of pre-modern Tibet were incongruent. However, despite the overwhelming evidence of historically diverse identity formation among the Tibetans, this chapter also highlights the fact that there is a loose-knit cultural or religious tie among Tibetans which enables the individuals to conceive of themselves as a unique part of a composite whole. Chapter argues that there exist a dormant singular identity of being a '*Bod-rigs*' (Tibetan race) through the Buddhist conceptualisation of Tibet as unique realm of '*Avaloketesvara*' (Buddha of Compassion) manifested today in the form of Dalai Lama. This pervasive Tibetan sense of belonging to a unique realm of '*Avaloketesvara*' who is both their patron saint and progenitor

provides for Tibetans a framework for imagining of them-selves as a part of collective whole. However through contextualising identities, we came to an understanding that the Tibetans in the absence of any overt outside presence, based their identities on the intra-cultural differences and moreover the modern nationalist imagination of Tibetan nation was impossible in the traditional society, where the abovementioned external objective conditions were absent. Thus on the eve of Chinese invasion, Tibetans were politically internally divided.

Lastly in chapter 4, This paper attempt to outline the nature of initial Tibetan resistance against the Modern Chinese state and argue that Tibetan resistance in 1950s were based on individual's diffused identities, thus their struggles were largely localised. It was not for the national cause but for localised sub-regional or monastic concerns that forced the Tibetans to take up their arms against the Chinese. Paper argues that it was in exile that under the new objective condition, the Tibetan elite leadership embarked upon the process of nationalising its citizens through series of invented traditions and symbols such a national flag and anthem etc. This reorganisation of the anti-colonial Tibetan struggle along the nationalist line was mainly due to the institutional incentives or legitimacy that ethno-national struggle enjoys in the post Second World War period. It is also argued in this chapter that the exile pan-Tibetan nationalist discourse of '*Chol-sum Bod-mi*' found its way into Tibet during the 1980s liberalisation period, which was experientially negotiated and selectively adopted by Tibetans in Tibet. Moreover the Chinese state also played a crucial role in constructing pan-Tibetan identity through their modernist education system and national classification mechanism, later categorising the diverse Tibetan groups within a singular national group known as '*Zangzu*' (*Bod-Rigs*). The new pan-Tibetan identity got further crystallised through series of protest that erupted into Tibet, followed by ethnic-specific Chinese differential policies in Tibet. This pervasive sense of relative deprivation along with the penetration of western knowledge system of 'nation-state' was given a rise to Tibetan nationalism which unlike the earlier localised Tibetan concerns, now aspires for a singular modern nation-state.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Theories of Nationalism

This Chapter discuss the theoretical framework for overall paper. It does so by beginning with the brief general introduction to theories of nationalism broadly classified into tripartite division of 'primordialist', 'modernist' and 'ethno-symbolist'. In each of the categorised theoretical approach to nationalism, it discusses few major theorists and critically examines their approach in the Tibet context. And lastly it will outline the meaning of the term such as 'nation' and 'nationalism' as is used in this dissertation.

#### Introduction

The fertile field of nationalism until late 19th century have mostly been explored by philosophers, both Marxist and liberals alike, concerning mainly with the moral dimensions of it and thereafter from the beginning of 20th century, eminent historians such as E.H.Carr, Hans Kohn and others also started taking interest in the field but somehow nationalism as a subject of critical inquiry remained limited within the simplistic model of 'transformation of traditional-state into nation-state due to the irresistible force of modernisation'(Ozkirimli, 2000). In other word, due to the institutional weakness of traditional societies, it crumbled under the force of modernisation, thereby giving birth to modern nation-state. This group of historians were in no sense the theorist of nationalism, since they took the very concept of 'nation' as unproblematic and 'pre-given. It was only after the Second World War, during the period of decolonization and proliferations of new states across Asia and Africa, the serious critical studies of nationalism also proliferated (ibid). It was during these period that for the first time the very idea of 'nation' as 'pre-given' or 'natural' was problematised, part responsible for this new critical interrogation of nationalist thought was the lived memories of cruelties and devastation caused during the second world war resulting mainly from the racist ideology of nationalism. In post-war period scholars like Elie Kedourie (1960) has embarked upon the crusade of freeing 'nation' from the myth of pure 'race' and pure ethnicity thereby reinstating 'nation' within the framework of 19th century European invention. This task of demystifying nation was carried forward by host of

other intellectuals from social science and political science background such Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, Tom Nairn, John Bruilly, Benedict Anderson and Others--together known as 'modernist' who despite their analytical differences shared a basic point of contention against 'primordialist', that nation is a 'modern' phenomena and has no antecedent in pre-modern society. Nationalism as an ideology was intellectually, completely uprooted from its earlier 'primordialist' understanding to the point that, it was now argued to be a 'falsity' and 'invented' (Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1983). The debate of 'when is nation?' was polarised between the 'primordialist' and 'modernist' so-much-so that, it was against this backdrop, that the new group of scholars have emerged proposing a 'middle ground' between the two. This group of scholars are collectively known as 'ethno-symbolist' and most important among them are John Armstrong, John Hutchinson and above all Anthony D. Smith. This new approach in general recognises the modernity of nation, though with some exceptions, but mainly contends that contrary to modernist interpretation of nation as 'without pre-modern antecedent', nations despite its historical novelty have deep ethnic roots (Smith, 1991). Thereafter towards the beginning of 1990s as the field of nationalism grew further mature, numbers of new crucial challenges gradually emerged, Marxist scholar such as Partha Chatterjee (1986, 1994) and Ranajit Guha(1997) from the 'subaltern group' critiqued the predominant Euro-centricism in the literature on nationalism and also feminist authors such as Nira Yuval-Davis(1997) has raised the issues of gender-blindness in theory of nationalism. More recently nationalism has been studied from the social-psychological point of view (Billig, 1997). Considering these vast literature available on the theories of nationalism, it is beyond the scope of the present research to deal with all the above mentioned writings, therefore in following pages, this paper will deal only with some of the key texts in the field of nationalism along with inter-disciplinary approach from social psychology to social anthropology in understanding inter-related concepts such as social/group identity, ethnicity and nationality--later two being the few of many possible group-identities. It is believed that such approach will enable us to understand 'nationalism' not only from top-down angle but also from bottom-up, to see how individual deals with its various social identities and how and under what circumstances the salience of national identity gains predominance over all other social identities, namely gender, region or religion etc. In the following

passages we will first attempt to briefly answer few of the questions concerning 'what an identity is?' and 'how it is formed?', then will move on to understand 'how collectives identities are formed?' thereby linking it with 'nation' formation.

### **Understanding Identity**

Identity in a very basic sense is the human capacity rooted in language to know 'who's who' and 'what's what' thus involves knowing who 'we' are and who 'others' are (Jenkins, 2008: 5). This process of understanding 'we' and 'others' are simultaneously interrelated, since there can be no 'us' without 'them', thus identity implies the process, in which individuals and collectives are distinguished from other individuals and collectives, based on their relationship of similarities and differences. Identity is not something that we 'possess' or something 'innate' in us, rather it is a 'process' of identification through continues negotiation and renegotiation with external 'others' and since identities are the products of negotiations, and all negotiation happens in context--- identities are contingent, relational and contextual in nature.

As an individual we have two kinds of identities, 'personal identity' and 'social identity', while the former is self-construal idiosyncratic personality attributes that are not shared with others (Hogg, 2006) 'social identity' is defined as "individual's knowledge of self belonging to a certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to her of that group membership" (Tajfal, 1972: 292). Thus individuals have multiple social identities such as organisational, religious, gender, regional, 'race', ethnic and national, which are thoroughly social constructed during the process of 'primary' and subsequent socialisation (Jenkins, 2008) and these various social identities are formed not just through the internal-self categorization, which is 'who we think we are' but also through external categorization of 'us', that is 'who they think we are'. Social identities are the production of synthesis between internal and external dialectic of identifications (ibid). Thus all social identities are contingent and mutable in nature; nevertheless some identities such as gender, 'race' and ethnicity are highly stable to a point that it is often mistakenly perceived as natural and innate.

## **Collective Identity Formation**

There are two kinds of collective identity, one is 'category' and other is 'group', former is an externally defined identity of a population sharing certain definable features but lacks the shared internal identification among the members (Jenkins, 2008: 110-111), classic example of this is provided by Marx in his class analyses, when he distinguishes between 'class in itself' and 'class for itself', where unlike later, former lacks the shared class consciousness. Group on the contrary are an active internal definition of the collectives in the process of interaction with significant 'others'(ibid). This sense of 'group-ness' is not simply the product of an intra-group similarities but more due to the inter-group differences, groups are rarely homogenous and thus has a sub-categories or cross-cutting categories but these internal-differences gets relatively minimised with increasing out-group interaction--thus the awareness of out-group difference reinforces the awareness of in-group similarities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). People cognitively represents a category or a group as a 'prototype', which simultaneously captures the similarities with the in-group members and differences with the out-group members but the very content of this 'prototype' is fuzzy, ideal and often hypothetical to the extent that this 'prototype' rather than describing the in-group similarities are often imagined in polarised response to out-group (Hogg, 2006). Any deviation within the group from that imagined 'prototype', especially during the period of inter-group conflict, is often seen as a threat to the group as a whole and met with hostilities. Conformity is sought after from the group members and the indoctrination of group's norms and values are pursued through various means, deviants are ostracised or coerced into conformity.

The above analysis of group identity formation can be implemented into the process of nation building and to understand how and under what context national identity takes prominence over all other individual's collective identities. Now will move on to critically analyse the different theories of nationalism and the major debates surrounding 'when is nation'?

## **Approaches to Nationalism: Critical Inquiry**

The idea of 'nation' and 'nationalism' has engaged scholars from across the disciplines for last over two centuries and yet today the very definition of the concept still remains highly contested. Various descriptive definition provided by theorist of nationalism over a long period of time has literally caused a 'terminological chaos' (Connor , 1994) thereby convincing many scholars of the impossibility of formulating any 'general' theory of nationalism (Hobsbawm, 1983; Ozkirimli, 2000), but despite all the difficulties faced while attempting to 'objectively' define the concept, theorist of nationalism have by and large avoided leaving the concept to be defined on purely subjective basis. Gellner (1983) for instance defines nationalism in more generic term as "a political principal, which holds that political and national unit should be congruent", whereas Smith (1991) chooses to be more descriptive and defines it as "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation". In the following passage we will discuss some of the key texts on the theory of nationalism and critically analyse some of the most of debated and the contested issue among the theorist of nationalism, namely the question of 'What is nation?' and 'When did it emerged?' and 'How far is it a purely modern phenomena?'---In the following analysis, we will follow the conventional three tiered categorisation of the theories of nationalism based on their emphasis on 'the role of modernisation in nation formation', for other more recent (re)categorisation of the theories of nationalism based on 'essentialism' and 'constructivism' see (Ozkirimli, 2000).

### **Limits of Primordialism**

Even though the umbrella term 'primordialist' or sometime 'essentialist' has been used to identify a group of scholars sharing a common convictions that 'nations' are not modern phenomenon and existed since time immemorial, they are in no way monolithic in nature. Within primordialist one can further classify them into sub-categories such as 'naturalist', 'perennialist', 'socio-biologist' but without going into much details of it, will examine some of the key argument put forward by the proponent of this approach, important theorist among them are Pierre L. van-den Berghe (1981) and Steven Grosby



(2005). Primordialist maintains that 'nations' are predetermined and has natural frontiers with peculiar characteristics, mission and destiny (Smith 1995, 32). Socio-biologist such van-den Berghe (1981) argues that ethnic, racial, and national groups are expanded forms of kinships, formed through the natural desire of individuals to maximise their gene pools through mechanism such as endogamy and nepotism. It roots ethnicity and nation into the intrinsic biological nature of human being and argues that nation is nothing but a politically conscious *ethny* (1981: 61). While on the other hand theorist like Grosby (2005) though maintains that ethnicity and nationality are an extension of kinship but explains kinship rather differently, which is not only in term of 'familial descent' but also through shared image of a territory and its descent-- that is in terms of being 'native to' a particular territory. He argues that national collective consciousness can be seen in an ancient Israel and also among the ancient Japanese based of their idea of being created by sun goddess (ibid). On the whole primordialist approach to nationalism can be summarise in the following two points.

1-Nations are 'pre-given' in nature and thus antedates modernity.

2-Each nation possesses certain distinctive national characteristics, which is easily distinguishable from others.

Apparently primordialist see not much differences between ethnicity and nation, since both are often interchangeable used but it must be noted that unlike ethnicity, nations are essentially power seeking, whether as an independent state (Hobsbawm, 2005) or autonomy (Smith 1991) e.g. Jews though historically maintained a strong sense of collective identity but it was only recently with the 'invention' of Jews nationalism in end of 17th century, it strived territorial state which was entirely different from their hope to return there when Messiah comes(Hobsbawm, 1983). Moreover 'nation' by definition is essentially a mass phenomenon and without the incorporation of masses into politics, nations can be said to have existed. In traditional societies masses were mere subjects and didn't have any say in the decision making and also the horizon of their collective consciousness were often limited within the bound of 'face-to-face' social interaction and thus it was cognitively impossible for them to imagine a community beyond their daily experiential interaction. Primordialist see ethnicity as 'pre-given' in our blood thus innate

in us, which goes contrary to large empirical evidence available in recent times, arguing for the constructive and changing nature of identity (See Barth, 1969)

### **Limits of Modernism**

Again, before this paper discuss some of the key text on modernist approach to nationalism, it must be noted that apart from a shared conviction that nations are modern phenomena and has no pre-modern antecedent, modernist in general largely differs on various keys issues such as--'where did nation first emerged?'-Creole (Anderson, 1983), Europe (Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1983) or 'how did it emerged?'- rise of print-capitalism (Anderson), industrialisation (Gellner), invention of tradition (Hobsbawm) or even to the question of 'what is nation?'- Falsity (Hobsbawm), real (Anderson). In the following passage, we will discuss the three main modernist texts on nationalism and will critique each of them in the end of the section.

### **Gellner's Industrial Functionalism**

In the outset of the book, Gellner defines nationalism as "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent" (1983: 1). He further goes on to identify three stages in the history of mankind, namely pre-agrarian, agrarian and industrial age. In the pre-agrarian age, hunters and gathering bands were too small and diffused to allow any kind of political division of labour required to constitute a state, where as in agrarian society state formation is possible often with either rivalry or cooperation between the religion and the state. Social structure during the agrarian period, he argues, is horizontally stratified, where a tiny group of minority is ruling over the large majority of the populations with marked cultural differences between the two--in fact the ruling class uses culture to differentiate itself from the majority. State (represented by ruling class) therefore has no interest in promoting lateral communication and cultural homogeneity, its sole responsible was to collect tax and maintain peace and order. Possibly 'clerisy' may have some interest in promoting cultural homogeneity but its lacks the required political recourses to do so. Gellner maintains that during the agrarian period no cultural homogenisation is possible. It was in the age of industrialism that new revolutionary set of development took place, with increasing

economic and productive growth, old social structure became highly incompatible and change became a permanent feature of social order (1983: 24). Unlike the rigidity of agrarian period, people in industrial societies were highly mobile and this increasing out-group contact made the requirement of shared and standardised linguistic medium and script indispensable. Another pre-requisite of the industrial society is the universal literacy and the centralisation of social reproduction of individuals, whereas in past individuals were locally produced but with the advent of industrialism, state through exo-socialisation has made the production and reproduction of man outside the local intimate, a norm. Culture today has become the life-blood within which alone members of the society can breathe, survive and produce, but this new pervasive culture is not the old folk culture but high literate 'training sustained' culture which is far from natural. "Industrial men", Gellner argues, "are artificially produced species and can no longer breathe in natural environment" (1983: 51), in other words, the newly universalised artificial cultural environment now requires political support to maintain it. Thus it is evident that nationalism is not in human nature but is the product of new pervasive social order. Gellner contends that "unlike Kedourie claims that nationalism imposes homogeneity, it is rather that a homogeneity imposed by objective, inescapable imperative eventually appears on the surface in the form of nationalism". For Gellner nationalism is an unintended effect of modernisation which is beneficial for modernising states, since modern division of labour requires a unified high culture thus nationalism reflects the objective need for homogeneity (1983: 46). Lastly for Gellner, it is industrialism that generated a need for cultural homogeneity which in turn required nationalism to protect the new universalised high culture and it was this unintended nationalism that engendered nation. However, Gellner's theory is too functionalist of modernisation and equally economic deterministic, by arguing that nationalism is the unintended effect of industrialism, Gellner conveniently ignores the other political factors such as roles of power elite or war and subjugations etc. Most of the non-Europeans nationalism was not the 'unintended' effect of industrialism but a conscious political mobilisation by the power elite against the European imperialism/colonialism, such as that of India, China, and Burma. Moreover, Gellner maintains that in agrarian society cultural homogenisation is not possible, since, the clergy, the only one with the interest

of imposing cultural homogeneity, lacks the political resource to do so. This argument is essentially euro-centric since there are numbers of non-European states where both temporal and religious power lied with clerisy thus both interest and the political resource was available e.g. Tibet since 11th century has been more or less ruled by clerisy and thus were able to impose a relatively high cultural homogeneity.

### **Hobsbawm and Invented Traditions**

At the very outset of the book, Hobsbawm makes it very clear to his readers that all attempt to 'objectively' define 'nation' based on certain criteria such as language, ethnicity, and shared territory have miserably failed. The real 'nation' according to him can only be recognised a-posteriori thus he contends that both 'objective' and 'subjective' definition of 'nation' is unsatisfactory and misleading. As an initial working assumption, any sufficiently large number of people imagining themselves to constitute a nation, will be taken as so. Nationalism for Hobsbawm is in Gellner's sense "primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent" but he also adds that, nationalism implies that for a nationalist, his loyalty to the 'nation' overrides all others obligations, especially in times of conflict. So with this working definition of 'nation' and 'nationalism' Hobsbawm goes on to argue that the idea of 'nation' as something 'pre-given' with some pre-decided historic political destiny are nothing but a myth produced by social engineering and invented traditions. He argues that, the elite ruling class in response to some novel situation invents tradition, which may or may not have any reference from the past, or in fact sometimes it may conveniently obliterates the pre-existing cultures for certain political purpose, thus to understand 'nation', he argues one must understand 'nationalism'. It is not the nation that creates state and then nationalism, but the fact is other way around. For Hobsbawm 'national question' as the old Marxist puts it, is situated at the point of intersection of politics, technology and social transformation thus nation exist not only as function of particular kind of territorial state but also within the context of particular stage of technological and economic development. In pre-modern era Hobsbawm(2005) acknowledges that there existed some sense of collective identity 'we' in contradistinction from 'them', but that collective group, he argues, is essentially different from modern state-aspiring nations, primordial

communities despite sharing a sense of being a part of a wider 'group' of people are politically dispersed. Modern nations differ in size, scale and nature from the actual communities which existed throughout the human history. In pre-modern period, he argues that it is also possible to find what he terms as 'proto-nationalism', a consciousness of belonging or having belonged to a lasting political entity, but this 'proto-nationalism' cannot be equated with modern nationalism, since former lacks the necessary relation with unit of territorial political organisation. Hobsbawm also emphasises on the importance of taking into consideration the view from 'below' and thus criticises Gellner for his over emphasis on the perspectives of modernisation from above thereby conveniently neglecting how common masses perceived and responded to it. He argues that state and government or even the activist spokespersons of the nationalist movement cannot truly represent the feelings of common masses thus it is an imperative task of the social historians and others alike to try to understand their consciousness, which often many not be national and still less nationalist. Lastly Hobsbawm like Gellner sees 'nation' and 'nationalism' as a 'falsity' and 'transitory' phase in the human history thus concludes by saying that "despite the evident prominence of nationalism, it is at present historically less important and no longer a global political programme of 19th and 20th century". It is important to note that, Hobsbawm though acknowledges the importance of understanding the view from below but somehow treats masses as merely a 'subject' to be studied and thus denies them of any agency to resist the ruling elite's imposition of 'invented' traditions. It is high time that we treat masses not merely as passive receivers of history but as an active participant in the making and remaking of history. In Smith's word 'past act as a constraint on the manipulations of elites'--and that past is stored in the memories of the masses (Smith, 1995). Hobsbawm analyses of nationalism, like most modernist, are too much state-centric, since for him, nationalism is essentially state-aspiring political ideology. This emphasis on 'state' as nationalist goal is problematic, since there are various evidence of nationalist movement not seeking separate state but high degree of autonomy within an existing state, e.g. Scottish , Catalanian, Quebecoise and more recently Tibetan nationalism.

## **Anderson's 'Imagined' Community**

Anderson approaches nationalism from the social anthropological perspective and contends that terminological confusion surrounding the concept of 'nation' is due to a common tendency among the theorist of nationalism to treat it as an 'ideology' rather than a concept belonging to a same category of 'kinship' or 'religion'. Taking cue from the social anthropological understanding of 'community', he defines "nation as an imagined political community, imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign"(1983: 6). This national community Anderson argues is purely modern phenomenon, since unlike earlier face-to-face local communities; members of even the smallest of modern nation will never be able to meet each other and thus exist only in their imagination. He also contrast earlier religious 'sacred communities' and dynastic realms with modern nation and points out that 'sacred communities' incorporates conception of immense communities through sacred language and script, which conceives itself as cosmically central to the universe and thus only distinction between them and outsiders are based on their sacred cultures. Unlike modern nation, outsiders are redeemable in 'sacred communities' through the embracement of 'sacred culture' thus Anderson argues that 'the fundamental conception of 'social group' was centripetal and hierarchal rather than boundary oriented and horizontal" (1983: 15). Likewise pre-modern dynastic realms are defined by centres and no hard borders existed like that of modern state, masses were mere subjects to be ruled rather than 'citizens' and the question of 'who ruled them' mattered very least to the community until the dawn of nationalism(1983: 19) e.g. no English dynasty has been ruling in London since 11th century. He argues that, beneath the decline of sacred community and dynastic realms, fundamental change was taking place in the way people perceives world and this cultural change was the result of the three crucial development accompanying modernisation, namely 1-change in the conception of time with development of print capitalisms, especially novels and news papers, 2-decline of religious communities and dynastic realms out of which or against which modern nation emerged, lastly 3-development of vernacular national language through print-capitalism with the gradual demotion of scared language (Latin in Europe) and creation of unified field of exchange and communication below Latin and above spoken vernacular gave a new fixity to language. For Anderson this new 'cultural artefact' was spontaneous

construct resulting from discrete historical force of modernisation, thus he treats 'nationness' as a cultural artefact of particular kind(1983: 4) which once formed becomes a 'modular' capable of being transplanted across the different social terrain. This 'modular' he argues is adopted and modified upon by various non-western countries, previously colonised by Europeans, since later from the mid 19th century started the process of increased bureaucratisation and spread of modern education without abandoning the policy of 'colonial differences' thus resulting into a large no of disillusioned modern educated natives, who then became the central force in natives anti-colonial nationalist struggle (1983: 118). In addition the availability of improved technology, such as radio, TV and others which enabled these intelligensia to communicate not only to the reading literate class but to the illiterate masses in far larger scale, even to polyglot members of the 'nation'. Lastly he argues that three institutions available only in modern period such as map, census and museums profoundly shaped the way in which colonial subject imagined its domain. However, Anderson analyses of nationalism as an 'cultural artefacts', underestimates the role played by elites in political mobilisation and creating the myths of nationalism, he also neglects the roles played by events such as war, domination in shaping the national consciousness among the masses. Moreover, his assumptions that nation comes out of or against the 'sacred religious communities' thereby necessitating the secular transformation of the society based on the idea of enlightenment, in order for nationalism to raise. This understanding is inherently euro-centric and thus ignores various contrary evidence of rise of nationalism, such as that of Burma, Poland, Israel, Ireland and Tibet, where nationalism and religion are often complimentary to each other. Anderson's analysis of colonial state nationalism as the derivatives of European 'model' of nationalism receives its strongest criticism from the imminent Marxist historian Partha Chatterjee (1986; 1994) of the subaltern group. He argues that if nation is an imagined community and the nationalism in the non-European country have to choose their; imagined communities' from the certain modular, what is left to imagine for them? For Chatterjee, Anderson's thesis implies that even the imagination of the post-colonial states must for over remain colonised by the European ideas and knowledge. Instead he argues that reality of the nationalism in colonial states are quite different, in their anti-colonial struggle they divides the social institutions and

practice into two domains, one that of spiritual and other of material domain. In the material domain, nationalist fashions the 'modern' culture which is nevertheless not western but declares the domain of spiritual its sovereign territory, it is precisely in this spiritual domain, the imagination of the nationalist is at work. Chatterjee maintains that the conventional historians of nationalism missed this dynamics and simply begins their analyses of nationalism with the contest for political power (1984, 217-218).

### **Ethno-Symbolist Approach**

Amidst the polarised debate between the proponents of 'primordialist' and 'modernist' concerning the question 'when is nation?' ethno-symbolist approach emerged as a reconciliation between the two, a sort of 'middle way' to understand 'nation' and 'nationalism'. It concurs with 'modernist' that the nation is relatively a modern phenomena but argues that modern nation has an ethnic root in the pre-modern past. It also maintains that the difference between the pre-modern *ethnie* and modern nation is that of degree rather than of kind, while former is mostly heterogonous in culture and political loyalties diffused, later seeks cultural homogenisation and centralised political loyalty. Ethno-symbolist unlike modernist doesn't mainly focus on 'modernity' for its analyses of nationalism but instead focus on the 'historical identity' of modern nation, since according to this approach, the formation of modern nation should be examined in '*la longue duree*', which is the time dimension of many centuries (Armstrong 1982: 4). In the following pages, this paper will limit its analyses of this particular approach with the work of Anthony D. Smith for two varied reason, first, despite the fact that John Armstrong is popularly considered to be the father of this approach by laying down the ground work for the later developments, it was Smith's work which formulised and firmly established this approach as distinct from 'primordialist' and 'modernist' and the second reason is rather personal, since the present research is bound to certain time and space limitations, selective rejection of many authors are inevitable, moreover voluminous work of Smith covers most aspects of this approach and is no doubt one of the most important scholarly work in the field nationalism.



## Smith and Ethnic Origins of Nation

Undoubtedly one of the most important scholars of nationalism, whose immense contribution to the field not only as a thesis but also in his anti-thesis of various 'modernist' positions. For Smith the main task of 'ethno-symbolist' is to explore the cultural history of nation (2009: 30) thereby establishing the fact that modern nation has an ethnic and cultural antecedent. He argues that to avoid any sweeping generalisation, it is important to conceptually define various conflicting terms such as '*ethnie*', 'nation' and 'nationalism' thereby becoming one of the foremost theorist to deal with the issue in most systematic and through basis often to the point of becoming overly descriptive. For Smith nation is "a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myth and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (1991) thus national identity, he argues, is multi-dimensional and can never be reduced to a certain essential elements nor can be induced easily through elite 'inventions'. Smith later reworked his classic definition of nation to "a named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and custom"(2002: 15) thereby eliminating the 'mass' character of public culture, 'common economy' and finally changing 'legal rights and duties' into 'common laws and custom'. This reworked definition made 'nation' lesser of 'mass' phenomenon and still lesser state centric (Guibernau, 2004). Smith also defines nationalism as an "ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its member to constitute an actual or potential nation" thus for him, it is this ideological nature of nationalism that differentiate it from previously observed 'any' resistance to cultural or political 'other'. Smith maintains that in order to understand the formation of nation one must not only see the so called elite's 'invention of tradition' but also analyse how masses respond to those 'inventions', since the ethnic past acts as a constraint over the actions of present elite. This '*ethnie*' for Smith is a kind of cultural collectivity, whose members share common myth of origin, historical memories and one or more differentiating elements of common culture, shared association with specific homeland and some sense of solidarity within a significant sectors of population. With all the above definition, it is clear that for him only differences between the '*ethnie*' and 'nation' are that of degree rather than of kind. He

acknowledges that modernity eroded the traditional societies and substituted language and culture for the earlier ties of kinship and tribes (2009), he also acknowledges the fact that nation which is mass phenomena is more or less possible only in modern times but again insist that except for few nations such as Australia, U.S. etc, which does not have ethnic antecedent, most nations are constructed upon the fertile soil of ethnic past and it is because of this long association with modern nation, nationalism is able to generate so much of emotional response. Lastly for ethno-symbolist nationalism is mainly a cultural artefact, for whose understanding, cultural element such symbols, myths, memory, values, rituals and traditions plays crucial part. Nevertheless, Smith in his analysis of nationalism takes its' cultural aspects too seriously to the point that it conveniently ignores the political aspects of nationalism, the role of state in cultural homogenisation and specially the role of elite in political mobilisation. Moreover, Smith despite reworking of his classic definition of 'nation', nevertheless still remains state-centric, e.g. the attribute such as 'common laws and custom' he gives to nations ignores the possibilities of a nation without a state and multiple nations within a state.

### **Reworking Ethno-Symbolist Framework**

If there is anything one can clearly understand about the 'nation' from the above theoretical debate, it is the fact that no 'general' and 'objective' definition of 'nation' is possible, and the entire attempt to do so have hitherto been failed. It is again not to say that, we should leave the concept to be subjectively interpreted but to caution ourselves from any sweeping generalisation. In the following passage, the paper will outline the framework of its analyses of 'nation' and 'nationalism' with reference to Tibetan experience and in the end redefines these concepts to suit the particular Tibetan experience.

The paper's approach to understanding Tibetan 'nation' is based on ethno-symbolism, in a sense that it does not believe that 'nation' are an unintended results of modernisation (Gellner, 1983) or are the products of elite's 'invention' (Hobsbawm, 1983) nor does it believe that it is simply imagined (Anderson, 1983) out of blue in modern period without having any substantial root in ethnic past. Nations according to this paper though radically differs from the earlier pre-modern ethnic community, in-terms of its

demanding nature for homogeneity, conformity and political centralisation but nevertheless these differences remains in degree rather than of kind. In this analysis of nationalism, the paper undertakes the novel task of balancing between the key arguments of both 'modernist' and 'ethno-symbolist' and thereby creating a fusion of two to redefine 'nation' in a manner that suits the Tibetan experience. Nonetheless this analyses still 'falls' under the ethno-symbolic approach, since it shares the basic premises of ethno-symbolism, that is the key factor in understanding 'nation' is not its relation with modernisation but with its 'historical identity', especially in the case of colonial state where unlike European nations, modernity was not an outcome of 'gradual' (r)evolution but an abrupt imposition by their European colonialist. Similarly in Tibetan experience, nationalism didn't emerged out of or against the decline of religion's cognitive hold over its members(Anderson, 1983), but on the contrary common (Buddhist) religion amidst the communist Chinese colonisation united previously diffused Tibetan polity and became the central element in the Tibetan's imagining of itself as a distinctive nation. It must also be noted that people 'imagine' nation not just based on intra-group similarities but also based on inter-group differences, thus while imagining 'us' as a 'nation' they simultaneously imagine 'them' as constituting 'other 'nation', it is this 'interactional' and 'relational' nature of imagining 'nation' that is central to the understanding of nation-formation, especially under colonial condition. As Partha Chatterji points out that under-colonial condition, nationalist imaginations are posited not on identity but rather on differences with colonialist (Chatterji, 1991).

Another point of departure in our analyses of nationalism from that of Ethno-symbolic approach is the question of 'what is *'ethnie'*?' and 'how different it is from modern nation? Smith maintains that the *'ethnie'* is a cultural community and has following attributes such as 1-'collective name', 2- myth of common ancestry, 3- shared historical memories, 4-one or more differentiating elements of common culture, 5- association with specific 'homeland' and 6- some sense of 'solidarity' within a significant sector of the population (1991) but in pre-modern times, when social relations were based mostly on face-to-face interaction, the understanding of 'homeland' is cognitively limited and often associated with a certain locality, where one is born, for example almost all Tibetans in earlier times when they speak of their 'homeland' (*Phayul*), it is mostly

associated with particular region rather than the today's enlarged conception of 'homeland' constituting the whole 'Tibetan plateau', thus it is possible to argue that historically within ethnic Tibetans they were multiple homelands thus multiple (sub)communities. The ideas of single homeland for each ethnic group in traditional societies are too abstract and experientially unreal. Likewise the idea of necessary 'collective names' for '*ethnie*' in pre-modern period is also problematic, because most of the collective names of an '*ethnie*' such as 'Tibetan' are often externally defined (western academic) and has no equivalent indigenous term which could encompass the same population denoted by western usage. Thus within the ethnic Tibetan population, there is no one 'collective name' which encompasses the whole of its' ethnic populations. Lastly in his definition of '*ethnie*', Smith necessitate 'some sense of solidarity within a significant sector of population' to constitute an '*ethnie*', thereby implying a need for some sort of 'group-ness' in 'ethnic community', but again in traditional society the 'solidarity' and 'group-ness' is locally diffused based on individual's limited experience of 'others' thus the abstract collective cognition of a group beyond one's limited interaction is not possible. With abovementioned departure from the Smith's understanding of '*ethnie*', this paper choose to define the term in social anthropological sense, thus '*ethnie*' is a social organisation of cultural differences (Barth, 1969). It is not the sum total aggregate of the culture that defines ethnicity but a social organisation through self-ascription and ascription by others (ibid), sense of 'group-ness' though can be found in some ethnic communities but is not the necessary component of ethnicity (Jenkins, 2012). Ethnicity though a product of social construct but has nonetheless proven to be relatively quite stable to the point of being misperceived as 'natural' and 'pre-given', especially in times of inter-group conflict.

With the above conception of '*ethnie*' we move on to 'nation' and see to what 'degree' modern 'nation' differs from 'ethnic community'. Smith in his effort to clearly differentiate between '*ethnie*' and 'nation' gives us two attributes which 'nation' posses but not '*ethnie*', such as 'common economy' and 'common legal rights and duties'(1991) but with his later modification to the definition of 'nation', he leaves out 'common economy' as the criteria for 'nation' and also changes 'common legal rights and duties' to 'common law and custom'(2002), this leaves us with an understanding that only difference between

'*ethnie*' and 'nation' is the absence or the presence of 'common law and custom' which is too simplistic and historically inaccurate. The essentialisation of 'common law and customs' is state-centric at best and uselessly ambiguous at worst. In Tibetan case, the presence of common law and custom can be seen at least since 8th century if not before, likewise most of the ancient religious community does have a relatively homogenous religious law and custom e.g. Jews. For modern 'nation' are not mere ('*ethnie*' + 'common law and custom') nor is '*ethnie*' mere ('nation' - 'common law and custom'). Unlike '*ethnie*', modern 'nation' despise cultural heterogeneity and is essentially seeking centralisation of political power (independence or political autonomy). It also demand supreme loyalty to the 'nation' from its subject at the expense of all other identity, thus even though we maintain that nations have ethnic roots and the differences are in degree rather than of kind but these differences are often radical to the point being mistaken as 'new' or 'invented'.

### **Defining 'Nation' and 'Nationalism' with Reference to Tibetan Experience**

Before moving on to next chapter, in the following passage this paper will clarify what it mean by the term 'nationalism' and 'nation', and their conceptual and periodic differences. By slightly modifying Guibernau's (2004) definition of nation, it defines nation as 'named human group, conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a particular territory, common history and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself'. This 'nation' is essentially a mass phenomenon and unless substantial number of masses identify with it, nation cannot be said to have existed and whereas nationalism is concerned we define it as 'a political ideology that presupposes the existence of nation and its right to self-determination, it also maintains that national identity supersedes all other individual's identity and the loyalty to nation is the supreme duty of every national members'. With this working definition of 'nation' and 'nationalism' it can be argued that nation since is a mass phenomenon is historically only possible in modern times with emergence of mass literacy and mass politics. These modern nations are mostly constructed or reconstructed over the fertile soil of ethnic past whereas on the other hand 'nationalism' is an ideology conceived first in the minds of literary elite, which through increasing politicisations and campaigns induces masses to

join and reshape the national goal thus nationalism invents nation with or without state. Thus adding to the debate of 'when is nation?' one can possibly argue that nationalism as an ideology existed since medieval period in the minds of the elite literate class but only with the emergence of industrial development, through increasing mobility and mass media, nationalist were able to create 'nation' in modern times.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **China's Tibet: History of Modern Day 'Tibet Question'**

This Chapter attempts to set the grounding work for the overall understanding of Sino-Tibetan conflict. It does so by first outlining both the Modern PRC's claim over Tibet as well as the Tibetans claim to independence. These modern claims are juxtaposed against the traditional understanding of the Sino-Tibetan relations in their respective historiographies and it is through such process we come to the understanding that the modern Chinese claims of 'Tibet's integrity' and nationalist Tibetan's claim of 'complete independence' are the product of imposed modern European knowledge system of statehood and sovereignty. Moreover in this chapter, we attempt to contextualise the overall Sino-Tibetan relations within the larger inner-Asian power struggle, Manchu and Mongols being the crucial factor necessitating Sino-Tibetans closer relationship. It also attempts to understand the internal and external factor that necessitated Tibetan's closer relationship or reliance upon the external armies, mainly that of Chinese. The crucial task of differentiating Chinese, which is Han, from the other ethnic minorities that ruled over both China and Tibet is also undertaken in this chapter thus underlining the problems of Chinese historical claim over Tibet based on both Mongol's or Manchu's domination over Tibet. This chapter also outlines the history of communist dealings with Tibetans, starting with their promises of self-determinations for "national minorities" to their modernist violent incorporation of Tibet within the camouflage of Chinese nation-state. Contrary to the Chinese Communist claim of proletarian rule, this chapter highlights the history elite Tibetan cooperation with the Chinese colonisers and how the Tibetan masses were pursued only after the failure of elite co-option. It also outlines the overall history of PRC's rule over Tibet and how with the change in centre, which is Beijing, the policies in Tibetan areas also undergo substantial changes. On the whole, we attempt to provide a critical history of modern day 'Tibet question', which would serve as a grounding work for later part of this dissertation.

## **Introduction**

Following Carr's dictum on history in his seminal work 'what is history?' (1961), we have now come to see history not as an unmitigated objective recording of past but more as an account of historians' interaction with their facts, often mitigated by his/her present socio-political predispositions. The 'facts' only speak when the historian calls on them, it is the historian who decides what facts are to be taken into account when discussing particular time and context thus raising another fundamental question regarding the possibility of history-writing being free of any ideological predisposition. This insight is particularly more relevant in understanding the historiography of Sino-Tibetan relations, where the knowledge of past is highly contested and deeply intertwined in the politics of present. Both Chinese and Tibetan side claims the possession of ultimate 'truth', which in effect legitimises their current political discourse thus making the terrain of historical past highly politicised. Such politicisation of past has according to Tibetan historian Tsering Shakya, led to process of negating past responsibilities and denying any complexities to intrude in both party's claim over their version Tibetan past, this process is aptly called the 'denial of history' (Shakya, 1999).

The initial People's Republic of China's claim for its legitimate rule over Tibet is based on two premises, one based on the idea of 'liberation' of Tibetan masses from their oppressive feudal lord and second based on the historical claims of Tibet being an integral part of China since 13th century. It is the later that will be engaged in this section of the chapter but before moving further ahead, it should point out some of the general trends in the historiography of Sino-Tibetan relations. Evidently both sides sees their past from two different vintage point depending of their present political disposition, for example; Tibetan side when writing on Sino-Tibetan relations of early empire (7-9th century) period focuses more on the history of conflicts and the subsequent political treaties between the two empire which in effect establishes or reaffirms their present claims to separate statehood (see Shakabpa, 1967; Richardson, 1984), while on the other side, (semi)official Chinese historiography underlines the of cultural exchanges and matrimonial 'alliances' between the two empires, especially emphasising on Chinese 'civilising' influence on Tibetan culture and state-craft (See Wang, Gyaincain, 1997).



Such selective overvaluation and devaluation of the particular aspects of their historical past has become an integral part of history writing on Tibet today. The historical complexities of Sino-Tibetan relations were increasingly simplified and the historical status of Tibet was presented either as 'completely independent' or 'integral part of China'. This ideologically infused dichotomisation of Tibetan past led to the creation of two highly polarised knowledge systems on Tibet, both in extreme contradiction with each other. Chinese side claims that Tibet before its 'unification' with the 'motherland' was 'dark feudal' and 'slave owning society' ruled by degraded 'Lamaist' government where everyone except for few feudal lord were 'suffering' and 'unhappy'. On the other side of the polemics, the exile Tibetan government presents an image of Tibet, which prior to Chinese 'invasion' was 'peaceful', 'apolitical' and 'extremely religious' society ruled by an enlightened 'Bodhisattva', where everyone from rich to poor were 'contented' and 'happy'. Such polemical rewriting of the Sino-Tibetan historical past only serves to obfuscate realities and in many ways exacerbate the conflict along the extreme ideological lines. In the following section, this paper will briefly outline the essence of China's historical claim over Tibet and will endeavour to de-ideologise the claimed history and instead reinstate the past in its proper historical context, in other words, historicising the history of Sino-Tibetan relations.

### **China's Tibet**

The earliest recorded Sino-Tibetan contacts were in 7th century during the reign of Tibetan King *Songtsen Gampo*, who after uniting the Tibetan tribes formed a *Tubo* Kingdom. His marriage with the Tang China's princess *Wencheng* is today eulogised by Chinese historians as symbolising the dawn of closer cultural, economical and political ties between the two nations (Wang, Gyaincain, 1997). Tibetans, according to these same historians, were perpetually on the receiving end of the Chinese civilisational fruits, absorbing from the 'art of agricultural' know-how to 'medicinal', 'state-craft' and 'Buddhist doctrinal knowledge' and in return reciprocating merely with the mundane knowledge of 'make-up' and 'ball-games'(ibid). Such modern Chinese narrative of 'asymmetrical' cultural exchange with Tibet creates sense of psychological superiority among Chinese populace vis-à-vis Tibetans and in effect constructing a discourse of

perennial China's civilising influence over barbarian-Tibetans. Nevertheless, despite all these subordinate and dependency positional insinuation, Chinese historiography today maintains that Tibet during the period was an independent state (ibid). However it is to be noted that, Sino-Tibetan relation during the empire period was far more complex than a mere civilisational transmission from a superior to subordinate state, let alone a relationship that could be characterised by the Confucius idiom of 'harmonious co-existence'. For over two centuries of Sino-Tibetan contact (617-842), there were some 15 conflicts between the two empires, mostly initiated by Tibetans and each subsequent battle fought within the interior space of then Chinese empire (Norbu, 2001). The *Tubo* Kingdom, as it was known to Tang China, was clearly a power to be reckoned with and was a major source of anxiety for Chinese empire. On one such occasion in 763, Tibetan forces invaded Xian, then capital of Tang China, after its failure to send a regular tribute mission to Tibetan court (Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013). Tibetan kings were referred by Chinese either by their Tibetan title or in unofficial writings with the Chinese term meaning 'emperor' (Beckwith, 1993).

Post-empire period, it is claimed that the eastern part of Tibet, fell under the influence of Chinese empire (Wang, Gyaincain, 1997) but however in post-Tang period, there was no singular centralised China for at least until 979, which in effect discredit the claimed 'China's' domination over eastern Tibetan region. Moreover despite lack of historical clarity over the concerned period, the information available suggest that the eastern part of Tibet were in effect linked with Song China under some kind of military alliance against the impending *Xixia* empire's (1038-1227) military threat to Song China. So the Song China's strategy of 'using barbarians to fight barbarians' got translated into Song's arming of eastern Tibetan warriors against the *Xixia* empire, such strategic nature of military alliances could hardly be subsumed under the modern political idiom of 'sovereign' and 'subject' (Norbu, 2001).

Present Chinese regime maintains that (central) Tibet since Yuan dynasty has been an integral part of China and since then throughout its history, Tibet has never been an independent state (White paper, 1992; Wang, Gyaincain, 1997). However it must be noted that these historical claims are themselves historically inconsistent and were

subject to frequent rewriting or reformulation. The first ever language of ‘integral part’ for Tibet was formulated by Republic of China in 1914 ‘Simla convention’ but during the period, Tibet was claimed to be a dominion of Qing Empire not a part of China (Sperling, 2004). Manchus throughout its dynastic period maintained a clear mark of distinction between their rule over China and other dominion states such as Mongolia, Tibet and Manchuria (ibid). In fact, the jurisdiction over these non-Chinese dominion states were exercised through the Qing’s imperial office called ‘*Lifanyuan*’, commonly translated as ‘court of colonial affair’ (ibid). Likewise the rationale behind the claims of the legitimacy for present China’s rule over Tibet based on the history of Yuan’s imperial domination is extremely problematic. The reason being the fact that Yuan was essentially a Mongolian empire and it is the later which incorporated Tibet under its imperial domination in 1206, almost seven decade prior to the establishment of Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) in China. Moreover in the official Chinese historiography of Yuan period, where the geographic range of the Chinese state is clearly delineated in the chapter on geography (*dilizhi*), Tibet is simply not found in those official writings thus alluding to the fact that the constitutive elements of Yuan empire was not integral to being a part of China and these facts during the period were well understood by the parties concerned (Sperling, 2004).

Ming dynasty (1368-1644), it is claimed, had continued Yuan’s ‘emperor-minister’ relationship with the religious leaders of Tibet, who were thus required to embark upon a tributary mission to the emperor’s court as a mark of their submission to ‘son of heaven’ (Wang, Gyaincain, 1997). In return, the Ming court would confer upon a title and lavish gifts to those submitting Tibetan lamas as mark of emperor’s limitless benevolence. Moreover Chinese historian today claims that the Ming’s continued to rule over Tibet essentially through its administrative office of Tibetan affair called ‘*Hezhou*’ later divided into two regional branches of military commission; *U-Tsang* and *Dokham* (Sperling, 2004) but what is conveniently left out in this official historiography is the fact that the both imperial office of Tibetan affairs were situated around the border area of Tibetan territory, one in *Hezhou* and other in *Xining* with no actual political influence in Tibetan area. Furthermore Chinese official, *Wei Zheng*, who is technically supposed to be the most powerful person in Tibet, is virtually unknown to the Tibetan historical literature (ibid). Secondly regarding the Chinese claims of Tibetan lama’s submission to Ming’s

court through tribute payment, must be understood from multi-dimensional perspectives. From the Ming China's perspective, it is possible that tribute payment by Tibetan lamas were seen as a mark of symbolic submission to 'son of heaven', especially considering Ming's Confucius ideocratic centrism but for Tibetan lamas, it was essentially a lucrative commercial transaction, an easy source of personal prestige earned through imperial titles or possibly a window of opportunity for their religious propagation. Moreover it must be also understood that during the period, no religious leader ruled over the Tibetan area claiming their mandate from Ming China, in fact it was the security imperatives of Ming China from the retracted Buddhist Mongolian of Yuan Empire that necessitated the Confucianised Ming-China's closer relations with Tibetan Buddhist Lamas (Norbu, 2001). Tibetan Buddhism throughout the period enjoyed a great imperial patronage. Finally, the great American sinologist J.K. Fairbank, while studying the administrative division of Ming China noted 15 provincial divisions, none of which included even the eastern most part of Tibet (ibid).

Manchu dynasty (1644-1912) of China, also known as Qing dynasty, after ascending to the throne was 'preoccupied' with the residual Mongolian forces, which were yet to submit to the new imperial power (Wang, Gyaincain, 1997). Manchu Emperor thereafter sent an invitation to 5th Dalai Lama who by now had already consolidated its power in Tibet; this invitation and acceptance of the same thereafter was essentially to revive the memory *Kublai-Phagpa* relation, which has by then became a supreme model of religio-political alliance. The great 5th of Tibet in 1652 embarked upon a journey to the eastern empire of China and upon arriving at the *Amdo* region of eastern Tibet, he sent a message to the Manchu Emperor to meet him at the border, Manchus were evidently willing to comply by but the Chinese official found such unprecedented concession to the official protocol of the middle kingdom unimaginable thus the emperor was persuaded to instead send one of his Princes to the border, citing issues of 'Bandits' and 'affairs of State' (Smith, 1997; Karmay, 1998a). Upon arriving at the Peking's court, 5th Dalai Lama was given a grand reception, unprecedented not only for any 'barbarians' (Smith, 1997) but also for Confucius monarch of eastern Asia, such as Korea, Japan and Vietnam (Norbu, 2001: 4). Emperor descended from the throne and walked for 30 feet to receive the 5th Dalai Lama, who was in turn not required to *kowtow*

before the 'son of heaven' (Smith, 1997; Karmay, 1998a; Norbu, 2001). In Peking he sat on the throne besides that of Emperor's, which was slightly higher than that of his own, thus the nature of relationship between the great 5th and the Manchu emperor was characterised by the cultural idioms of 'symbolic subordination' with 'mutual respect' (Norbu, 2001). The official Chinese historians under their current ideological imperatives, selectively revisits the past and memorialises the only events, which doesn't contradicts the state canonised and sanctified 'truth' on Tibet. Thus it is claimed that 5th Dalai Lama at the imperial court was granted gifts, titles and imperial 'golden seal & golden certificates' along with a 'rousing welcome' (Wang, Gyaincain, 1997), whereas in reality, the granting of title was not solely the imperial prerogative but the 5th Dalai Lama also exchanged gifts and titles, moreover the imperial seal and certificate were not given at any official ceremony but were hastily sent to him from Peking upon his return to Tibet in 1653 (Karmay, 1998a).

The official Qing domination over Tibet was established in 1710 by then Tibet's de-facto Mongolian ruler *Lhazang Khan*, who in return for military support and the position of governorship by Qing emperor submitted to its overlordship. In 1725, Tibetan areas under the Qing domination was 'reorganised' and the area west of *Mekong* and *Yangtze* were left to be administered by the Lhasa government and the remaining eastward Tibetan areas to be administered by native chieftains under the supervision of Governor of Sichuan and Qinghai (Smith, 1997). Qing instituted a series of administrative reforms in Tibet from 1751, thereby gradually transforming the traditional political structure into semi-bureaucratic system. The Qing's political domination over Tibet reached its zenith in post-Gurkha war of 1791, when Qing had to militarily intervene against the invading Gurkha forces and thereafter it imposed upon Tibetans an institutional mechanism of 'lot system' through the use of 'Golden Urn' to select both the future Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, not surprisingly only the selective few of the reforms were fully implemented and many gradually went in disuse with time lapse (Petech, 1972; Smith, 1997). Tibet by late 18th century was undoubtedly under domination of Qing empire (Sperling, 2004) but such domination was characterised not by the direct incorporation of Tibet under Qing's Chinese dominion, instead as illustrated before, Tibet and other dominion states of Qing such as Mongolia and Manchuria were

separately administered from China proper (Norbu, 2001). Luciano Petech, a prominent Italian scholar on Sino-Tibetan relation in 18th century described Tibet as a ‘protectorate’ state of Qing Empire (Petech, 1972), a modern legalistic term which even in contemporary usage doesn’t connote the loss of sovereign-hood (Barnett, 2010), furthermore according to Norbu, there is a scholarly consensus over the Tibet’s status as a “separate country” in concrete territorial and administrative sense (Norbu, 2001).

### **Tibetan’s Narrative of Sino-Tibetan Relation**

Tibetan government’s official documents before 20th century has always consistently used the term ‘*Chos-yon*’ (priest-patron) to characterise their relationship with China, these same documents today remain sealed and inaccessible to foreign and local inspection (Barnett, 2010). Such historical facts may not reveal much about the actual nature of Sino-Tibetan relations in history but nevertheless it ‘partially’ alludes to point that from the Tibetan government’s perspective, they saw their relationship with China within the paradigm of ‘priest-patron relationship’. I use the term ‘partial’ because, it is not implausible that similar to the Chinese official historian’s (mis)interpretation of the events from their ‘middle-kingdom’ ideological imperatives, Tibetan government could also plausibly interpret the political history from the religious idioms of ‘priest-patron’ relationship, intentionally downplaying the political subordination under the rhetoric’s of spiritual super-ordination. While such mode of interpretation may seem an exercise of excessive cynicism, nevertheless there seems to have some plausibility to the above line of reasoning especially when juxtaposing the actuality of Sino-Tibetan relations in 18th century with the rhetorical claims of Tibetans, over-emphasising on the spiritual nature of relationship at the complete expense of political one. Tibet throughout the 18th century until the mid 19th century was undoubtedly under the political domination of Qing China, who exercised their authority through the various institutional and administrative mechanism installed by the Manchu Emperor (See Petech, 1972; Norbu, 2001). Nevertheless by mid 19th century, Qing’s authority in Tibet has been significantly lost, illustrated by the event of *Nyarong*’s war in 1860s when the Chief of *Nyarong*, *Gompo Namgyal*, sought to expand its territorial space into the *Derge* region of *Kham*, even though both regions were technically under the Chinese control (*Gya-de*),

Lhasa government on the request of *Derge's* chief resolved to militarily intervene and finally defeated the *Nyarong's* force (See Hartley, 2013). Qing China during the time were recovering from the devastation caused by the series of two Opium wars waged against the Western imperialist power, thus throughout the two centuries that followed, Qing emperor exercised little to no authority over the major parts of Tibet. It is also be noted that, despite the loss of *Amdo* and *Kham* region of the eastern part of Tibet to the nominal authority of Qing China in early 18th century, Tibetan government in Lhasa never renounced its claim over the whole of Tibet. The eastern ward border of the Central Tibet with the Chinese 'controlled' Tibetan areas of *Kham* and *Amdo* was officially referred to as a ceasefire line (*Mag-tsam*) rather than border (*San-tsam*). Such claims were essentially based on the memory of Tibetan polity under the Empire period, from where almost every subsequent ruler of Tibet drew their political legitimacy.

### **Contextualizing History**

The above historical relations between China and Tibet needs to be understood within the larger socio-political background of the two interacting actors, then only this paper argues, we can understand 'why a particular actor acted in particular ways', in other word, in order to make a sense out of history, we must move beyond outlining 'what a particular actors did on a particular occasion' but instead look underneath those outward appearance and try to see 'under what circumstances did a particular actor acted in particular way', that is seeing actor's acting as product of their socio-political condition. In the following section we will briefly outline some of the key factors involved in producing the history that we have witnessed earlier.

Buddhism plays an essential role in Sino-Tibetan relation, during the Yuan period; the Tibetan Lamas were made '*Tishih*' (imperial preceptor) at the Yuan court, who exercised a tremendous influence over the Mongol Emperor. In fact *Kublai Khan*, the founder of Yuan dynasty was himself initiated into Tibetan Buddhism by *Phagpa* of *Sakya* sect and it is this spiritual connection that resulted into the administration of Tibet being completely left in the hands of Tibetans (See Kapstein, 2006; Norbu, 2001). Throughout the Yuan period, central Tibet was separately administered by the office called '*Ponchen*' in *Sakya* state, whose Chief administrator was generally nominated or

recommended by '*Tishih*' and subsequently approved and appointed by the Emperor himself (Norbu, 2001). Moreover the founder of both Ming and Manchu dynasties were Buddhist themselves and despite Ming's 're-confucianisation' effort in China, Buddhism continued to play a crucial role in Ming's relationship with its western barbarians; Mongols and Tibetans. The retracted remnant Mongol force continued to cause a major security concern for Ming's rule in China, thus the configuration of Buddhism in Confucius China's relationship with its western barbarians was essentially a strategic response from the Chinese side to pacify and neutralise the impending Mongolian forces. Manchu's were no different, they seems to hold a similar security concern from the Mongolian tribes, though later by now was already a declining power in the region and was no more in the position to cause an existential threat to the Manchu empire. Moreover, the pre-dynastic Manchus were initiated into *Sakya* sect of Tibetan Buddhism and in 1615, the 4th Dalai Lama granted a title '*Manjushri*; to then Manchu ruler *Nurhachi* (Norbu, 2001; Smith, 1997). It is from this title that the word '*Manchuria*' derived and all the subsequent Manchu emperors were known to Tibetans as the emanation of *Manjushri*. Furthermore, Tibetan Buddhist Lamas, as argued by Norbu, "not only gave a transcendental objectives and spiritual meaning to an otherwise objectless imperialism but also sacralised and legitimated the Mongol & Manchu warrior within Buddhist conception of 'universal ruler', a '*Cakravartin*' or a '*Dharmaraja*' (Norbu, 2001)." It also provided the Emperor with the "supernatural protection" and "transcendental power".

Second critical factor in understanding the Sino-Tibetan relation within its proper context is to understand the internal political structure of the Tibetan state and the nature of power relation between the two. In post empire period, Tibet never regained its military might and the warrior nation was tamed by spiritual force of Buddhism. Another important changes that configured in the Tibetan political structure was the introduction of the idea of 'Bodhisattva King', where unlike in Western state, both the spiritual and the temporal authority is vested in the person singular being, believed to be the emanation of *Avaloketesvara*, a Bodhisattva and a patron saint of Tibet (See chapter 2). Such configuration of both the temporal and the spiritual authority in the form of one being was conceptually anathematic to idea of state based on organised forces, thus Tibet in



effect cease to be a 'state' in Weberian sense and was mainly characterised by non-coercive, decentralised state (Norbu, 2001). This decentralised non-coercive state system increased Tibet's both internal and external vulnerabilities and under the backdrop of such inherent vulnerabilities, that the increasing configuration of external forces in Tibet's political landscape is to be understood. It must be noted that almost all external intervention in Tibet's political landscapes are the results of request initiated by Tibetan themselves, sectarian rivalry being a major factor that necessitated the support of an external power to resolve the impasse, often initiated under the rubric of 'priest-patronship'. Most importantly Buddhist Tibet's conception of sovereignty was essentially non-political and mainly ideological in nature; it tolerated indirect external interference in the political sphere as long as this interference doesn't threaten the core Buddhist belief system (ibid).

In conclusion it is the inherent non-coercive nature of the Tibetan state and its accompanying political vulnerabilities from both within and without that created for Tibet a 'dependency situation', which continued to exacerbate along the increasing state vulnerabilities, requiring frequent assistance from the dynasties in China. With every military 'assistance', there was unacknowledged political string attached, eventually leading to the complete loss of autonomy of the Tibetan state in the immediate aftermath of 1791 Gurkha war. It must be remembered that Qing China's early domination over Tibet in early 18th century began with Mongol's intervention in Tibetan affair in post 5th Dalai Lama period and later fully consolidated in the immediate aftermath of Gurkha's invasion of Tibet in 1791. In both cases it was Tibetans due to their military weakness initiated the request for Qing China's military intervention (See, Shakabpa, 1967; Kapstein, 2006 & Smith, 1997). However when the Qing Emperor, for reasons of its own increasing vulnerabilities against the Western imperialist powers, were unable to provide any military assistance to Tibet during the Tibet-*Dogra* war (1841-42), 3rd Tibet-Gurkha war (1855-56) and Anglo-Tibetan war (1888 & 1903-04), Tibetans understanding the relative change of asymmetrical power relation with China in its favour, sought to reassert their independence from the Qing' authority. Especially in late 19th century when Qing engaged in series of negotiation with British concerning latter's entry into Tibet, all the subsequent Anglo-Chinese negotiations (1876, 1890, 1893 and later 1906)

concerning Tibet but essentially bypassing the Tibetan authorities were simply repudiated by Tibetans as illegitimate and amidst such situation of external legitimacy crisis, Tibet once again reasserted the idea of pure 'priest-patron' relationship between Tibet and China<sup>2</sup>.

### **The Dawn of West in Sino-Tibetan Equilibrium**

Marxist historiography in China today claims that it was with the advent of British imperialism in Tibet from late 19th to early 20th century that the idea of 'independence' was sown into minds of anti-national elements in Tibet, who under British instigation sought to separate Tibet from the 'motherland' (Wang, Gyaincain, 1997). It is also being claimed that despite British imperialist design in Tibet along with the pro-British Tibetan elements such as *Tsarong* and *Taktra*, the patriotic elements in Tibet led by Panchen and *Reting* continued to strife for unification of Tibet with the 'motherland' (ibid). Such polemical rhetoric of 'patriotizing' Panchen and Reting along with the demonization of *Tsarong* and *Taktra* have become a necessary part of China's history writing today.

However the genesis of the modern day Sino-Tibetan problems dates back little earlier to the mid 19th century, when the Qing China's Confucius ideocracy was increasingly challenged by 'Western barbarians' through their military supremacy and the imposition of various 'unequal treaties' starting from Nanking treaty in post Opium war of 1842 (Fairbank and Goldman, 2006). This marked the beginning of what would later be characterised as the 'century of humiliation', during which China was time and again humiliatingly defeated by the Western imperialist powers along with Japan, once China's tributary state. The territory of China by late 19th century was literally carved out into various western spheres of influence; island of Hong Kong was ceded to British, island of Taiwan (Formosa) to Japan, several areas were leased: Lushun and Liaodong Peninsula (Russia), Qingdao (Germany), Guangzhou Wan (French) and Kowloon new territories and *Weihai* to British (ibid). Such humiliating military defeats were accompanied and reinforced by completely alien European ideological forces along with the highly

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<sup>2</sup> See 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's Independence proclamation in 1913 (Shakabpa, 1967)

advanced technological development. While the histories of foreign dominations over China are not new phenomena; both Yuan and Manchu were essentially a foreign dynasty ruling over China (and they were seen as such by Chinese of the period), but the history of Western imperialism in China had a completely norm changing effect in course of Chinese history. Unlike the northern Mongolian and Manchu barbarians, who despite their alien rule nevertheless ruled China in Chinese way, which is by essentially embracing the Confucius ideocracy and becoming for themselves the 'son of heaven' (*Tianzi*). Western powers instead resolved to deal with China through the European political culture, which is within the framework of 'nation-state'. This European knowledge system of international relation was an alien anathema for Confucius envisaged 'universal common wealth' system (See Hsu, 1960), where 'inter-state' relations are not among 'equals' but are characterised by the language of hierarchical 'civilised-barbarian' cultural idioms. In a Sino-centric Confucius ideocratic system, 'International Relations' (IR) were essentially different from the Western/European IR and is based primarily on the symbolic and ritualistic subordination (Hsu, 1960; Norbu, 2001), where the lesser powerful states in return for their symbolic submission through the payment of tribute to the Emperor, were given a sort of 'diplomatic recognition' and 'representation' to act in the Sino-centric Confucius international system. The rationale system behind these 'symbolic subordination' and 'diplomatic recognitions' were the Confucius universalising idea of '*Zhongguo*', the Middle Kingdom, believed to be the centre of the world ruled by a dynasties in China that has gain 'mandate from heaven' to rule 'all under heaven' (Fairbank and Goldman, 2006). Such ideocracy was cultural specific and thus were shared only by those East Asian states with common Confucius culture (Norbu, 2001). Outside the Confucius cultural domain, especially in the north-western Buddhist and Islamic states, the emphasis on 'all under heaven' stops and the foreign relation begins, based on the idea of 'harmonious kinship' through matrimonial and other form of alliances thus effectively transforming the foreign hostile forces into 'brotherly states'(ibid). Once again from the 'son of heaven's' perspective, the Sino-centric IR, which is characterised by tribute payment is essentially 'prestige-value driven' rather than that of 'exploitative economic orientation', since the tributary system was often an economically loss venture for China (Hsu, 1960). On contrary it is precisely for

this reason of economic gain that the other non-Confucius entities, such as Tibetan lamas participate in the said 'tributary international system', Emperor's recognition often also entails a source of prestige and political support for the Lamas respective school.

### **Introduction to European Knowledge System**

Foreign relations of China until mid 19th century was characterised by the absence of modern notion of 'equal nation-states' but instead was imbedded with the political culture of hierarchy and symbolic submission. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that until around the late 19th century, the 'foreign relations' of China were done through the office of 'State Ceremonies & Emissary Affairs' (Zhou period), 'Commissioner of Guests' (Qin period) and 'Board of Ceremonies' & 'Court of Colonial affairs' during the Qing period (Hsu, 1960). There was no 'Foreign Office' in China and the Western demands for diplomatic resistance in Peking were fervently opposed, instead Qing Emperor in the face of increasing Western intrusion continued to appoint 'Imperial Commissioner' to deal with the 'foreign powers', which later became institutionalised as 'Canton viceroy system' (Hsu, 1960; Fairbank & Goldman, 2006). Nevertheless among the members of Qing's court there was now an increasing understanding for the objective need to introduce the knowledge of western technology and state craft in China, this realisation of 'objective condition' was not through the 'gradual evolution' of Chinese state but was the result of Western imposition through the barrels of gun. This led to the introduction of first Chinese translation of Wheaton's International Law by an American missionary W.A.P. Martin in 1864; he was subsequently appointed as professor of International Law at Imperial University and simultaneously worked as a legal advisor of Chinese officials in dealing with European powers (Hsu, 1960). Such gradual embracing of particular European knowledge system of 'International Relations' and 'Statehood' transformed China from the Confucius universalising empire into a particular member of the family of Chinese 'nation-state'.

### **'Culturalism' to 'Nationalism'**

Traditional Confucius China was characterised by the absence of 'national sentiment' (see Hsu, 1960) and the prime marker of we/they differentiation was along the

Confucius acculturation understood through the cultural idioms of ‘civilised-barbarian’ distinction. Any one, who adopts Confucius culture was said to have become ‘Chinese’, thus the conceptualisation of ‘Chinese-ness’ was culturally imbued. Nevertheless, amidst growing Western encroachment upon China and the perceived weakness of Qing dynasty, the popular resentment among the Chinese against alien ‘Manchu’ rule grew. These popular sentiments were reinvigorated through the elite mobilisation of masses along the ‘*Minzu*’ (nationality) line, a derivative concept of Japanese ‘*Minzoku*’, imported essentially to articulate anti-Manchu stance (Mullaney, 2011). The gradual change in the conceptualisation of ‘Chinese-ness’ from ‘shared culture’ to ‘shared ethnicity’ resulted into the dispossession of Manchus from their claimed ‘Chinese-ness’, this along with the rise of ethno-nationalism delegitimises Manchus rule over China. *Sun Yat Sen* and *Yeung Ku-wan* were amongst the leaders, who most vociferously articulated the need to overthrow the alien Manchus domination off Chinese nation (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006). The overthrow of alien Manchu rule along with European imperialist power became the prime target of new Chinese nationalist discourse; this nationalism was also accompanied with the widespread acknowledgement for the need of (external) modernisation. This duo ideological drive for ‘modernisation’ and ‘nationalisation’ has produced a new Chinese modern nation-state, which in its process of overthrowing the colonial yoke has embraced the very knowledge system of post-enlightenment Europe that it sought to repudiate at the very outset (see Chatterjee, 1989). It is this Europeanisation of traditional Chinese’ conception of ‘statehood’ and ‘sovereignty’ in particular and ‘knowledge system’ in general that has produced the modern day ‘Tibetan question’ (see Dibyesh, 2009). The Tibet issue today is primarily the product of superimposing modern nation-state’s absolute sovereignty framework over pre-modern imperial relations of ‘symbolic dominations’. Such Western imperial de-legitimation of non-European interstate relations reduces the ‘Tibet question’ within the binary framework of either ‘complete independence’ or ‘an integral part of China’ (Norbu, 2001). It must be again remembered that, pre-20th century China never claimed Tibet as an ‘integral’ part of it, essentially because the modern conception of ‘sovereignty’ and ‘statehood’ was alien to the Sino-Tibetan relations (Sperling, 2004). In fact it was only with the dawn of imperial British in the Sino-Tibetan equilibrium, that the articulation of

‘traditional’ Sino-Tibetan relation into a ‘modern’ European vocabulary of ‘sovereignty’ or ‘suzerainty’ was necessitated. Unlike Korea, Vietnam and others, Tibet through its isolationist policy again due to the impending European imperialism at its Himalayan border and monastic conservatism towards modernisation, failed to graduate from the status of ‘symbolic subordination’ to ‘independent state’(Norbu, 2001). In conclusion it was the Chinese transition from ‘culturalism’ to ‘nationalism’ that essentially eliminated the space for traditional modes of political interactions where inter-state relations did not operate alongside the modern conception of hard boundaries. Thus, the ‘territorialisation’ and the ‘nationalisation’ of the Qing Empire into the camouflage of modern Chinese ‘nation-state’, operating along the permanent hard boundaries and absolutist European conception of sovereignty felicitated the victimisation of Tibetan people and construction of modern day ‘Tibet question’ (Norbu, 2001; Dibyesh, 2007, MacGrahaman, 2010).

### **Modern China and the ‘Liberation’ of Tibet**

In late 19th century, imperial British in search for new trading market sought to gain excess inside Tibet through its dealing with Qing Empire but the news of British imperialism, in cis-himalayan area through foreign merchants and traders in Tibet, has made Lhasa authority close its border (Norbu, 2001). However the following ‘isolationist policy’ of Tibet was European specific, since Tibet throughout the period remained open for its Asian neighbours (ibid). British initial attempts to enter into Tibet through series of treaties signed with Qing China was immediately repudiated by Tibetans as illegitimate thus after the repeated failure to gain indirect excess into Tibet, British resolved to contact directly with the Tibetan authorities but again without any positive avail. Finally in 1903-04 British invaded Tibet and consequently brought Tibet from remoteness to centre of the ‘great game’ (Goldstein, 1989). In the aftermath of the event, despite London’s repudiation of the expedition and promptly renegotiating with China the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1906, where British reaffirmed their commitment to Chinese position on Tibet (ibid). Nevertheless British invasion of Tibet has created a future security concerns for the leadership in China thereby precipitating a new activist and annexationist Chinese policy in Tibet (Goldstein, 1989; Smith; 1997; Norbu, 2001). For the first time in the history of Sino-Tibetan relations, imperial China sent its military

force (uninvited) under the command of *Zhao Erfeng* to incorporate Tibet under the direct administration of China. This led to the series of Tibetan uprising initially in *Amdo* and *Kham* part of eastern Tibet (see Samuel, 1993) and thereafter with the news outbreak of Chinese revolution, Tibetan in central Tibet revolted against the Manchu's rule. The 13th Dalai Lama, who then was in exile in India, has subsequently returned back to Lhasa and proclaimed Tibet's independence (Shakabpa, 1967; Smith 1997; Goldstein, 1989). The new government of Republic of China has adopted the modernist secular outlook of western nation-state thereby secularising their policies vis-à-vis Tibet but such secularisation of inherently religio-political relation has produced the historic rupture in Sino-Tibetan relations (Tuttle, 2010). Nevertheless the new government in China along the modernist European ideology embarked on citizenising (*goumin*) the earlier barbarian (*fan*) 'subjects' of Qing Empire. China during the republican era had indirect nominal control over eastern parts of Tibet and the central Tibet was effectively independent of any Chinese influences. The polemical rhetoric of China's Tibet continued alongside the Lhasa's claim to whole of Tibet, this polemical battle was reinforced by the real battles and negotiations on the ground, essentially seeking to settle the international status of Tibet (see Goldstein, 1989; McGranahan 2003). In the immediate aftermath of the 13th Dalai Lama's death, there was a substantial 'breakthrough' in the relationship, at least from Chinese point of view, since for the first time in last two decades Chinese were able to establish their presence in central Tibet, under the guise of 'condolence mission' for the deceased 13th Dalai Lama (Goldstein, 1989). The dominant opinion in Tibet during the period was to reject Chinese request but ultimately it was the view of the Monastic sections that prevailed, which insisted on allowing the mission to enter central Tibet due to its 'religious' nature (*ibid*). In China, it was also around this period that Chinese leadership had possibly realised the failure of their earlier 'secularisation' process and thus reinstated the religious configuration in the Sino-Tibetan relations (Tuttle, 2010). The Chinese government from 1930s onward supported the influential (dissident) Tibetan lamas such as *Panchen* and *Norlha Hotugtu*, now based in China, who in return for state-patronship extended their religious support to the Chinese state. This 'religious' support is vital for China's dealing with Tibet, since in Tibetan world it is the religious lama's support to the state authority that translates into a form of political legitimacy and

historically it is through this religious mediation that imperial dynasties in China was able to gain some form of symbolic domination over Tibet. Nevertheless post-imperial Republican government of China's claim over Tibet continued to be within the absolutist European nation-state framework of 'sovereignty' and 'territoriality', which in the aftermath of *Sun Yat Sen's* death in 1925 even renounced its rhetoric of 'multinational China'. The new nationalist government under *Chiang Kai-Shek* abolished the 'five coloured Republican flag' in 1928 and instead put forward a new pseudo-scientific 'mono-minzu' (nationality) discourse which essentially claimed that all previously classified different nationalities in China are in fact sub-varieties of common racial stock and thus belongs to indivisible singular '*Zhonghua Minzu*' (Chinese nation) (Mullaney, 2010). Nevertheless Nanjing government continued to use multiracial rhetoric when dealing with people outside its control, such as Tibetans (Tuttle, 2010). Moreover in order to win over Tibet's traditional elites, Chinese government has developed educational institutions to train Tibetan youths in prevailing secular ideologies of 'nationalism' and 'race' and this to a certain extent was successful, evident from the presence of small group of Tibetans sympathetic to republican ideals (ibid). *Sun Yat Sen's* 'three principles of the people' (Sanmin zhuyi) was translated into Tibetan in 1940s by *Pandatsang Rabga* and also *Phunwang's* establishment of first ever Tibetan Communist Party around the same period is testimony to the success of those secular educational institutions (Stoddard, 1985; Tuttle, 2010). These progressive Tibetans were attracted by the republican/socialist ideals in which they saw a hope for new modern Tibet but nevertheless as time passed by, due to the lack of practical implementation of those ideals in China, Tibetans gradually realised the rhetorical nature of promised autonomy (Tuttle, 2010). Nevertheless those progressive Tibetans belonged from the eastern peripheries of Tibet thus their influence were largely confined within the margins of Tibetan world, central Tibet during the period was fervently resistant to any foreign ideologies, especially when it threatens the very interest of aristocrats and monastic elites (see Goldstein, 1989). KMT government in China gained substantial support among Tibetan ruling elites, who were ready to accept Tibet's special status within the Republic of China since such compromise didn't entail the abolition of traditional socio-political structure. In post-war period, civil war ensued between Republican and Communist groups which



eventually resulted into the feeling of KMT into Taiwan. The news of communist victory and their subsequent plans to ‘liberate’ Tibet from the foreign imperialist caused an anxiety among the ruling elite in Tibet, who unlike before were suspicious of Communist antipathy towards religion. The remaining contingent of republican Chinese officials stationed in Tibet since 1934 were summoned and informed of Tibet’s decision to expel all the Chinese from Tibetan territory (Goldstein, 1989; Shakya, 1999). In conclusion of this section, it must be noted that despite Nationalist governments claims of Tibet being part of China, it nevertheless treated Tibet as historically a dominion of Qing Empire thus throughout the period of its rule in China, KMT never sought to incorporate Tibet under its direct political administration. In fact it was to an extent ready to settle for ‘ceremonial sovereignty’, where apart from Tibet’s foreign affair, military defence and nominal Chinese high commissioner’s presence with retinue not exceeding 25, Tibetans would effectively control the Tibetan affairs (Goldstein, 1989; Shakya, 1999; Norbu, 2001).

### **People’s Republic of China and Integrality of Tibet**

The first Communist Party of China’s (CPC) promises of real autonomy for minority nationalities was made in their 1922 manifesto which proclaimed “Mongolia, Tibet, and Turkistan to be autonomous states and envisioned their voluntary unification with the China proper in Chinese Federal Republic” (Tuttle, 2010). Thereafter in their 1931 constitution in Jiangxi, it offered ethnic group even more latitude in relations in Chinese, the constitution stated that “the Soviet Government of China recognises the right of self-determination of the national minorities of China, their right to complete self-determination from China and to the formation of an independent state for each national minority” (ibid). The same policy was again reinforced even in May 1935 by Chinese leadership; however such rhetoric of ‘national self-determination’ must be understood in its proper context, since in the initial period of Communist Party of China it was basically parroting the Soviet nationality policies. Moreover the promises of ‘national self-determination’ was strategically more viable, since it was essentially seeking to counter *Chaing Kai-Shek’s* ‘*mono-minzu*’ discourse and garner more grassroots support from ethnic minorities. Mao’s confidence in the dogmatic Marxist

understanding of social evolutionary theory could have possibly played some role in CCP's early formulation of nationality policy, which essentially believed that the elimination of 'feudal oppressions' and establishment of equality among nationalities would entail into voluntary unification of various nationalities into single Chinese nation. Nevertheless PRC was fundamentally different from KMT, for it sought to completely incorporate Tibet within the Chinese nation-state framework through militarising the region and imposing an administrative structure completely alien from the traditional Tibetan political system (see Norbu, 2001).

### **Consolidating Rule in Tibet**

In Oct 1949, People's Republic of China was established and from the outset Chinese repeatedly broadcasted in both language that People's Liberation Army (PLA) was going to 'liberate' Tibet from foreign imperialist to which Tibetan radio responded back by saying since there is no foreign imperialist in Tibet there was no need for 'liberation' and the relation between Tibet and China was that of 'priest-patron' (Goldstein, 1989). However by May 1951, Chinese claim of 'peaceful liberation' of Tibet was completed with the signing of 1951 Sino-Tibetan agreement (Wang & Gyancaïn 1997). This agreement between the 'local' and 'central' government was first of its kind that 'central government' in China had signed with any other national minorities. Central Tibet under the agreement was guaranteed a protection of its traditional social structure and promised for non-imposition of reforms until Tibetan people ask for it themselves (see Goldstein, 1989; Shakya, 1999). Thus Communist Chinese rule in Tibet until 1955 was rather relatively 'calm' and 'peaceful', since their primary task during the period was to connect Tibet with mainland China through building of required transportation and communicative infrastructure and to create an administrative structure in Tibet (Norbu, 2001). Moreover PLA soldier were under a strict instruction from Mao himself regarding their behavioural conduct in Tibet and were told that "we have no material base in Tibet and in terms of social power they are stronger than us, which for the moment will not change" (Shakya,1999). In Tibet, proletariat revolutionary Chinese communist party rather than going to masses, initiated a series of policies to co-opt the traditional Tibetan ruling elites. In 1952 when Chinese Buddhist Association was established, Tibetan

Lamas were given leading post in it and moreover monasteries in Lhasa were extended financial patronage by communist Chinese (ibid). In 1954 both Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama with entire Tibetan hierarchy were invited to Beijing to meet with Mao but the timing also ‘coincided’ with the preparation of first National People’s Congress thus Tibetan were asked to participate in it with allotment of 10 seats (ibid). However this period of ‘elite cooperation’ was increasingly being jeopardised by the inflow of refugees from *Kham* and *Amdo* which brought along with them the stories of communist attacks and religious persecutions. In 1956 collectivisation and ‘democratic reform’ has reached its height resulting into the mass revolt by *Amdowas* and *Khampas* throughout the eastern part of Tibet (Norbu, 1994). This along with the formal establishment of Preparatory Committee for the establishment of Autonomous Region of Tibet (PCART) in 1956 has created a rift between the Sino-Tibetan relations (Shakya, 1999). Thereafter during the Dalai Lama’s visit in India for 2500 anniversary celebration of Buddha’s birth, he under the influence of Tibetan émigré in Kalimpong even contemplated staying back in exile but due to subsequent *Zhou Enlai*’s visit to India to meet Dalai Lama and his reassurance of non imposition of reforms in Tibet until Tibetan themselves ask for it, Dalai Lama finally made his mind to return back to Lhasa (ibid). Soon after his arrival back in Lhasa, PCART was reorganised and 90 percent of the cadres were made Tibetans. This revision of China’s policy in Tibet was part due to 1956 internal party conflict in Beijing over ill performance of China’s overall economy and part due to the growing violent opposition to reforms in eastern Tibet. In May 1957, Party convened a special meeting of Nationalities Affair Commission where it announced a ‘rectification campaign’ against the Chinese cadre in minority areas; ‘Han chauvinism’ was identified as key source of problems in Tibet which resulted into the general PLA’s disrespect for Tibetan culture and belief system (ibid). Nevertheless damage was already done and the violent resistance against Chinese rule spread throughout the parts of eastern Tibet, these resistances were labelled by Chinese authority as an instigation of ‘upper strata reactionary clique’ despite the fact that class composition of those participating in resistances cut across the religious line rather than economic (Norbu, 2001). The colonising Chinese forces were essentially seen as the ‘enemy of faith’ and were thus identified by Tibetan as ‘*Tendra*’ (enemy of faith), such religious configuration of

'external others' resulted into the identification of 'selves' along the religious line thereby (re)creating the sense of internal commonality along the religious line. These revolts in eastern Tibet eventually culminated into the Lhasa uprising of 10th march 1959 (Norbu, 2001), during the period thousands of Tibetans from across the class and region, in defiance of all authority (even that of Dalai Lama), gathered outside the Norbulingka palace to protect what was then a symbol of Tibetan nation; the 14th Dalai Lama (Shakya, 1999; Norbu, 2001). A Tibetan historian Tsering Shakya identifies the Lhasa uprising as a space for subaltern agency, where people were not only expressing their anger against the Chinese but also against the Tibetan ruling elite, who they felt had betrayed their beloved leader (Shakya, 1999). Tibetan protestors vented their anger against high ranking Tibetan official who were believed to be 'pro Chinese' and on one occasion protestors stoned to death a high ranking Tibetan official for wearing Chinese cap, these accounts of subaltern uprising were conveniently buried by Chinese officials under the rhetoric of 'staged uprising by upper class reactionaries' without any sense of historical irony (Shakya, 1999, Norbu, 2001). In fact both the Dalai Lama and Tibetan ruling hierarchs were against the angry demonstrators, former reacting to 'uprising' by calling it as a quickest way to self destruction and later conveniently enjoying the dance performance organized by PLA in the evening of the same day (ibid). The mass uprising in Lhasa was followed by the Chinese military crackdown, which according to PLA's own 'secret' report resulted into the death of over 87000 Tibetans (see Norbu, 1996). Post-Lhasa uprising, Dalai Lama along with some 80,000 Tibetans fled into India and thereafter establishing the exile government, which in long run would play a crucial role in the construction of nationalist discourse within the Tibetan world (see Chapter 4). In central Tibet, Lhasa uprising and the subsequent violent suppression of the rebellions by Chinese state lasted until March 1962 (see Wang & Gyaincain, 1997), the PLA troops were even deployed in the areas such as *Shigatse* where people refused to participate in the revolt (Shakya, 1999). Such Chinese state's anticipation of the uprising beyond the ambit of Lhasa's 'reactionary upper class' influence illustrates the fact that the Lhasa uprising, despite their rhetorical claim, was clearly understood by Chinese along the 'ethnic' or 'religious lines', since Panchen during the period was clearly seen by Tibetan themselves as 'pro-China'. This event marked the end of a decade long 'elite

cooperation' phase and instead from 1959-1964, a new strategic period of winning over the masses began. The 'democratic reform' which was previously confined within the eastern Tibetan areas was now implemented in the whole of Tibet and the 'local Tibetan government' was replaced by PCART (Shakya, 1999; Smith, 2009). *Drepung* monastery was classified as rebellious monastery and its estates and properties were confiscated, the monastic administrative structure was also fundamentally altered and new groups of officials known as 'work team' (*Las don ru-Khag*) were sent to take control over the monasteries and who eventually ended up staying till Cultural Revolution. Members of the new administrative committee called 'Democratic Management Committee' were selected from the poorer thus deemed to be 'progressive' monks. The traditional leaders of the monasteries were classified as 'exploiter' and sent to either labour camp/imprisoned or were forced to undergo an intensive socialist ideological training, which included a need to engage in productive labour, thus in 1965 only 715 out of 10,000 monks remained in *Drepung* monastery (Goldstein, 1999). The new group of communist Tibetan cadre emerged, mostly from the poor rural background and amidst such development; the traditional Tibetan leaders such as Panchen were purged under the rubric of 'anti-rightist' campaign. Panchen Lama in 1962 has written a 70000 character petition to the Party, which would be later term by Mao as 'poisonous arrow' aimed at the heart of the party (Smith, 2009). This petition has now become an important source of historical document, refuting the very core of Chinese claim that the destructions in Tibet were due to the 'excesses' of Cultural Revolutions (1966-1976), which in fact is recognised as an aberration in the history development in China and thus such destruction were not Tibet-specific. The baseline of the argument is that apart from the tumultuous decade of Cultural Revolution, Tibet throughout the period of PRC's rule enjoyed the fruits of 'socialist development'. This ahistorical claim was essentially refuted by the contents of Panchen's 1962 petition which illustrates the facts that already by early 1960s, Tibetan language was marginalised in the official usage and the religious practices were confined within the private space of an individual. Moreover the institution of monasteries were systematically destroyed to a point that in TAR out of 2500 monasteries and 110,000 monks and nuns in 1940s only 70 monasteries and 7000 monks and nuns remained by 1962 (Smith, 2009). This systematic attack on the very basis of Tibetan identity got

intensified during the period of Cultural Revolution (CR) and it is during this period that any expression of Tibetan cultural identity even within the space of private domain was prohibited. Mao's rhetoric of eliminating the 'four olds' during the CR was in Tibet equated with 'Tibetan cultural tradition thus everything 'old' was associated with Tibetans and 'new' with Chinese (Kolas & Thowsen, 2005). The ubiquitous image of Buddha was replaced by that of Mao and his quotations were extensively translated and studied by Tibetans to rectify one's erroneous ideological disposition and such 'ideological reductionism' problematised 'Tibetans way' as 'anti-socialist way' (see Shakya, 1999). In post-Mao era, the new Chinese leadership under Deng Xiaoping initiated a series of reforms aimed at undoing the wrongs of Cultural Revolution, this reform policy culminated into 'marketisation' of economy and relatively 'greater' freedom of expression in China. In Tibet the policy of forced assimilation was abandoned in favour of modernist 'economist approach', whose rationale was based on the presumption that with greater economic development/integration, the natural assimilation of Tibetan into a modern Chinese culture was inevitable. The drive for 'modernisation' was declared a key national goal and it is such transformation of China from 'ideological' to 'de-ideologised capitalist state' that has produced a new developmental discourse of legitimisation for their colonial presence in Tibet. The liberalisation also entails a period of personalisation of faith and institutionalisation of 'religious freedom' (Smith, 2009). However the initial period of liberalisation was marked by a general sense of suspiciousness and cautiousness in Tibet to which *Hu Yaobang's* 1980 Lhasa visit & the subsequent policy announcement of 'Tibetanising' administrative mechanism in TAR has provided a substantial breakthrough in informal grassroots process of reviving Tibetan cultural tradition (see Xiaoqiang, 1996). Nevertheless the subsequent cultural revivalism in Tibetan areas is within the institutional control of the state and unlike in other mainland areas, the neoliberal policy in Beijing has only resulted into the 'partial' withdrawal of the state from the Tibetan affairs. State continues to maintain its 'invisible' presence in Tibetan society through various institutional mechanisms such as through institutionalisation of 'tulku system' (reincarnation system), where modernist Chinese state assumes an active role in conferring 'de-jure' recognition to the Tibetan *tulkus* and also assigning them with political responsibility (Kolas & Thowsen, 2005). Leadership in

China has once again possibly realised the problems of completely secularising Sino-Tibetan relations and instead it chooses to once again use Tibetan *tulkus* system as a mediating force between Chinese state and Tibetan society (ibid). However this reconfiguration of religion in Sino-Tibetan relation was strategic in nature and thus carefully coordinated and controlled with the ultimate aim of secularising Tibetan society. The reconstruction project of monasteries in post-Mao period also saw a similar ideological influence where monasteries with political significance, such as 'Wencheng Temple' in *Jyekundo* and Panchen lineage connected monasteries had a relatively easy access to government funding (ibid). However throughout 1980s, under the ambit of Chinese state the 'quantitative' revival of monasticism and 'cultural centres' in Tibet has gradually proliferated. This liberalisation period was accompanied with *Hu's* 'opening of Tibet' policy which has eliminated any restriction over in-migration of Chinese for trade and business purpose (Shakya, 1999). The influx of new Chinese migrants in Tibet has (re)produced a Tibetan sense of economic marginalisation and relative deprivation and this along with Chinese state intrusion into the 'internal sphere' of monastic discipline symbolising the 'traditional religious authority' has resulted into the series of nationalist protest (1987-89) in and around Lhasa (Schwartz, 1995). During the period Lhasa's social space was highly (re)politicised and every 'anniversary' and 'oppositional anniversary' dates were marked with intense security control to an extent that Lhasa saw a series of ethnic-specific bans (Yeh, 2013). These bans on religious activities for all the Tibetan students and government employees and freezing of mobility through non-issuance of passport for Tibetans are the symptomatic part of larger Chinese 'rule of colonial differences' in Tibet (ibid). This 'rule of colonial differences' are further reinforced by the racist ideological conceptualisation of minorities as inherently backward, requiring constant supervision from their 'superior' Chinese 'elder brothers'. In the immediate aftermath of Lhasa uprising in late 1980s, the TAR region saw an imposition of martial law for over a year and thereafter the decade long policy of liberalisation was abandoned for a renewed policy of increasing securitisation and further opening up of TAR to market economy (Shakya, 1999). The 'Dalai clique' helped by the 'hostile forces in western countries' were identified as a cause for instability in Tibet thus in 1994 '3rd National Work Forum on Tibet' in Beijing announced its campaigns to root

out the Tibetan nationalist force and resolved to further intensify China's developmental policies in Tibet (Smith, 2009). The forum also denounced the Dalai Lama as 'splittist' and for the first time since Cultural Revolution the picture of Dalai Lama was banned in TAR (ibid). This reconfiguration of religion as a cultural source for nationalist mobilisation has probably (re)convinced the leaderships in China that the role of religion in Sino-Tibetan relations has been that of double edge sword, where both repression and limited freedom has resulted into a nationalist backlash. Consequently the Chinese colonial state through its reinvigorated drive for 'socialist modernisation' sought to (re)script 'Tibetan-ness' essentially within the secular modernist framework. This was done through deemphasising the Buddhist factor in Tibetan civilisational development and 'othering' Buddhism as 'foreign' to the native Tibetan culture in official Chinese state discourse. Such secularisation efforts were accompanied by intensified Chinese immigration process into Tibetan areas thereby demographically minoritising and economically marginalising natives in their own homeland. The process of 'minoritisation' and 'marginalisation' are far from simplistic exile Tibetan claims of 'state sponsored resettlement drive of Chinese into Tibetans areas' but instead are the complex product of 'state's insentivisation', 'preferential market policies', 'native's cultural aversion to capitalist market rationality' and 'ethnic disparities in skilled labour' (see Yeh, 2013). Moreover in post-3rd work forum on Tibet, Tibetan areas saw an intensified 'patriotic education campaign' where the declared goal of the Chinese state was to eliminate the residual power base of 'Dalai clique' among Tibetans, especially in monastic communities. This led to increased restrictions over monastic reestablishment process along with the regularisation of 'quota system' for monks and nuns (Wang, 2002). The monastic communities are now institutionally required to learn books on the 'history of Tibet' and other 'modern' subjects including 'patriotism' and 'socialism' (Smith, 2009). This red-ideologised production of 'history' and 'knowledge system' has been made a necessary pre-requisite consumption for monks and nuns in order to gain/retain their legal position as a member of monastic community. Moreover each monastery was institutionally placed under the direct secular authority of the state, exercised through the institution of 'management committee', earlier monk staffed-'Democratic Management Committee' was now radically secularised and party cadres were installed in their place



since 1996. This institutional control mechanism has maintained the direct presence of Chinese state within the core of Tibetan cultural world thereby seeking to curb the very source of nationalist Tibetan resistance (Kolas & Thowsen, 2005; Smith, 2009).

In 1999, after the completion of Deng's eastern coastal developmental project, China has adopted a policy of developing its western regions including Tibet under the rubric of Western Development Project (WDP). This strategic developmental plan entails the further opening up of Tibet for both domestic and foreign investments, concentrating largely on infrastructural projects such as transportation, energy, communication and urban infrastructure development. Tibet under this policy has experienced an undeniable overall economic development but such developmental experiences are marred by the Tibetan's sense of relative deprivation, where increasing Chinese in-migrant is viewed as 'Other' encroaching upon Tibetan's share of development. It is this non-absolute relative gain and loss perception through which Tibetans negotiate their experience of Chinese developmental project. Moreover most of developmental investments were concentrated in few 'key areas', such as those with relatively stable prior economic base, population density and nearer to the transportation routes, which institutionally prioritises the urban(ising) sectors, whereas almost over 85 percent of the Tibetan population lives in the rural communities (Lai, 2002). The WDP despite its national character, when implemented into Tibetan areas has its Tibetan specific ethnic-characteristic, where the development concern takes backseat and the 'national security' and 'stability' concerns becomes a key factor of consideration (Cooke, 2003). This developmental policy presupposes the desired developmental model for Tibetans along the Han (Chinese) lines and thereby denies Tibetans an alternative forms of modernisation in congruent with their historical experience. WDP seeks 'social transformation' of the Tibetans resulting into their marginalisation and dilution of cultural identity. However as mentioned earlier, such increasing state penetration into the socio-cultural aspects of common Tibetans heightens their sense of distinctive identity and often results into ethnic tension.

### **Beijing Olympic and Tibetan National Uprising**

Olympic has been much politicised event in China, in year 2000, China lost the bid to host Olympic against Australia in final round, which was seen in China largely as a

plot by anti-China forces led by United States and its allies to deny China of its rightful place. So when it finally secured the hosting right of Olympic in 2008, it was interpreted everywhere as recognition of China's status in world (Schell, 2008). It was a unique opportunity for Chinese nation to project its rise and dominance in global order, nation went frenzied in its preparation, for the first time after over six decades, Olympic ceremony was to be marked by international torch relay, this was clearly to project China's rise thus legitimising its political structure; perhaps as an alternative to Western democratic model.

But the same year in March 2008, group of Tibetans monks from *Drepung* monastery marched peacefully to Lhasa in order to seek the release of their fellow monks arrested a year earlier for celebrating the honouring of U.S. Congressional gold medal to Dalai Lama (Smith, 1997). The monks were stopped and detained on their way, another group of monks protested and slowly the atmosphere of tension escalated and the initial seemingly isolated protest turned into a nationwide revolt against Chinese occupation. The purpose of the protest is evident by the symbols and slogans used during the process; many protestors carried the banned Tibetan national flag and raised slogans of freedom and independence (Ibid). The response from Chinese authorities was severe crack down and imposition of martial law, the protesters were labelled 'reactionary' and the whole incident has been conveniently framed as coordinated action instigated by Dalai clique and its western masters, various reference to the historical intrusion of West was also invoked. Chinese state owned television was full of images and the videos of 'violent Tibetan protestors' engaged in 'burning, looting and killing'. What we see is the process of dehumanisation of Tibetan protestors resulting into moral contempt by Chinese people and thus denying Tibetans of any objective consideration of their grievances from Chinese populace. All Western media coverage of Tibetan protest has been labelled as either misinformed or of harbouring "cold war mentality to contain China's rise." The state and Chinese people has been once again united under the banner of nationalism and during the process what Chinese saw from that nationalistic lens was not the oppressed Tibetans seeking redressal but Chinese nation once again under the siege and once again being demeaned by West and its allies (Schell, 2008). Thus this conceptualisation of Tibetan protestors within the Chinese's anti-Western nationalism leads to obscuration of

real Tibetan issue, and in the process an objective understanding of Tibet issue within the Chinese people becomes highly implausible. Tibetan protesters in Tibet are completely denied of any agency or capability to think for themselves and has been reduced to mere pawn in the game of chess between West and China, Thus earning instead of sympathy from the general Chinese populace it created a perception among Chinese of an ungrateful Tibetans who despite all the benefits and development they receive from the Chinese nation are still protesting against their benefactors. Tibetan aspiration of freedom is highly implausible under the shadow of present Chinese nationalism.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **History and Identities in Traditional Tibetan societies**

This chapter will attempt to analyse the socio-political condition of Tibet before Chinese occupation and examine the presence of any sense of collective ‘identity’ or ‘identities’ among the masses. The paper will begin with the brief critical account of Tibetan history focusing mainly on the events crucial for the understanding of later political development in Tibet. It will also attempt to highlight the kind of ‘political system’ that Tibet had prior to communist Chinese invasion in 1949 and argue that the de-centralised understanding of ‘Tibetan polity’ is critical for our analyses of identity development in Tibetan societies. The chapter also discusses the state and society structure in pre-modern Tibet and thus their effects on identity formations among Tibetans. However at the outset, I would also like to acknowledge the fact that the amount of research time and space given to this important period of Tibetan history are lesser than sufficient thus is bound to miss certain important historical events and also present certain simplified account of Tibetan history. Particularly the research on Eastern Tibet is far from satisfactory but nevertheless throughout the chapter that follows, I have endeavoured to present a historical account of Tibet which is though necessarily incomplete but are crucial for the understanding of later development of Tibetan identity and nationalism. This chapters though endeavours to present an account of Tibetan history which is not ‘Lhasa and Gelug-centric’, however it also found that a complete non-centric approach to Tibetan history at least from cultural and religious perspective is also problematic, thus it follows the pattern of balancing the centralising and decentralising perspective on Tibetan history, former from the religion induced cultural perspectives and later from political perspectives.

#### **Historical Introductions**

##### **Fall of Tibetan Empire**

Contrary to the traditional account of history, it is now an established fact amongst the scholars that people in Tibet before 7th century lived in clans and tribes

without any central authority. It was under the King of *Yarlung* province, *Songtsen Gampo* (617- 649), that the whole of Tibet has been incorporated under a single political authority albeit within a confederation-like system (Kapstein, 2006; Kuei & Coblin, 2013). At this time, Tibetan ruler was clearly viewed by other nobilities as ‘first among equals’ whose claim to rule depends upon the maintenance of various marital and political alliances with other powerful noble clans. During the period Bon<sup>3</sup> was a predominant religion and each clan under the rubric of Bon-ism has their respective claims of divine origin, thus the prevalent religio-political ideology clearly limited the power of the King within the yoke of religio-custom and probably for this reason *Songtsen Gampo*, in-order to reorganise the royalty into a unitary empire, sought to create a new hegemonic political ideology with the help of Buddhism. Interestingly despite the later Buddhist historiography’s identification of *Songtsen Gampo* as ‘Bodhisattva’ and a ‘Dharma-King’, *dunhang*<sup>4</sup> document presents an image of *Songtsen Gampo* with little inclination for Buddhist principles, let alone an ardent Buddhist follower (see Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013). During his reign written Tibetan script was codified and new imperial law enacted; both an essential prerequisite for any centralised state. *Songtsen* in his quest for expansion of the empire eastward moved his capital from remote *Yarlung* to more central and strategically important city, Lhasa, then known as Rasa (Kirkland, 2013). The foundation of Tibetan state was laid down and the subsequent ruler continued to expand until the early 9th century. Next important king during the empire period is *Trisong Detsen*(756-797), under whose reign, Buddhism was proclaimed as a state religion and first Tibetan monastery, *Samye* (774/5) was built (Kapstein, 2006; Richardson, 2003). *Trisong Detsen* also undertook the establishment of first monastic community (*sangha*) in Tibet whose subsistence was to be provided by the state and eventually with the increasing maintenance cost of the ever increasing no of monks, subsistence responsibility was transferred from the state to subject people (Dargyay, 2003) . Every three subject families were made responsible for every individual monk

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<sup>3</sup> This ‘Bon’ is essentially different from the later days organized ‘Bon religion’ which was by and large established in 10<sup>th</sup> -11th century.

and eventually jurisdictional right over the subjects were also conferred upon the monastic community (ibid, Kapstein, 2006) thereby creating a parallel administrative system, albeit a small one, within a larger state-wide administrative network. State has effectively created aristocratic-like monastic lords with complete control over its subject estates, whose increasing power in long run would alter the balance of power and threaten the very base of the confederation. Nonetheless *Trisong Detsen* reign marked the zenith of Tibetan empire, expanding into all direction of modern day Baltistan in the west to east-Turkistan in the north and *Dunhang* and *Gansu* corridor in the east (Shakabpa, 1967; Snellgrove & Richardson, 1968; Kapstein 2006) and at one point of time in 768, it even invaded Tang capital Xian and installed a puppet emperor, which lasted for 15days (ibid). Generous state patron ship of Buddhism continued, not without any resistance from the nobilities and reached its height during the reign of *Tri-Ralpachen*(815-836), a devout Buddhist, who increased the subject families of each monk from earlier three to seven, consequently further reducing the subject directly under empires jurisdiction (Dargyay, 2003). It was during *Ralpachen*'s reign that for the first time in the recorded history of Tibet monks were appointed for a ministerial position thereby paving the way for later conglomeration of religion and politics (ibid). His extravagantly lavish patronship of Buddhism coincided with the abrupt halt in the empire's continuing eastward expansion due to the Sino-Tibetan treaty of 821-822, under the treaty's condition, Tibetans agreed to renounce their expansionist policy (Kapstein, 2006). In this new post-treaty condition, on one hand there was no possibility for a new territorial and wealth accumulation for Tibet and on other hand *Ralpachen* continued if not increased the state's lavish expenditure over Buddhism resulting into the bankruptcy of imperial treasury. Tension between the nobility and monastic group continued to exacerbate to a point that in 836 nobilities finally revolted against the state and the powerful monk official *Drenka Pelgyi Yonten* was executed and *Ralpachen* himself assassinated (Kuei & Coblin, 2013). *Ralpachen* was followed by 'controversial' Tibetan emperor *Lang Dharma*, whom once again later Buddhist historiography identifies with 'evil' pro-*Bon* and destructor of Buddhism but in reality, it seems he was merely trying to reverse the harm done by the earlier policies of *Ralpachen*, by abolishing the extravagant privileges and donations conferred upon monks and temples (Kapstein, 2006; Richardson, 2003). In

earlier text he was even attributed to have built monasteries and composed Buddhist text (Power, 2012). However his effort was not to last long, for he was duly assassinated by a Buddhist monk called *Lhalung Pal Gyi Dorjee*. *Lang Darma* had no legitimate heir (Petech, 1992) thus soon afterward, the succession dispute turned into a civil war which precipitated the final collapse of empire. In retrospect the possible reason behind the collapse of empire doesn't only seem to be the assassination of Emperor *Lang Dharma*, let alone due to his destruction of Buddhism, as later 'traditional' Tibetan historians seem to claim, but there seems to be far more fundamentally structural reason behind the collapse. It seems the intersection of various condition from the factious political struggle between the lay nobilities and Buddhist clergy to the imperial financial crisis (Kapstein, 2006) and finally the power vacuum at the centre in post emperor assassination, led the empire into all out civil war and thus its disintegration.

Tibet during the Empire period (7-9) was one of the greatest powers in the whole of central Asia (Beckwith, 1993), internally despite state's professed adherence to Buddhism at-least since 8th century, most of its people continued to adhere to pre-Buddhist faith thus Buddhism was largely confined within the court circle (Richardson, 2003, Schneiger, 2013). Tibetan king was simultaneously Buddhist 'Dharma King' and pre-Buddhist '*Lha bTsanpo*'; divine ruler and son of heaven, in-fact most of the imperial burial were done according to pre-Buddhist custom (Kuei li & Coblin, 2013; Snellgrove & Richardson, 1968). The annual oath taking ceremony throughout the empire period continued the custom of animal sacrifices along with spearing of lips with blood (Richardson, 2003). The hegemonic religio-political ideology that *Songtsen Gampo* sought to create remained largely unaccomplished and the people of Tibet throughout the empire period were mostly non-Buddhist, consequently their conception of self and others remained completely different from the later Buddhist world view. Their political theory, social structure and identity conceptions will be discussed in the following section but here from the structural point of view it is important to note that later generations' basic social structure has been established during the period (Dargyay, 2003). Prior to 7th century landed property was under the collective ownership of clans and tribes but following two century (7-9) of empire period, basic private ownership of the means of production was established (Macdonald, 2003). From then on landed property were either

owned directly by the state (*rJe-zHing*) and distributed among individual families based on rights of tenure or are owned by noble aristocrats or monastic lords with complete jurisdictional right over its subject population (McDonald, 2003; Dargyay, 2003). In other word primitive form of exploiting land-owners class was formed, which would continue throughout the history of Tibet in some form or the other.

### **Post-Empire Tibet(s)**

It is fitting to note that the immediate aftermath of post-empire period, the Tibetan society was mainly characterised by the attributes of ‘statelessness’, in a sense that neither lay aristocracy nor monasteries succeeded in establishing any large scale dominion under its control (Shakabpa, 1967; Kapstein, 2006 ). In other words it was a period of decentralised authority aptly described as ‘local hegemonic period’ by Professor Turrell Wylie. Once again it should be noted that contrary to the Traditional Buddhist historiography, which characterises the post-empire period as ‘dark age’ with the virtual extinction of Buddhism from the Tibetan landscape until its revival from India in late 10th century, contemporary evidence indicates that Buddhism though have suffered losses of patronship but never was its actually completely eliminated (Snellgrove, 2003; Stein, 2013). The revival (*Phyi-Dar*) of Buddhism began from two opposite directions, one from *Amdo* in north-eastern part of Tibet which was the doctrinal continuation of old imperial Buddhist transmission, later known as *Nyingma* and second from *Guge* Kingdom of western Tibet in early 11century, which became a source of ‘new’ Buddhist doctrinal transmission mainly associated with the figure of Indian Buddhist scholar; Atisa (See Stein, 2013; Vitali, 2003; Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013). Ironically while non-Buddhist people of Tibet were gradually embracing Buddhism, though not without any sense of hesitation and resistance, its surrounding Buddhist countries were losing the same religion under rising Islamic force. Buddhist-Tibet by 13th century was left under increasing cultural isolation (Snellgrove and Richardson, 1968) and probably for this cultural encirclement of Tibet by non-Buddhist societies led to the Tibetans (Buddhist-influenced) conceptualisation of selves as ‘*Nangpa*’ (insider) and generalised ‘Others’ as ‘*Chyipa*’ (outsiders). This relativisation of the comparative and possibly subversive field of knowledge leads to the “territorialisation



of faith”, which according to Anderson (1983) foreshadows the modern language of nationalism.

All major Buddhist sect, except for *Gelug* school, was by then already established and according to Richardson(2003) during the initial ‘local hegemonic period’ there were no territorial rivalry between the sects and it was only with the advent of foreign power, in this case the Mongols, that the political rivalry between the various sects of Buddhism began. Tibetan source claim that the Mongol ruler *Chengis Khan* came to Tibet in 1206 and was greeted by *Joga*, a descendent of *Yarlung* royal family and *Kunga Dorje*, head of *Tselpas* who offered the Khan, Tibet’s (central Tibet) submission (Stein, 1972). It is to be remembered that during the period there was no single collective political entity in Tibet and thus probably “central Tibet’s” submission to Mongol were the result of internal consensual arrangement to avert individually facing powerful external threat. However the actual Mongol incursion in Tibet occurred around 1240 under *Godan Khan*, more than three decades prior to Mongol’s invasion of China (Stein, 2013). Again the Tibetan source claim that *Sakya* hierarch was sent gift and invitation by returning *Chengis Khan* and there after he visited Mongol and became an imperial perception at Mongol court, who in return was conferred upon with the supreme authority over thirteen Myrairchies<sup>5</sup>, ‘*Tri-khor Chuk-sum*’ which is approximately whole of Central Tibet (ibid). This event for the first time in Tibet’s recorded history led to the political submission of central Tibet to a foreign power under rubric of ‘priest-patron relationship’. The concept of ‘priest-patron relation’ was purely non-institutional and rather a personal mechanism devised by individual Lama and the lay ruler to facilitate their respective temporal and spiritual need (Smith, 1997; Ruegg, 2013). Thus Mongols protectorate of Tibet led to the rise of *Sakya* hierarch in the central Tibet politics; Mongolian law code and customs were embraced by leading religious hierarchs (Norbu, 2001). Thereafter the model of ‘priest-patron relation’ set first by *Phagpa* and *Kublai Khan* were thus emulated by various other Tibetan Buddhist masters, consequently aligning themselves with other lesser Mongol Khans e.g. *Tselpa* with *Airk Boke* until 1260 and then with *Qubilai Khan*, *Drikung* with *Hulegu* ;who founded Mongol dynasty in Iran (Stein, 2013; Richardson, 2013). The internal strive for

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<sup>5</sup> Myrairchy is Mongol’s administrative division system.

supremacy continued, thus it would be safe to presume that though *Sakya* hierarch had a nominal ruler-ship over whole of Central Tibet, its power on ground was effectively checked by other religious hierarchs such as *Drikung-Kagyü* hierarch which controlled several of myriarchies in *U* province (Richardson, 2013). However Tibetan commoner and nobles alike despised Mongolian (Yuan) domination which led to the ousting of *Sakya* hierarch in 1354 by *Jangchup Gyaltsen* of *Pakmodru* (Snellgrove & Richardson, 1968). The weak Mongol dynasty in China was left with no other option but to simply confer upon the imperial seal and the title '*Tai Situ*' to a new de-facto ruler of Central Tibet. Thus the Mongol domination over Central Tibet not only began but also ended prior to collapse of their dynasty (Yuan) in China.

*Jangchup Gyaltsen*, a lay leader of Tibet continued to pay lip service to both Mongol and *Sakya* hierarch until 1368 when *Yuan* dynasty in China collapsed, thereafter he server all the remaining ceremonial relation with it. Under *Jangchup Gyaltsen*, Central Tibet sought to consciously revive the old imperial tradition and once again reasserted its independence from China (Dreyfus, 2003; Smith, 1997; Petech, 2013). The earlier century's (1248-1354) old Mongolian titles, dress, custom and traditions were expelled and new imperial dress and titles such as '*Gongma*' (most high) and '*Lha-btsun*' (divine lord) was adopted for a ruler (Snellgrove and Richardson, 1968; Kapstein, 2006; Shakabpa, 1967). Mongolian law code were replaced with imperial law and 'myrarchies system' instituted under Mongol administration were reorganised under imperial *dZong* (district) system and also the civil celebration of New Year as per the ancient empire tradition was also revived (Snellgrove and Richardson, 1968). In retrospect it was no doubt a period of considerable nostalgia for the glory days of Tibetan empire but this nostalgia of past was selectively memorialised in order to serve the present hegemonic interest. Tibetan history was being mythologised and imperial non-Buddhist figure such as *Songtsen Gampo* was 'Buddhisified', the legends of 'Chinese and Nepalese princes *Wenchen* and *Brikuti*' '*Tri-Song detsen*', '*Padmasambhava*' and '*Langdharma*' were being reconstructed through the 'discovery' of ancient treasure-text, known as '*terma*' (Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013; Dreyfus, 2003). These treasure text are believed to be esoterically hidden from religious persecution in 8th century by various adepts, most importantly by *Padmasambhava* for future discovery at auspicious period by

pre-propheisised adepts known as 'terton'. These texts, particularly '*Mani-Kabum*' and '*Kathang De-nga*' are filled with the part-historical and part-mythical narrative of Tibetan empire, creating a strong sense of 'national' sentiment (Dreyfus, 2003; Snellgrove and Richardson, 1968). During the same period Tibetan history was also increasingly 'buddhistified' and thus this retrospective judgement of the imperial history led to the glorification of *Ralpachen* and demonisation of *Lang-Dharma*, later becoming a prototypical model for any anti-Buddhist figure to be despised and detested. After the decline of *Pakmodrupa*, due to internal feud in early 15th century, *Rinpungpa* gained influence first in *Sumdrubtse (Shigatse)* and then later in whole of *Tsang* area (Richardson, 2003; Wylie, 2013). It though never actually controlled the whole of Central Tibet and continued to pay a lip service to *Gongma* of *Phakmodru*, but the rise of *Rinpung* practically limited the power of *Phakmodrupa* within the border of *U* province, leading to a century of conflict between *U* and *Tsang*. However in mid 16th century, *Rinpung* was also unseated by another rising power under the leadership of *Karma Tseten Dorjee* from the clan of *Nyag*, who was previously acting as a governor of *Samdrubtse (Shigatse)* under *Rinpung* rulership and subsequently adopted for himself the title of '*Tsangpa King*' (Kapstein, 2006). *Tsangpa* ruler militarily aligned himself with Mongols of *Kokonnor*, *Chogthu* tribe and sought to revive the old imperial institutions in-order to achieve good governance, apart from these fragments of information little today is known about the administrative and the extend of its land holding (Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013). In 17th century after the series of conflict between the *Tsangpa* ruler and the *Gelug* based *U* region, the 5th Dalai Lama emerged victorious in 1642.

Few important things to be noted are the fact that in post-empire period no power was able to politically reunify the cultural sphere of Tibetans and moreover with the increasing religious penetration into Tibetan societies, its conception of self and others underwent tremendous changes. Power in Central Tibet during the period was withheld by nobilities and monastic sect, often in collusion with each other, e.g. ruler of both *Rinpung* and *Tsangpa* dynasty were from the laity but backed by *Karmapa* hierarch. The 'priest-patron relation' was not confined within the exclusive domain of external relations but internally also this model was emulated, laity not only acted as an economic patron for religious hierarchs but also provided a political support where needed, likewise in-

return it received not only the ‘spiritual blessings’ but also an essential religio-political legitimising force in its quest for hegemony.

### **Rise of *Gelug* Hierarch and the Institution of Dalai Lama**

In mid 14th century an extraordinary Tibetan Buddhist master was born in north-eastern part of Tibet, called *Tsongkhapa*, who later moved to central Tibet and founded his first monastery *Ganden*, near ancient imperial city of Lhasa. He subsequently received patronship from *Phakmodru* family, who then was still a nominal ruler of Central Tibet. His fame and followership steadily grew and on 1407 he instituted an annual *Monlam* festival at Lhasa “intended to commemorate the event, evoking a collective memory of Buddha’s defeat of heretical teachers through a rare public display of magical powers gained as a by-product of enlightenment” (Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013: 518) thus the festival becoming the symbol of religious triumph over anti-religious force. Apparently *Tsongkhapa* himself never intended to establish a separate religious sect but his teachings were particularly inspired by the earlier *Kadampa* teachings of *Atisa* thereby his successors have often been conflated as ‘new *Kadampa*’. In second decade of 15th century *Tsongkhapa*’s students with active collusion with their close wealthy patrons established *Drepung* monastery in 1416 and *Sera* monastery in 1419, thereby completing three great seats of *Gelug* hierarch.

First in the line of Dalai Lama’s<sup>6</sup> lineage was *Gendun Drupa*, who founded a *Tashilhunpo* monastery in 1447 and passed away at the age of 82 in year 1474. Second Dalai Lama, *Gendun Gyatso* who was the abbot of *Drepung* monastery and later in 1518 established *Ganden Podrang*, seat of subsequent Dalai Lama in *Drepung* monastery. During the early periods of Dalai Lama lineage, though they were among the important *Gelugpa* masters but have had a little political significance until the politicisation of the sacred institution in early 16th century. It was in late 15th century during the time of 2nd Dalai Lama that the initial tension between *Gelugpa* and *Kagyü* hierarch began (Maher, 2007) both religious sects were dominant power in their respective area of *U* and *Tsang*, each under the patronship of *Phakmodrupa* and *Ringpung*. The ascendance of red-hat

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<sup>6</sup> Dalai is a title conferred upon the 3<sup>rd</sup> by Mongol Altan Khan and thus has been posthumously conferred upon 2 previous incarnations in the line.

*Karmapa* supported *Rinpung* ruler in *Tsang* area led to the increasing confrontation with Lhasa, which then was the power base of *Gelug* hierarch (Snellgrove & Richardson, 1968; Maher, 2007; Karmay, 1998). In 1490, *Yangpachen* monastery<sup>7</sup> of Red-hat *Karmapa* was built in Lhasa to gain strategic political power base in the region and thereafter in 1498 *Rinpung* attacked and captured whole of Lhasa until 1517 (Wylie, 2013). During the period of *Rinpung*'s control over Lhasa, *Monlam* festival which was traditionally overseen by *Drepung* monastery were handed over to *Kagyü* hierarch and monks from *Sera* and *Drepung* were not allowed to attend the festival (ibid). 2nd Dalai Lama sought to mediate between the *Gelug-Kagyü* sectarian conflicts but to no avail and with his death in 1542 things get worsened. Next Dalai Lama, *Sonam Gyatso* was born to a powerful *sNe gDong* royal family in Lhasa amidst the increasing sectarian rife in central Tibet (Maher, 2007). Unlike his predecessor he was an active religious figure of his time and sent many of his representatives to foreign land to propagate the *Tsongkhapa*'s teaching. It was during this time that *Gelug* religious order under his active leadership gained particular influence among Mongols, finally converting *Tumed* Mongol ruler *Altan Khan* to Buddhism or more particularly to *Gelug* religious order (Shakabpa, 1967; Karmay, 1998). The needed powerful patron (Mongol) for *Gelug* religious order was secured and this increasing religio-political alliance of *Gelug* and Mongol ruler made then *Tsangpa* king (1565-1642) of Central Tibet uneasy, who was determined to keep Central Tibet free from foreign Mongolian encroachment (Snellgrove & Richardson, 1968). Third Dalai Lama travelled extensively throughout the eastern Tibetan region of *Kham* and *Amdo*, building monasteries and mediating in feuds and preaching law and religion (Tucci, 2013). He spend remaining 11 years of his life in Mongol and died in 1588 but for the dismay of *Tsangpa* king, the next reincarnation of 3rd Dalai Lama was born in 1589 as the great grandson of *Altan Khan*. This led to the increasing Mongol interferences in Tibetan affair; exacerbating the already intense sectarian politics, culminating into Mongol backed *Gelug* hierarch's direct confrontation with *Kagyü* backed *Tsangpa* king. However the 4th Dalai Lama, *Yonten Gyatso* passed away very young at the age of 17 in 1616 and the *Tsangpa* king thereafter sought to undermine

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<sup>7</sup> Monastery was later during 9<sup>th</sup> Red-hat-Karmapa, who was accused of treason during the war with Nepal, converted in Gelug monastery.

*Gelug* power base by prohibiting the search for next reincarnation resulting into an all out attack by Mongol-*Gelug* force over the royal office in Lhasa (Karmay, 1998). The conflict escalated throughout the period and amidst this backdrop the new born son of powerful noble family of *Zahor* was secretly recognize as 5th Dalai Lama by his monastic entourage, interestingly the patriarch of the family was also ‘coincidentally’ involved in the secret plot against the royal government of Central Tibet (ibid). The *Tsangpa* king however lifted the ban over the incarnation of Dalai Lama due to the mediation from Panchen Lama, or probably he understood the futility of such proclamation which would only exacerbate the already intense animosity. The treasurer of the *Gaden Phodrang*, *Sonam Choephel* played a crucial role during the early period of young Dalai Lama and was the prime architect of his political rise. *Sonam Choephel* sought assistance from the *Gurshi Khan* of *Qoshot* Mongol against the *Chothur* Mongol settled in the area of Kokonor, who then was an ally of *Tsangpa* king. The apparent reason for the alliance was to protect *Gelug* faith from persecution in the area thus *Gurshi Khan* around the year 1637 defeated the *Chogthur* Mongol and then settled in the Kokonor region of *Amdo*. He continued to visit the 5th Dalai Lama under the guise of pilgrim and was conferred upon the name ‘*Tenzin Choegyal*’ by the Dalai Lama, meaning ‘the protector of faith’ and ‘the religious King’. In mid 1639 once again due to the religious persecution of *Gelug* faith in the predominant Bon kingdom of *Beri*, *Sonam Choephel* sought *Gurshi Khan*’s military assistance despite the letters reputation of ruthlessness against the military foes and civilians alike (Kapstein, 2006). *Khan* immediately responded positively and embarked on the crusade to ‘free’ *Gelug* faith from the ‘evil’ presecution of *Beri* King, who was again an ally of *Tsangpa* Ruler. In following years (1639-1641) Civil war and massive bloodshed ensured resulting into the triumph of *Gurshi Khan*, who then as ‘dutiful’ supporter transferred over the rulership of Tibet into the hand of the 5th Dalai Lama (Shakabpa, 1967; Maher, 2007). For the first time since the collapse of Tibetan empire in 9th century whole three traditional region of Tibet was once again united under the leadership of great 5th Dalai Lama (Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013, Shakabpa, 1967; Snellgrove & Richardson, 1968), traditional scholarship asserts that *Gurshi Khan* retained the nominal status of ‘King of Tibet’ since he was addressed as ‘King’ by the 5th Dalai Lama (see Smith, 1997; Kapstein, 2006; Schaeffer,

Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013) but this seems not to be the case, because according to Samten Karmay, *Gurshi Khan* was addressed as ‘King’ by the Dalai Lama because he was by then the ‘king’ of *Qoshot* Mongol (Karmay, 2005). However, it is generally agreed amongst the scholars that the Mongols had a little to no role in the internal administration of Tibet and their duties were strictly confined to the military assistance for ‘protection of Gelug faith’, but in practical terms due to their military power Mongols constantly did interfere in the internal matters of Tibet. It appears that in his youth, the 5th Dalai Lama though a nominal head of Tibet had a little actual authority in the matters of state, which during the period seems to have been entirely controlled by his regent *Sonam Choephel* in collaboration with *Gurshi Khan*. The 5th Dalai Lama unlike any of his predecessor was a person of great capabilities and with time slowly (re)gained his power at the expense of regent and Mongols. He changed the institution of regent-ship with that of Tibetan imperial ‘*desi*’ (prime-minister) system, which was made responsible for all the governmental functions. Later he appointed ‘*Desi*’ for a period of 3 years, most important among them was the 5th *Desi Sangay Gyatso* (1653-1705); a great learned and an astute politician.

‘The great 5th’, as the later Tibetans would recall him, along with his trusted *Desi Sangay Gyatso* sought to consolidate the political unity of all Tibet thus embarked upon the creation of ‘religio-political’ ideological hegemony. The earlier sectarian warfare of (1639-1641) which saw a tremendous amount of bloodshed of both military and civilians, resulting in to the general dissatisfaction among the people, were thus religiously justified (Maher, 2010). In the writings of 5th Dalai Lama, Mongol *Gurshi Khan* was hailed as the ‘emanation of *Vajrapani*’, ‘the second *Songtsen*’, who, out of compassion for humanity initiated a war in order to maintain peace (ibid). This sacrilisation of warfare was widely disseminated and violent source of Dalai Lama’s rule was partially justified. Next both Dalai Lama and the *Desi* made a constant effort to capitalise on the ‘cult of *Avaloketesvara*’, who was then widely believed to be the patron saint of Tibet and who has earlier incarnated as the Tibetan King *Songtsen Gampo* (617-650). The great 5th moved his government to the ancient imperial capital city of Lhasa, which was also the stronghold of *Gelug* order, where he started his construction project of palace over the earlier remains of ‘*Marpo ri*’(red hil) palace, credited to have been built by *Songtsen*

*Gampo*. The new palace ‘Potala’ was named after the mount *Potalaka*, a mythical abode of *Avalokitesvara*. Moreover after the death of *Gurshi Khan* in 1655, Mongols suffered an internal strife thereby Tibetans now increasingly resenting Mongol’s domination sought to overthrow it, once again the traditions associated with imperial Tibet was revived and foreign (Mongol’s) titles and clothing were discouraged (Snellgrove & Richardson, 1968). From 1670s onwards Dalai Lama’s authority in eastern Tibet have been reasserted, many new *Gelug* monasteries in whole of Tibet were built e.g. there were in *Amdo* region there were some 60 *Gelug* monasteries in the first two and half century of its establishment (1400s –1650s) and in the next two centuries (1650s to 1850s) there were over 350 new *Gelug* monasteries founded (Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013). These monasteries served as an extension of Dalai Lama’s religious and temporal authority in the region and after the death of *Gurshi Khan*, Dalai Lama in a formal edict even claimed authority over Khan’s Mongol subjects (ibid). The overall period of 5th Dalai Lama’s reign marked the remarkable period in the history of Tibet, sectarian conflicts were subdued and apart from *Jonang* sect, major reconciliation was pursued with *Kagyü* and *Bon* religion (Snellgrove & Richardson, 1968). In one of the official decree, 5th Dalai Lama recognized the *Bon* as one of the official religion in Tibet (Karmay, 2013) and even assisted the establishment of small Muslim Tibetan community in two major city of Tibet; Lhasa and *Shigatse* (Arpi, 2008). The 5th Dalai Lama was particularly known for this non-sectarian doctrinal outlook, for he had received teachings from various important *Nyingma* masters. All these illustrates to the fact that the earlier sectarian conflicts in Tibet were non-doctrinal and mainly political in nature, once the political stability was been maintain by and large sectarian issues were subdued or never became a major societal issue.

The sudden demise of 5th Dalai Lama in 1682 and the concealment of the news by *Desi Sangay Gyatso* for some remarkable 15 years until 1696(Maher, 2007), was a major shock for the people of Tibet as well as for both Mongols and the Chinese emperor *Kangxi*. During the period *Desi* secretly recognised the reincarnation of 5th Dalai Lama and placed the child under his close supervision. In between the time, he was pursued closer ties with the *Dzungar* Mongol in order to counter the role of new *Qoshot* Mongols leader; Lhazang *Khan* and the latter’s ally Manchu emperor *Kangxi*. Internally despite the



initial shock, Tibetans gradually embraced *Desi's* installed boy as the real incarnation of the 6th Dalai Lama but among the nobilities and monastic segment, particularly among the *Gelug* hierarch, *Desi* was becoming increasingly unpopular, possibly for his Nyingma leaning inclination, clearly despised by *Gelugpa* hierarch (ibid). This internal lack of support for *Desi* was calculated and capitalised upon by external powers, mainly *Lhazang Khan* who with the assistance of his Manchu ally attacked and killed *Desi* in year 1705 and declared the then 6th Dalai Lama as 'unreal' and sent him into exile, where subsequently on his way to China he passed away (Shakabpa, 1967; Kapstein, 2006). The new Mongol ruler instead arbitrarily installed another boy as the 'real' 6th Dalai Lama, for which throughout the decade of *Lhazang Khan's* rule in central Tibet, he was popularly resented, for he alienated the monastic segment and lost the popular source of legitimacy by deposing the 6th Dalai Lama. In year 1710, *Lhazang Khan* for the first time in centuries officially proclaimed Manchu's protectorate-ship over Tibet (Petech, 1972). Resentment against him grew over the years and finally in 1717, *Dzungar Mongols* along with the 'three great monasteries' of Lhasa attacked and killed *Lhazang Khan* (Snellgrove & Richardson, 1968). *Dzungar* despite their initial promise to bring back the 7th Dalai Lama to Lhasa, started plundering the holy city and persecuted the *Nyingmapas*, for *Dzungar* were the zealots *Gelug* followers (Maher, 2007). *Dzungar's* enmity with Manchus alarmed the latter, who perceiving the possible threat to its eastern frontiers and thus sent a large troop of over 7000 armies to Lhasa but the Chinese troops were completely annihilated by *Dzungar* force. Around the same time *Pholanas*, an able lay governor under the *Lhazang Khan*, mobilized Tibetan followers and attacked *Dzungars*, who was finally forced to retreat out of Central Tibet, the 2nd Chinese force dispatched to central Tibet never faced the *Dzungar* force (Shakabpa, 1967).

The 7th Dalai Lama who was born in 1708 in *Lithang* area of eastern Tibet was secretly recognised as the incarnate of late 6th Dalai Lama, subsequently perceiving the danger to his life due to the controversial contradiction it poses to then *Lhazang Khan's* installed 6th Dalai Lama, he was sent to *Kumbum* Monastery in 1715 under the 'protection' of Manchu force. Thus when *Dzungar* Mongols were expelled from Central Tibet, Manchus insisted upon 'delivering' the 7th Dalai Lama to Lhasa under their safe 'protection' and soon after reaching Lhasa, Manchu emperor *Kangxi* issued a

proclamation of 1721, establishing its over-lordship (Petech, 1972; Snellgrove & Richardson, 1968). Tibet due to its internal weakness chooses not to confront the imperial decree, the administration of Tibet was left with the four council of ministers and Manchu court's representative office was established in Lhasa, known as *Ambans*. Around over 2000 Chinese troops were also left behind in Lhasa with *Ambans*, which eventually affected the price rise and supply shortage leading to popular resentment against Manchus (ibid). Manchu's troop were subsequently reduced and thereafter in 1727/8, civil war in Tibet ensued, leading to the rise of charismatic lay leader *PhoLanas*, during whose reign 7th Dalai Lama was exiled and Manchu's nominal overlord-ship over Tibet was not challenged (Shakabpa, 1967; Petech, 1972). His son *Gyurmey Namgyal* however was an ambitious and despotic ruler who sought to declare Tibet's independence by allying with *Dzunger Mongols*, his plan was intercepted by *Amban* in Lhasa, who under the guise of important meeting invited him to their residence and murdered him. Since *Gyurmey Namgyal* was thoroughly hated by his subjects for his despotic rule his murder didn't provoked any retaliation from the nobilities and monastic segments, however one of his attendant who escaped the murder scene mobilized some thousand men and succeeded in razing the *Amban* residence to the ground, killing both *Ambans* and some hundred Chinese soldiers (Petech, 1972). The 7th Dalai Lama intervened, reasoning the just treatment of despotic *Gyurmey Namgyal* and arrested the ringleaders of mob; thereafter the imperial troops arrived leading once again to the proclamation of 1751 (ibid). The imperial proclamation recognises the sovereign right of the Dalai Lama over Tibet and at the same time initiated a series of reform intended to reduce the lay aristocratic share in it. It must be noted that during the reign of *Pholanas* for the first time in the history of post-empire Tibet, standing Tibetans army of some 10,000 professional horse-soldiers and over 15,000 foot soldiers were created (Petech, 2013: 23) but with the ecclesiastical rule in post-1751 period, army were neglected and its efficiency declined, direct effect of which was felt some four decades later during the 1st Gurkha invasion in 1791/2. After the death of 7th Dalai Lama in 1757, for next almost one and half century until 1895, 94 percent of the periods were ruled by the reincarnate regent, most Dalai Lama in between the period died before their age of maturity (Goldstein, 1973). In year 1878, a young boy born near *Samye* monastery was recognised as the 13th Dalai Lama,

he was then escorted to Lhasa with great pomp and ceremony, a year later his enthronement ceremony was held at *Potala* palace, but he was not to assume the political power until 1895. The 13th Dalai Lama lived a tumultuous life, at the age of 25, his former regent attempted a failed assassination through ‘black magic’ (Shakabpa, 1967) and later in the beginning of 20th century, during the British invasion of Tibet, he was forced to flee into exile; first to Mongolia and then to China (Shakabpa, 1967; Goldstein, 1989). In 1910, while he was on his return journey to Lhasa from the Manchu imperial court, once again Chinese warlord, *Chao Erfang* invaded Tibet and the 13th Dalai Lama was forced to flee into Exile, this time in British India where he travelled extensively and developed a ‘friendly’ relationship with British. In 1912 when the Manchu empire was on its verge to collapse, Dalai Lama from exile coordinated a revolt against the Chinese warlord and in 1913 after returning back to Lhasa, he declared Tibet’s independence (Shakabpa, 1967; Bell, 1996). The 13th Dalai Lama upon returning back to central Tibet sought to create a more centralized state, thereby introducing a series of socio-economic and political reforms aimed at modernising Tibet but these reform measures were perceived by the conservative and powerful (Gelug) monastic circle as endangering not only their politico-economic interest but also the very ideological core of Buddhism, thus the reforms are thwarted (Goldstein, 1989). In 1933, the 13th Dalai Lama passed away resulting once again into the long period of regent-ship and for next over one and half decade, internally Tibetan society was plunged into the series of internal strife, first between the Regent *Taktra* and *Reting Rimpoche* and then later in an all out civil war between the Lhasa government headed by *Taktra* and the monks of *Sera Che* monastery (ibid). Externally with the 1949 establishment of Chinese Communist Party in Beijing, Tibet was facing an all out attack on its eastern part. Amidst this political crisis in the centre, the young 14th Dalai Lama; Tenzin Gyatso, was called upon to take up the political leadership of Tibet (see Shakya, 1998; Goldstein, 1989). In retrospect, throughout the de-facto period of Tibet’s independence (1913-1951), opportunities for internal reforms were missed and the quest for ‘modernisation’ abandoned but these internal reason alone cannot subsume the reason behind the occupation of Tibet, since China’s present domination over Tibet has much less to do with latter's fateful ‘demise’ but more to do with the formers military colonisation.

## **Histories of Eastern Tibet**

In much of the above writings, this paper has specifically focused on the history of Central Tibet and little has been said regarding the region of Eastern Tibet. The idea of 'Tibet' as unitary political entity is problematic (See Samuel, 1993; Kapstein, 2006) and thus any history writing of 'Tibet' must necessarily deal with the Tibetan areas beyond the Lhasa administration or more appropriately beyond Central Tibet. Though as earlier mentioned, 'non-centric' approach to Tibetan history is problematic but this principle shouldn't discourage us from engaging in demystifying 'Tibet' as a singular homogenous polity. Tibet a vast territory has a multiple stories in it, and these stories are interlinked with the multitude of degrees of sameness and differences, former often in cultural sphere and later in political. After the disintegration of Tibetan empire in mid 9th century, eastern parts of Tibet were among the first regions to break away the centre. Little today is known about the histories these regions until 17th century (Samuel, 1993) but most likely the whole region was further divided into smaller sub-regions ruled by tribes, principalities and local self-governing villages. These parts of Tibet traditionally seem to have maintained ambiguous relationship with both Central Tibetan government and various Chinese dynasties. Submerged in between the two powerful centres, local people seems to have developed an intriguing political strategy by constantly shifting allegiances and nominally submitting to the more powerful centres, overall they have been able to maintain their traditional internal autonomy with little outside interference (Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013; Carrasco, 1959).

The north-eastern part of Tibet (Amdo) in post imperial period has never been a home to single polity nor has it ever achieved the status of distinct state or became a province of any other polity (Tuttle, 2010). From 11th century on Tibetan kingdom of *Tsongkha* were dominant in the region but soon afterward in 13th century Mongol's invaded the area and placed it under their administrative control but these were never made part of their Chinese empire thus was administrated separately (ibid). Subsequently during the Ming period (1368-1644) the area was nominally under the Chinese overlordship but Tibetan kingdom of *Cone* and *Kagyü* traditions were dominant power within the

region, from mid 14th century Mongol slowly (re)gained control over the region. Around the period of early 17th century, the region was under the control of *Altan Khan* of *Tumed* Mongol tribe, who was then in religio-political alliance with Dalai Lama's *Gelug* order, but soon in around 1630s, it was attacked and captured by another Mongol tribe of *Chogthu*, who sought to help *Karma Kagyu*, then an arch rival of *Gelug* order (Maher 2007). The new Mongol ruler subsequently made a military alliance with *Tsangpa* King of Tibet but was again in few years time deposed by *Gurshi Khan* of *Qoshot* Mongol, later the descendants of *Altan Khan* as the main benefactor of *Gelug* order. The 5th Dalai Lama though nominally had the control over whole of Tibet but in practical terms, due to Tibet's vast area and weak bureaucratic system, most of the eastern parts of Tibet remained de-facto independent. Later in the beginning of 18th century when Manchu established its overlord-ship of Tibet, the whole region of *Amdo* was carved out and placed under the imperial administration based in *Xining* prefecture but again on practical terms, the internal administrations were mostly left with the natives and Tibetans exercised complete autonomy under the nominal rule of Manchus (Samuel, 1993). The status-quo between the Tibetans and Manchus where for the first time altered when in 1907, Manchu dynasty tried to place the region under its direct control, local people revolted and with the collapse of Manchu dynasty in China, the whole region fell under the *Hui* Muslim warlords (Tuttle, 2010). These warlords maintained nominal relation with new Republic government of China and frequently engaged in the battles against the rising local Tibetans under secular and religious leadership of important monasteries, such as *Labrang* and *Regkong*. These led to the warlords increasing alliances with Kuomintang government in China and reorganisation of *Amdo* region into *Qinghai* Province in 1928 (Samuel, 1993; Carasco, 1959), nevertheless *Hui* warlord *Ma Bufeng* based in *Xining* continued to be a dominant power until 1949 when it was finally annihilated by the marching PLA force.

History of *Kham* regions is less complicated than that of *Amdo* regions, since unlike later; former have a relatively lesser kind of multicultural and multi-ethnic composition for much of its history. This is not to say that unlike *Amdo* regions, its historical relations with central Tibet was that of harmony and peace, which was not that case. Throughout the much of known history of *Kham* post-empire period, it was the

contested region of power between Central Tibetan government, Chinese dynasties and local *Khampas*. The *Sakya* during the 13-14 century controlled the important principalities in *Kham* such as *Lingsang* and *Gonjo* (Samuel, 1993) but after the collapse of *Sakya* rule in Central Tibet, much of the regions in *Kham* seem to have become independent with often vague relationship to Ming. In 1642, *Kham* along with other regions of Tibet was incorporated under Lhasa Government (Karmay, 1998; Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013) but soon after the establishment of Manchu protectorate over Tibet, it fell under Manchu's influence and boundaries between *Kham* and Lhasa was fixed at *Bum-la*, area somewhat west of *Drichu* (Petech, 1972). Manchu's rules over the regions of *Kham* were mostly nominal and had exercised a little administrative control in the internal matter of estates. *Kham* region was divided into various kingdoms and principalities, most important among them were *Chakla*, *Derge*, *Lingsang*, *Nangchen* and *Lhatok*, these region along with others had their own local rulers, known as '*sDe-pa*', 'king (*rGyalpo*)', who were mostly reincarnate lamas or hereditary lay with monastic support e.g. *Dragyab*, *Chamdo*, *Riwoche* were ruled by Gelug reincarnate lama and *Nangchen*, *Derge* and *Powo* ruled by hereditary lay, former two has their ruler known as King (*rGyal-po*) (Samuel, 1993). Traditional area of *Kham* is spread over the vast territory, expanding beyond the west of *Drichu* River, a natural border between the Lhasa and Manchu's controlled *Kham* thus some western regions of *Kham* falls under the control of Lhasa administration such as *Markham*, *Lhatog*, *Gyade*, *Dragyab*, *Riwoche*, *Gonjo*, *Powo* and *Chamdo*, later *Chamdo* served as a seat for provincial governorship of *Kham* '*Do-me Chikyab*'. The Manchu-*Khampa* status quo was altered with the Chinese interventionist policy in around 1907, when the Manchu dynasty fearing western 'imperialist' intervention sought to reorganise the *Kham* regions under its direct control (ibid). This led to the general uprising among *Khampas*, which were ruthlessly crushed, leading to the huge destruction of monasteries and forcible removal of government of various petty estates. The 1912 fall of Manchu dynasty, led to the *Khampas* revolt against the foreign rule, Lhasa government pursued a dual strategy by engaging Chinese both through diplomatic channel to settle the Sino-Tibetan boundary (1914) and with the failure of which it started sending their military to 'liberate' its eastern territory from the Chinese domination (see Goldstein, 1989). Tibetan forces were steadily (re)gaining their

effective control over eastern parts of Tibet until the Chinese side pursued the 1918 truce of *Rongbatsa* thereby redrawing the new de-facto border between Central Tibet and Chinese controlled *Kham* area (McGranahan, 2003). This ‘border’ remained in place until (1930-1932) Sino-Tibetan war, which was precipitated by the conflict between the chief of *Beri* and *Nyarong* monastery, when later sought Lhasa government’s assistance and former from the Koumintang government (Goldstein, 1989). In the ensuing battle, Tibetan army after the initial victory when pressed forward was defeated by the regrouped Chinese army and was pushed back until *Yangtse* River; thereafter through British mediation truce of 1932 was signed (ibid). This de-facto border though remained in place until the final takeover of *Kham* by Communist force in 1949, but it must be noted that Tibetan government in Lhasa never recognised this border as de-jure and continued to claim its traditional authority over whole of eastern Tibet until *Dartsedo*.

### **The Ideological base of the Tibetan Polity**

One of the important debates surrounding the nature of pre-modern Tibetan polity or state system revolves around the understanding of Tibet as either ‘stateless’ or ‘galactic polity’ (Samuel, 1993), semi-bureaucratic-state (Goldstein, 1971) or Weberian-type highly bureaucratic state (Michael, 1982; Shakabpa, 1967). These analyses, as pointed out by Georges Dreyfus, reify the particular historical experience of state system in Tibet and universalise the reified model for entire Tibet without taking into account the historical ‘time’ differences. I would further argue that in addition for a need to take into account the ‘time’ factor in our analyses there is also a need to consider the ‘space’ factor, since in most of the above analyses it is not just the particular historical experience with the state-system that has been reified but also a particular regional experience of state-system has been universalised to whole of Tibet. Probably the degree of confusion arises first from the lack of agreement over what constitute ‘Tibet’? Whether the traditional areas of *Kham* and *Amdo*, as Tibetans today claim constitute the whole of Tibet or these areas are to be classified under the title of ‘ethnic Tibet’ (Bell, 1996; Goldstein, 1996) thus outside the analytical domain of Tibetan state system? This disagreement over the ‘space’ constitution of Tibet, the paper would argue could be resolved conveniently through the further division of ‘Tibet’ into various ‘regional space’

e.g. ‘western Tibet’, ‘central Tibet’, ‘eastern Tibet’ and more, depending upon one’s analytical concerns of ‘spatial focus’. Such spatial classification of Tibet is not only convenient from the analytical point of view but also reflects the true ancient nature of Tibetan political space (see Introduction). Thus by keeping in mind both the ‘time’ and ‘spatial’ factor, one could see a rather more comprehensive image of Tibetan polity, which is far from the unitary and static model but a polity under constant contestation and transformation.

### **Empire to Stateless Polity: State and Society**

During the empire period (7-9th century), the territorial constitution of the state was beyond today’s ethnic boundaries, which despite its confederation-like political system, was at-least in theory a unitary political system. During the period, the basic social organisation of the later Tibetan society has been laid down, which though with time changed in degree but nevertheless retained the basis of its kind throughout the history of pre-modern Tibet (Dargyay, 2003). The customary legal concepts of the later period, based on the Buddhist ideas of ‘ten godly virtues’ and ‘the sixteen pure human laws’, has their roots in the empire period and not only that, but even the basic socio-economic structure of the Tibetan societies based on existence of hereditary ruling and ruled class was present since the empire period (Macdonald, 2003). Also despite the promulgations of Buddhist legal code of conduct during the empire period, recent evidence suggests that the Tibetan society then by and large remained unaffected by the foreign Buddhist doctrine, thus the political ideology of the Tibetan empire remained pre-Buddhist in nature. Consequently the Tibetan kings were mainly viewed as a ‘Son of gods’ (*Lha-sras*), who having descended from the heaven to rule over the men of Tibet, possess a divine right to ruler-ship but this divine right, unlike in the many contemporary western countries, doesn’t seem to be unconditional, it seems that the ‘just ruler-ship’ of the king was a necessary precondition for any legitimate political authority in ancient Tibet (See Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013). Tibetan political system of the empire period could be characterised as a unitary confederation-like polity. The post-empire period was marked with the centuries (842-1244) of decentralised local hegemonic rule, where both nobilities and monastic communities were unable to establish any large-scale



political centres, thus the Tibetan societies during the period were marked with the characteristics of ‘stateless-ness’, that is the absence of any state-power (See Samuel, 1993; Dreyfus, 1995). This societal precondition of ‘stateless-ness’ was according to Geoffrey Samuel (1993), a major reason for a kind of grassroots ‘shamanic’ religious development in Tibet. During this period of over four centuries, the Tibetan societies underwent a major cultural transformation from pre-Buddhist to Buddhist societies and thereby creating a new cultural basis for ethnic self-classification: Buddhist worldview. In mid 13th century, these politically dispersed small estates in central Tibet was forced to internally unify under the increasing external Mongolian threat, thereby resulting into the rule, first of *Sakya* and then of other various religion-backed-noble families in central Tibet (Stein, 2013; Richardson, 2003). The nature of Tibetan polity beginning from the *Sakya*’s rule in mid 13th century to the establishment of *Gelug* political authority in mid 17th century was marked by the characteristic of what Stanley Tambiah (2013) calls a ‘Galatic polity’. This state-system was essentially different from that of today’s modern western state, where the polity is conceptualised in terms of ‘bounded space’ within which the state has complete monopoly over the means of force, but in Galactic polity, the spatial constitute of the state is ‘centre-oriented’ thus, characterised by the shifting and blurred boundaries (ibid). This conceptualisation of the ‘territorial space’ as a variable entity, control over which diminishes as central authority radiate outward towards the peripheries, is integral to the schematic characterisation of traditional polity as ‘mandala’ composed of varying concentric circles (ibid) ). These concentric circle represents the centre-periphery relations, thus with each outward concentric circle, the authority of the centre diminishes thereby leaving only the nominal ‘claims’ of control over the peripheries, consequently resulting into the de-facto independence of the peripheral regions or the loss of peripheral areas to other powerful centres. In Tibetan case the constant loss and regaining of the western and eastern peripheral areas to and from the China and India are the results of the weak and strong political centre, moreover during the period (13th-17th century), the Tibetan political centre itself was constantly shifting between *U* and *Tsang*<sup>8</sup> though without much affecting the very nature of the

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<sup>8</sup> Lhasa was capital of Tibet for empire period (7-9 century) and for Gaden Phodrang government (1642-1959).

polity itself (Samuel, 1993). The Tibetan societies until mid 17th century was marked by the unstable and limited central authority whose attempt to pull together the periphery into a differentiated whole was done not so much by the use of force but through various elaborate performative rituals, such as '*Monlam* festival' since early 15th century (Dreyfus, 1995). The very act of centre's patron-ship over these elaborative rituals that binds the whole ethnic Tibetans, function as a reminder of its super-ordinate position vis-à-vis other smaller states beyond its direct sphere of political control. Moreover even within the so-called "centre's political sphere", that is central Tibet, apart from annual extraction of the service and tax and control over personals, central government has little role or interest in regulating the day to day internal administration of the estates (Goldstein, 1971; Carrasco, 1959).

### **State System in Tibet**

With the rise of Dalai Lama authority in Tibet from 1642 for almost a century after, Tibet is said to have been once again under a single political authority (Karmay, 1998) but such political claims of rule have little corresponding ground realities (See Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013). The political structure of the eastern Tibet throughout the period went under a little to no transformation and regionally the Dalai Lama's claims of authority was contested and often supplanted by the traditional local hierarchs. Throughout reign of 'the great 5th', the central authority in Tibet was completely relied upon the personal charismatic leadership of the Dalai Lama and thus soon after his untimely death the internal dissension resurfaced leaving a fertile field for external intervention (see Petech, 1972; Snellgrove & Richardson, 1968). From 1721 onwards, Tibet once again fell under the protectorate-ship of the Manchu emperor of China; the internal division of Tibet was once again carried on by the imperial power, thereby eastern part of Tibet was once again 'separated' from the Lhasa administration, both *Amdo* and *Kham* regions were placed under the control of *Xining* and *Sichuan* imperial office respectively (Petech, 1972). Such transference of nominal authority over the eastern parts of Tibet, from Lhasa government to Manchu empire had little to no corresponding affect over the basic social structure of these regions, since in both the cases, the external authority was merely nominal and rural masses were still under the

direct ruler-ship of the traditional local hierarchs (see Samuel, 1993). In central Tibet, after the failed coup attempt by the Tibetan king *Gyurme Namgyal* against the Manchu over-lordship, the Dalai Lama's sovereignty over central Tibet was once again re-affirmed by the Manchu emperor (Petech, 2003). The series of new reforms initiated by Manchus opened a new chapter in the history of Tibetan political system, for the first time in long recorded history of Tibet; a Tibetan polity was systematically bureaucratised (Petech, 1972). The later period's ideal of 'dual form of government' which is 'religion and politics combined' was formally instituted in 1751 (Dreyfus, 1995). Moreover a government was given a definitive structure with dichotomised administrative system between the laity and monastic communities, thus hereafter the exemption of monks from lay administrative rule was formally instituted (see Carrasco, 1959). At the top of the political hierarch, four councils of ministers; one monk and three laics were instituted under the sovereign leadership of the Dalai Lama, whose main responsibility was to oversee the day to day administrative functions of the government (Petech, 1972; Dreyfus, 1995; Goldstein 1971). The custom of maintaining private secretaries and other helpers by the council of ministers were abolished and replaced with the institutionally regularised governmental staff system to be approved by Dalai Lama himself (Petech, 1972). In addition these reforms, the authority of the Dalai Lama with regard to the appointments of the head of the monasteries were institutionally excluded; moreover the central government in Lhasa was henceforth made the last court of appeal for all the Tibetans within its jurisdiction. The military and the maintenance of law and order throughout the domain of Lhasa government was systematised and delegated to the provincial commander called '*Dapon*', who in-turns were to be appointed by the council of ministers (ibid). However it must be noted that the Manchus imperial reorganisation of Tibetan polity was not inherently incompatible and alien to the Tibetan society, these colonial reforms drew their legitimacy from the earlier existing traditions (ibid). The 'councils of minister' was instituted since the time of 5th Dalai Lama, though with little power and responsibilities then, moreover the appointments of the monk officials are said to have instituted first by the great 5th Dalai Lama thus it would be appropriate to see these reforms more in-terms of change in degree than in kind. These series of reforms resulted into the establishment of semi-bureaucratic state organisation in central Tibet,

whose sovereign authority no longer relied solely upon the personal charisma of the individual Dalai Lama but increasingly gained its legitimacy in the form of an institutionalised set of government headed by the person of Dalai Lama (Dreyfus, 1995; Goldstein, 1971). George Dreyfus has characterised this nature of Tibetan polity from 1751-1949 as a ‘semi-bureaucratic state’, but I would argue that such characterisation fails to take into account the entire spatial constituent of Tibet. The characterisation of ‘semi-bureaucratic state’ was undoubtedly applicable to the territorial space within the control of Lhasa government but to the regions beyond the east of *Drichu*, the administrative mechanism of centre was not applicable, thus understanding of Tibet as a semi-bureaucratic state is also problematic.

Tibet, this paper would argue, by then had acquired a part-bureaucratic and has retained part-galactic characteristics and this fusion of two, is not only the result of the weak central government but also due to the lack of any major technological advancement in Tibet, without which the natural ecological barriers of Tibet remained a formidable challenge for any centralised unitary state. During the period of 1751-1949, the Tibetan areas under the control of Lhasa government was partially bureaucratized and since the reorganisation of the centre was not a result of gradual transformation but an abrupt changes due to the imperial policies, the larger peripheral estates beyond the control of Lhasa administration remained largely unaffected. These regions continued to see Lhasa as their cultural and religious centre, whose centrality vis-à-vis the marginal selves were (re)affirmed only through various performative ritual actions (see Samuel, 1993), such as frequent religious and scholastic pilgrimage to Lhasa from all over the ethnic Tibetan regions (see Huber, 2003). Politically the domination of Lhasa government was despised and contested by the eastern Tibetan regions of *Amdo* and *Kham* or even by the estates within the jurisdiction of Lhasa government such as *Tashi Lhunpo* estates of Panchen Lama (see Goldstein 1989). Thus this new model of polity in Tibet from 1751-1949 largely remained galactic in nature, where the peripheral regions are pulled together not by force but by elaborate performative rituals under the secular patron-ship of the centre. The territorial conception of the state largely remained ‘unbounded’ and ‘centre-oriented’ with multiple overlapping zones of allegiances (Tambiah, 2013). This largely galactic nature of the Tibetan polity was in and around the

centre partially bureaucratised but with the increasing outward distance from the centre, autonomy of the regions increases to the point of becoming de-facto independent. From the centre's perspective, the peripheral eastern estates, even though for centuries remained largely independent or under the nominal control of the dynasties in China, remained still an integral part of the 'Tibet', frequently expressed in the language of 'greater Tibet' (Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013), reflection of such claims can be seen throughout the 20th century 'negotiation' between China and Tibet (Goldstein, 1989). From the peripheral *Kham* and *Amdo* regions perspective, despite the cultural and religious affinities with the central Tibet and more particularly with the Lhasa, the traditional political autonomy of the regions are at all cost maintained through constant negotiation and renegotiation of nominal control between the two powerful centres; that is central Tibet and China (Samuel, 1993; Carrasco, 1959; Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013). In conclusion it will not be inappropriate to say that before Chinese final military invasion in 1949, there was no politically unified entity called 'Tibet' but a series of contesting and diffused political 'centres', each with their own further subunits, the culture and political boundaries of pre-modern Tibet were incongruent.

## **Territorial Conceptions and Identities in Pre-Modern Tibet**

### **Pan-Tibetan identity**

The earliest known recorded history of Tibet from the empire period, configures the existence of some forms of collective identity among the Tibetan people, which is probably indigenous and pre-Buddhist in nature (Karmay, 1996). These available literatures clearly shows the Tibetan people's conceptualisation of territorial 'Tibet' in between the four points of concentric square, namely India to the south, Iran to the west, Turkestan to the north and China to the east (Stein, 1972). Such conceptualisation of the centrality of Tibet vis-à-vis other great powers, was accompanied by the idea of its divine ruler, '*Nyatri Tsenpo*', who being a god in heaven have descendent upon earth to rule over the men of 'high country and pure land', the centre of "snowy mountains" and the "source of great rivers" (Kirkland, 2003). Beyond such territorial and regnal identification, people of Tibet during the period often used the expression of 'black headed' and 'red faced' as a means of self-identification (Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle,

2013). Moreover during the period there was a separate office for ‘colonial administration’, known as ‘*delon*’ (Kapstein, 2006), whose administrative details are though unclear but nevertheless presence of such ‘colonial office’ establishes the fact that, within the domain of Tibetan empire there was a clear we/they distinction. The available evidence from the imperial period also suggests the presence of pride among the people of Tibet for their perceived unique and sacred ecology but with the gradual penetration of Buddhism into the Tibetan societies, the sense of centrality was transformed to the marginality to the new religious centre; India (Gyatso, 2003). The earlier Tibetan world view of the ‘concentric square’ was moved downwards to the south thereby placing India into the new centre and thus consequently the idea of Tibet was pushed into a marginal north. This marginalisation was not only limited to the geographical location but the whole idea of ‘Tibet’ was demonized, from the land of ‘best men and best horse’ (Snellgrove & Richardson, 1968; Karmay, 1996), Tibet was now (re)described as ‘the land of the bad ones’, ‘land of the red-faced flesh eating demons’ and ‘Tibet, land of hungry spirit’ (Gyatso, 2003). These revisionist Buddhist historiography, beginning from the 13th century in the form of ‘*terma*’, selectively appropriated the imperial past for the pre-eminent need of chaotic present, since the period was marked by the increasing Mongolian threat and remembering the ‘religious kings’, who symbolizes the perennial order was strategic situational response by Tibetans (Dreyfus, 2003). These ‘*termas*’ not only described the ‘origin’ of Tibetan race but also contains the part-mythical and part-historical accounts of Tibetan empire; particular important ‘*termas*’ among many others are ‘*Mani-Kabum*’ and ‘*Kathang De-nga*’ (Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013). *Mani-Kabum* in particular for the first time, describes the territorial space of Tibet as being constituted by the vast body of supine demoness, said to have perceived first by Chinese princess of *Songtsen Gampo*, through her geomantical chart to determine reasons for encountering problems in transporting the sacred statue of Buddha Shakyamuni in Tibet (Kapstein, 2003; Gyatso, 2003). Thereafter the King is said to have physically pressed down the waving arms and legs of the demoness by building a thirteen sets of temple over her body in concentric square centring around the *Jokhang* in Lhasa, this story of taming the demoness landscape of Tibet not only reaffirms the ‘centre-oriented’ political structure of the state (Miller, 1998)

but also effectively creates an imaginative map of Tibet, with three concentric squares around the centre of Lhasa.

*Mani Kabum* not only ‘Buddhisified’ the Tibetan landscape but has also constructed the whole new Buddhist conception of ‘Tibet’ and ‘Tibetan race’ by placing the ‘cult of *Avaloketesvara*’ at the centre of this new identity discourse (Kapstein, 2003; 2013). The origin of ‘Tibetan race’ was (re)mythologised and it was claimed that the ‘Tibetans’ were the descendents of the union of male Monkey and a female Ogress, who in-turn were the emanation of ‘*Avaloketesvara*’ and the ‘goddess Tara’ respectively (ibid). After ‘biologically’ fathering the ‘Tibetan race’, *Avaloketesvara* himself, according to the legend, was assigned the guardian-ship over the dark realm of ‘Tibet’, henceforth the realm of Tibet became the sphere of his personal activities (Dreyfus, 2003; Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013). Such mythologisation and the gradual popular dissemination of the legendary ideas created among Tibetans a deep sense of belonging to the ‘distinct community’ having ‘special’ relationship with the ‘father’ figure of *Avaloketesvara*. Moreover these text were not merely concerned with the cultural history of Tibet but were also preoccupied with the political fate of Tibet in-terms of its eminent future conflict with Mongols, China and others (Dreyfus, 2003). It should also be noted that, these mytho-historical stories had a popular characteristics and were not merely confined within the upper clerical circles, since the very nature of the ‘*terma*’ tradition of Nyingma sect are largely non-monastic and lay dominated, thus its widespread dissemination has a popular grassroots characteristics (ibid). Moreover the tradition of wandering bards (*Bla ma Mani-pa*) in Tibet, who would travel throughout the ethnic Tibetan region singing the songs of classical tales about “the life of Buddha”, “*Gyaltsa* and *Beltsa*” and many other Tibetan narratives, often taken from the “*terma* text” such as “*Mani-Kabum*”, enables the illiterate Tibetans to understand the literary content of these mytho-historical text (see Snellgrove & Richardson, 1968; Dreyfus, 2003). Throughout the (12-14) centuries, the volumes of such ‘religious text’ on the legends of imperial figure were increasingly composed, each text were filled with the evermore mythical view of the Tibetan past thus (Schaeffer, Kapstein and Tuttle, 2013). Therefore it wouldn’t be inappropriate to assume that at least by 14th century there was a widespread sense of “loose-knit collective identity” among the people of Tibet.

Moreover, since no identities are possible in isolation, which is there can be no “us” without the idea of “them”, in the Tibetan case the knowledge of mytho-historical past was reinforced by the ‘relativisation’ Buddhist faith with its now increasingly Islamicised neighbours, resulting into the territorialisation of faith (Snellgrove & Richardson, 1968).

### **Contextualising Identity**

For any identity analyses in general and for the Tibetan case in particular, it is important analytically to contextualise the identification process into its appropriate framework. Identities are never “singular” or “innate” in us, therefore rather than seeing it as something that we “possess”, we should understand “identities” as the result of “process of identification”, and consequently identities changes along with the processual change (Jenkins, 2012). Moreover every individual has multiple identities, that is, I can be sexually a “men”, ethnically “Tibetan”, ideologically “liberal”, and professionally a “student” and also within each identity there are hierarchical layers of identities, e.g. I am *'Tsang-shungpa'*—*'Nangchenpa'*--*'Khampa'*-*'Bod-pa'*--*'Central Asian'*--*'Asian'* etc, thus each of my identities depends upon the ‘process of identification’ that is context-specific. Such understanding of ‘multiple’ and ‘hierarchically layered’ identities are the key to the holistic understanding of identity formation in the pre-modern Tibetan society. R.A. Stein in his monumental work “Tibetan civilisation”, he mentions that “it is its civilisation that unifies Tibet” (1972: 26) but for our purpose of understanding, the word “unify” presupposes the identification of bordering “Others”, who are different and thus needed or could be excluded. Stein’s underlining of the ‘Tibetan civilisation’ as unifying force for Tibet was based on his macro inter-civilisational analyses, where from the perspective of two or more interacting civilisations, each one has the potential for internal unification against the differing civilisational “Others”. Thus it is an apt for us to raise a pertinent question, which is, what happens when in individuals daily life, the above theoretical experience of inter-civilisational interactions are minimal to the point of being non-existent and instead are supplanted by constant intra-civilisational interaction.



## **Diffused Identities in Pre-modern Tibet**

Territorial space of Tibet is immensely vast and sparsely populated; the landscapes are marked by the numerous natural barriers such as mountains and rivers, which traditionally confined the larger section of the society within a particular region. These regional confinements were though supplanted by the substantial amount of frequent laborious travel outside their particular region for trade and pilgrimage purpose but these increasing outward regional interaction, this paper would argue creates a further sense of difference among the interacting inter-regional groups and engenders the sense of ‘common-ness’ among the intra-regional groups, consequently the idea of ‘*Phayul*’ or ‘fatherland’ in traditional societies are confined to a narrow ‘regional space’ such as ‘*Nangchen*’, ‘*Shigatse*’ or ‘*Tsongkha*’ etc. Though it is also a fact that such increasing inter-regional interactions within ethnic Tibetan population would no doubt generates a sense of ‘common-ness’ primarily based on religion-induced culture, but such feelings of ‘common-ness’ I would argue are overlaid by the more pertinent and ‘experientially real’ differences based on regions. Cultures are experientially lived therefore despite its outward similarities, cultures are internally diverse thus in the absence of any ‘overt cultural-outsiders’, the intra-cultural differences overrides the intra-cultural similarities. Likewise in Tibetans case, the common masses in traditional societies were more concerned with their region-based cultural identities such as ‘*Khampa*’ ‘*Amdowa*’ and ‘*Bod-pa*’, which are more experientially real than the abstract super-ordinate identity such as ‘*Bod-rig*’ or ‘*Bod-kha-pa*’.

Moreover besides these socio-cultural reasons of identity formation in Tibetan societies, there are political dimensions to it as well, ethnic Tibetan population since the empire period has never been ‘united’ under a single political authority consequently their political allegiance are never singular but comprised of series of hierarchal and overlapping allegiances. The eastern Tibetan regions of *Amdo* and *Kham* in general resented the ‘dominance’ of Lhasa government of central Tibet, often perceived to be corrupt and despotic in nature and thus time and again in the history of Tibet, there have been a constant inter-regional power struggle, resulting often into alliance with the foreign power to meet their respective political end. People in each region identify

'others' based on the stereotypical model of understanding and it is these process of 'othering' others that in long run becomes a source for we/they differentiation. People in central Tibet would negatively stereotype the *Khampas* as 'uncouth', 'ill-mannered' and 'hard-headed' barbarians thereby treating 'them' with contempt, whereas on the other side *Khampas* would reverse the process by negatively stereotyping the people from central Tibet as 'docile', 'poor' and 'coward' consequently resulting into reverse-contempt. Such stereotypically 'otherings' of 'internal others' in the absence of any overt 'external Others' resulted into the predominance of identities based on the multiple layers of regional and sub-regional identities and these layered sense of distinct identities were not only confined within the population of eastern Tibet but also were prevalent amongst the subjects within Lhasa administration. As we have observed earlier that the political system of central Tibet is such that, apart from few imperative political powers and the roles for a stable and functioning central authority, most of the state powers are delegated to the sub-unit estates, who in-turn has a complete internal autonomy over its subject population that often the prime political loyalties of these subject people are mainly with their respective lords rather than with central government.

Moreover from the religious perspective, despite Buddhism acting as a spiritual force for communal bonding, there are still a large intra-religious variation which in the absence of any outside competing force, exacerbates the internal differences to the point of culminating into sectarian-ism. Moreover contrary to the popular belief, Buddhism in Tibet is largely non-clerical and has mainly retained its 'shamanic' characteristics (Samuel, 1993), thus is devoid of any centralised authority. Also until recently, there is no Pope-like figure in Tibetan Buddhism and even the 'supreme' authority of Dalai Lama was mainly recognized in-terms of its political aspects, religiously Dalai Lama was seen as a high Lama but not without equals. Within Tibetan Buddhism each sects has their own respective spiritual hierarch(s), whose 'supreme' authority amongst the followers of a given sect is generally undisputed. Moreover the very idea of 'root lama' in Tibetan Buddhism, which is one of its core principles, makes the possibility of any singular religious authority an anomaly. There can be no singular 'supreme' source of spiritual authority other than one's own respective 'root lamas', who not only acted as their spiritual guide when living but even after-death. Thus such decentralised conception of

religious authority in Tibet accompanied by the corresponding political influences plays a vital role in the formation of diffused Tibetan identities. For instance, the subject population of Panchen's estate of *Tashi Lhunpo*, for both religious and political reasons held their primary allegiance to the Panchen's authority rather than to a distant and relatively inaccessible seat of Dalai Lama, moreover in many parts of eastern Tibet, the 'supreme' spiritual authority of black-hat in *Khampa* was widely recognised.

In addition to above cultural, political and religious source of diffused identities, one can also look into the institutional dichotomisation of the Tibetan population into lay and monastic community, later possessing their own separate 'representative' officials within a government and a separate administrative jurisdiction system. Moreover the class based segmentation of Tibetan populations into 'noble-monastic lords' and 'commoner' (Miser) creates a highly stratified social structure (see Goldstein, 1972; Carrasco, 1959) resulting into the class-based segmented identities. Last but not the least, our understanding of identity formation in general and Tibetan case in particular would be incomplete and gross simplification without taking into account the gender perspectives. The Tibetan societies like any other pre-modern societies was patriarchal in nature, thus there was a gross misrepresentation of women population in any governmental institution and monastic order. The societal roles were gendered and most of the property inheritances were patrilineal in nature (Goldstein, 1971). In conclusion it was these 'intersections' or 'cross-sections' of region, sect, class and gender that has produced various diffused identities in Tibetan societies, incapable of any sense of 'horizontal comrade-ship', a necessary pre-requisite for any nation formation. It was in the absence of external others that despite common culture and common religion, Tibetan identities were mainly revolved around the intra-cultural and intra-religious differences.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Nationalism and Modern Tibetan Identity**

This paper attempt to outline the nature of initial Tibetan resistance against the Modern Chinese state and argue that Tibetan resistance in 1950s were based on individual's diffused identities, thus their struggles were largely localised. It was not for the national cause but for localised sub-regional or monastic concerns that forced the Tibetans to take up their arms against the Chinese. Paper argues that it was in exile that under the new objective condition, the Tibetan elite leadership embarked upon the process of nationalising its citizens through series of invented traditions and symbols such a national flag and anthem etc. This reorganisation of the anti-colonial Tibetan struggle along the nationalist line was mainly due to the institutional incentives or legitimacy that ethno-national struggle enjoys in the post Second World War period. It is also argued in this chapter that the exile pan-Tibetan nationalist discourse of '*Chol-sum Bod-mi*' found its way into Tibet during the 1980s liberalisation period, which was experientially negotiated and selectively adopted by Tibetans in Tibet. Moreover the Chinese state also played a crucial role in constructing pan-Tibetan identity through their modernist education system and national classification mechanism, later categorising the diverse Tibetan groups within a singular national group known as '*Zangzu*' (*Bod-Rigs*). The new pan-Tibetan identity got further crystallised through series of protest that erupted into Tibet, followed by ethnic-specific Chinese differential policies in Tibet. This pervasive sense of relative deprivation along with the penetration of western knowledge system of 'nation-state' was given a rise to Tibetan nationalism which unlike the earlier localised Tibetan concerns, now aspires for a singular modern nation-state.

#### **Identities in Early Tibetan Resistance**

Throughout the long history of Tibet, there have been numerous external conflicts (Tang China, Mongols, Manchu, British, Republic of China) often resulting into political subordination (Mongol, Manchu) but never in its entire history has Tibet faced a

challenge similar to that of Maoist China. Here the external thread was threefold: weighty and completely alien ideological force, massive colonial population influx and the pressure of modern 20th century world (Stoddard, 1996), which has completely altered the traditional socio-political structure of Tibet. This modernist PRC's colonisation not only ended the political sovereignty of the Tibet but also ended the social sovereignty of Tibetans. The traditional Chinese symbolic domination over Tibet was largely an 'elite affair' and didn't affect much of the apolitical Tibetan masses (See Norbu, 2001). For instance in the eastern part of Tibet, where Chinese had most of its 'influence' and which among Tibetans are known as 'Gya de' (Chinese dominion), the exercise of Chinese 'rule' was largely conducted through the native ruling elite. The social history of non-elite apolitical Tibetans were largely imbued with the sense of independence. This Tibetans' sense of 'independence' was not along the modern territoriality or legalistic conceptions but more within the experiential domain of culture and way of life (ibid). It is the alteration of this Tibetan sense of social sovereignty under modern Chinese colonialism that has provoked violent resistance from the Tibetan masses. For instance, in the Tibetan regions of *Kham*, a mere presence of Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) and the nominal incorporation of the area under People Republic of China (PRC) did not provoked native Tibetan's resistance, because during the period masses sense of 'social independence' was still largely intact. The incorporation of these areas under PRC was mediated through the traditional Tibetan ruling elites under the promise of continued religious freedom and protection of traditional socio-political structure (See Goldstein, 1989; Shakya, 1999). This process of 'elite co-option' which mediated between the Chinese state and Tibetan (*Khampa*) masses has resulted into the absence of *Khampa* resistance against marching PLA, at least until 1951 (Goldstein, 1989). In fact many *Khampas* due to their traditional dislike of Lhasan authority has willingly assisted the PLA's entry into Central Tibet, they essentially saw the confrontation as between Lhasa and Chinese (Goldstein, 1989; Shakya 1999). Whereas in central Tibet after the initial panic and attempted resistance (See Shakya, 1994), post-1951 Sino-Tibetan agreement, leadership in Lhasa by and large believed that religious Tibet could co-exist with Communist China, especially due to Chinese assurance of safeguarding traditional Tibetan socio-political structure (Shakya, 1999). Many in central Tibet welcomed Chinese presence as 'modernising' influence,

especially the inflow of Chinese silver dollar known as '*Da Yuan*'; an old nationalist Chinese currency especially minted by Communist to be used in Tibet, the modern Chinese paper currency was not accepted by Tibetans. Chinese strategy of co-opting the Tibetan elite got largely paid off, many aristocrats and traders in Lhasa earned a huge fortune through supplying the necessities of PLA, also receiving an interest free loan from Chinese government (ibid). Many aristocrats even sold their lands and provided accommodation to the Chinese at exorbitant price, not only that, these lands were cultivated by Tibetans often from the lowest class strata (Yeh, 2013). Moreover the strategic road connecting China and Tibet was built by PLA with the recruitment of around 30,000 Tibetans as wage labourers. It was the prospects of personal upward class mobility that played a key determining factor in their co-option within the Chinese colonisation project. Nevertheless, to be sure, there was also an aspects of Tibetan resistance, especially by then two Tibetan prime ministers, *Lukhangwa* and *Lobsang Tashi* who refused to sell grains to PLA from government reserve and insisted on return of the PLA occupied Chamdo Tibetan territory. Such nationalist opposition to Chinese authority resulted into their removal from the office in 1952 by Dalai Lama and Kashag under the increasing Chinese pressure. The duo Tibetan prime ministers were nevertheless very popular within the Tibetan masses, representing the prototypical model of incorruptible and staunch defender of Tibetan culture (Shakya, 1999). Moreover during the 1952 Monlam festival despite the Chinese attempts to woo the monastic communities through their financial patronage, anti-Chinese posters appeared on the streets of Lhasa demanding the withdrawal of Chinese and rejection of 17th point of agreement (ibid). These posters clearly illustrate the fact that the object of mass discontentment was not only Chinese but the perceived weak Tibetan leadership at the centre. These resistances to the perceived Chinese encroachment were mainly from the Tibetans of typical middle class background or commoner monks who despised both elite and impoverished Tibetans' cooperation with their colonisers. Nevertheless general political atmosphere during the period was characterised by an elite attempt to mutual coexistence and lack of mass radicalisation but soon with the Mao's campaign of 'socialist transformation', the parallel Tibetans experience of Chinese initial 'cultural accommodation' has diverged to an extent that by 1956 the eastern part of Tibet saw an

intensified process of 'collectivisation' and 'democratic reform' (Smith, 2009). These 'reforms' altered the very basis of traditional Tibetan socio-political structure in *Kham* and *Amdo* areas, thereby affecting the social experience of common Tibetans. This alteration of traditional Tibetan religio-political authority was seen by natives as an attack on the core of their belief system thus culminating into the violent resistance. In early years of 1956, twenty three *Khampa* chieftains leaving aside their generational feuds and traditional animosity planned a united frontal attack against their common enemy identified as '*tendra*' (enemy of faith). In this process of identifying the common enemy 'other', the respective 'selves' were contextually reconfigured into common 'us', thus for the first time since PRC's colonisation, intra-*Khampas* regional/sectarian differences were put aside thereby giving a way for new (re)defined 'selves' revolving around the common purpose of protecting the religion; these *Khampas* self-identified themselves as '*Tensung Dhanglang Magmi*' (The volunteer Army to Defend the Faith). The resistance in the eastern part of Tibet was a reaction to the Chinese attempt to alter the Tibetan sense of 'social independence', which as discussed earlier (See Chapter 2) culminated into the 10th March 1959 Lhasa uprising.

### **Modernity and Nationalism in Pre 1951 Tibet**

Tibet is conventionally understood as indisputably traditional, where the 'alien' modern culture was brought about by the 'modern' PRC's colonisation. Such interpretation grossly simplifies the complex Tibetans' historical experiences and conceptually configures the 'modernity' and 'traditional' as inevitably polarised incompatibility (Gyatso, 2011). In fact the aspects of cultural 'modernity' can be found in Tibet as early as the beginning of 18th century, largely due to its place within the Qing's imperial and cosmopolitan court but also due to European Jesuits presence in Lhasa (ibid). In the beginning of 18th century Tibetan Buddhist scholar name Lobsang Tenpa Gyaltzen wrote a series of notes on 'new astrology' and briefly introduced Johannes Kepler's model of planetary motion (Yongdan, 2011). Around the same period two Tibetan Lamas studying 'geometry' and 'arithmetic' in Beijing were commissioned by Kangxi emperor to survey the land of Tibet and later with assistance of Jesuits they drew the first ever scientific map of Tibet (ibid). Moreover in around mid 18th century another

Mongolian scholar of Tibetan Buddhism called Sumpa Yeshe Paljor (1704-1788) wrote a small book called 'brief description of the world'<sup>9</sup> which for the first time introduced the systematic knowledge of the existence of European states, this along with the George Bolge's written account of Europe in Tibetan for Tashi Lhunpo has provided a modicum of information about the European knowledge system among the tangible literate Tibetan elites (ibid). Furthermore in the beginning of 19th century a high Tibetan incarnate lama known as '*Tsan-po*', who was also the Chinese emperor seal holding lama, wrote a book detailing the world geography by employing both the traditional and European strands of knowledge (Yongdan, 2011; Tuttle, 2011). Such charting of the world geography based on the European knowledge system directly contradicted the traditional Buddhist conception of universe and the movements of sun, moon, earth and the stars but despite such iconoclastic writing in largely 'traditional' society, *Tsan-po's* iconoclasm went without the inquisition and punishment by religious authority or the government. Instead this modern knowledge of 'world geography' was discussed and both complimented and critiqued by various other high incarnate lamas including the 7th Panchen Lama (Yongdan, 2011). Such cultural receptivity toward the contradictory alien knowledge system speaks a volume about the level of cultural sophistication among the Tibetan literate elite. Moreover such epistemic challenge from the entirely different authoritative knowledge system relativises one's sense of Buddhist absolutism resulting into the 'territorialisation of faith' which according to Anderson foreshadows the modern language of nationalism (see Anderson, 1983). It must be also noted that *Tsan-po* though an 'imperial seal holder' nevertheless shows Tibet (*Bod*) as separate country, whose people are comprise of '*U-tsang*', '*Khampa*' and '*Amdowa*', though he doesn't make an explicit comment about the later.

These aspects of cultural modernity throughout early 18th to mid-19th century did not however get translated into full-fledged industrial or technological modernisation, due largely to Tibet's century long isolationist policy (see Chapter 1). Throughout the period, Tibetan societies remained largely enclosed and unaware about the modern technological and industrial development in the West and in its neighbouring areas

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<sup>9</sup> This book left out the North America, Africa, Australia and most of central and northern Europe.



(Norbu, 2001) but beginning with the late 19th to early 20th century; Tibet nevertheless saw a modicum of modernisation process initiated by none other than the 13th Dalai Lama himself. It was the Post-*Meiji* restoration and Japanese victory over Russia that has greatly inspired the 13th Dalai Lama who saw in Japanese emperor a progressive leader of an independent Buddhist nation (Norbu, 2008). The 13th Dalai Lama later sent few Tibetans to study in Japan and also invited two Japanese; *Tada Togan* and *Aoki Bunkyo* to Lhasa. It was the later; *Aoki Bunkyo* who translated among other things the Japanese military manual in Tibetans and also served as the principle advisor on foreign affair, providing 13th Dalai Lama with the summarised news updates from the Japanese and English newspapers (ibid). Moreover, one of the largest Tibetan army units was assigned to be trained under the modern Japanese military system headed by a veteran of 'Russo-Japanese war'. Not only that, the *Buriat Dorjiev*, who is traditionally (mis)understood to be a sinister Russian spy, nevertheless has a significant modernising influence over the young 13th Dalai lama, his knowledge of the world affair and international politics along with the close tutor-disciple relationship with the 13th Dalai Lama for over 10 years has contributed immensely to the shaping of young Dalai Lama's political outlook (ibid). Thereafter the post-exilic experience from (1910-1912), the 13th Dalai lama's socio-political outlook has undergone a remarkable changes evident from the series of social and administrative reforms initiated soon after his return in Central Tibet (see Goldstein, 1989). His 1913 'independence proclamation' reflects the selective appropriation of 'modern nationalist discourse', which is nevertheless non-secular and imbued with the religious idioms of Buddhist universalism. Among other things, the 1913 proclamation relativises the technological and (military) power inferiority of Tibetan nation with respect to other nations and thus uses the language of 'sacrifices' (voluntarily) necessary from all the Tibetans in order to protect and defend their land (See Shakabpa, 1967). Such political discourse emphasising upon of 'common national purpose' of self-strengthening against the impending 'common enemy' along with the irredentist emphasis upon the need to regain the lost territory of *Kham*, purposively sought to unite the 'addressees' within a singular imagined political community. However such nationalistic effort of political centralisation and militarisation received a huge setback from the powerful monastic communities and local estate rulers, whose traditional socio-political

authorities were threatened under the new envisioned modern political/nation state. The 13rd Dalai Lama's efforts of militarisation was carried forward by one of his closest favourite *Shape* (cabinet minister) and Commander in chief *Tsarong Daza Damdul*, who along with other members of his group shared a view that ultra-conservative monastic sections have weakened Tibet in past and presently brought to its knees thus the only way to regain its lost glory was to embrace modernisation along the British line (See Goldstein, 1989). *Tsarong's* overt westernisation and his dealing with heavy handedness in Tibet were unpopular among both the lay and monastic communities, capitalising upon which his detractors led by *Lungshar* engineered his downfall (Dhondup, 1986, Goldstein, 1989). *Lungshar* was a progressive aristocrat, who at the dawn of 20th century went to England as a guardian of four Tibetan students sent by the 13th Dalai Lama to receive modern education. While in Europe he travelled extensively to France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium and Holland thereby gaining a new insight into the ideals 'democracy', 'age of revolutions' and 'constitutional monarchy' (Goldstein, 1989). His experience in England developed in him a sense of independence from the British and thoroughly convinced him of a need for change in the socio-political system of Tibet, thus throughout the 1920s he worked his way up through various political manoeuvring and intrigues. In post-13th Dalai Lama's period with Kashag's inability to avert Chinese mission, *Lungshar* increasingly saw the leadership of Kashag as highly unsuitable thus attempted to alter the political system incongruence with his republican ideals (ibid). In 1934 he founded a secret party called '*Kyicho Kuntun*' which envisioned a republican government of Tibet led by the national assembly, who in turn select cabinet ministers (*Shape*) for four years would term rather than traditional system of lifelong position (Dhondup, 1986; Goldstein, 1989). Consequently his reform proposal of democratisation and republicanisation, which was an anathema for both aristocrats and Monastic ruling elites, cost him his fateful fall from the Tibetan political scene (ibid). In retrospect, *Lungshar* and his secret party (*Kyicho Kuntun*) was a first form of organised Tibetan nationalist party with the prime objectives of safeguarding the sovereignty of (central) Tibet. His organisation appealed to the 'patriotic officials' from both lay and monastic communities to oversee the inefficient and incompetent interregnum government from losing out Tibet's sovereignty to the impending Chinese threat. The party with the

exception of few high ranking officials is comprised mainly of the members from lower ranking strata, typically representing the 'middle class' group with the strong anti-Chinese dispositions, who has the least of interest in safeguarding the traditional political structure. *Lungshar's 'Kyicho Kuntun'* was nationalistic in a sense that it not only sought to oppose a mere 'external threat' but also despised the weak central leadership which he attempted to counter through some form of politicisation of masses (democratisation), nevertheless his reform ideals remained confined within a small section of Tibetan ruling elite.

### **Pan Tibetan Nationalism from Eastern Tibet**

While *Lungshars* reform failed in central Tibet, there was lot going on in the eastern parts of Tibet; a Tibetan region traditionally in most contact with Chinese and which has recently suffered directly under the *Zhao Erfeng's* military campaign. It was due to this traditional close interaction with the Chinese, the sense of distinctive identity consciousness developed first among the literate elite of this region. The Chinese under late Qing and then Republican Government established schools in the eastern Tibetan region where student's enrolment was made compulsory (Goldstein, 2004). Sun Yatsen's ideal of 'three principle of the people' were taught, which among other things introduced the concept '*minzu*' (nationality) and '*minzu zhuyi*' (nationalism) to the Tibetan students (Stoddard, 2013). Many of the well to do families also sent their children to mainland China for modern education, one such individual is *Bapa Phuntsog Wangyal*, who during his studies in China was introduced to Marxist ideas and later particularly inspired by its nationality policies, he along with his Tibetan friends founded in 1939 the first ever Tibetan Communist Party (*Bod rigs gung khran ring lugs gsar brje tshogs chung*). Interestingly the native term used for the newly founded party was not any region-specific names such as '*khampa*' or '*dokham*' but instead a nation-wide pan-Tibetan identified name of 'Bod-rigs' was used. This was later renamed in Lhasa as '*Bod mi dmangs gcig sgril mna' mthun tshog pa*' for public use and privately called as '*Gang ljong bod rigs gung khran ring lugs gsar brje tshogs chung*' both nevertheless retains the pan-Tibetan identity of '*bod rigs*' and '*Bod mi*'. The party's explicit objective was to reform *Kashag* and make its more representative of whole of Tibet and also to request weapons

from Lhasa government for guerrilla activities in *Kham* against Chinese forces (Goldstein, 1989). According to Abdul Wahid, who met *Bapa Phuntsok Wangyal* (*Phunwang*) and became a close friend, '*Phuntsol Wangyal* was an authentic Tibetan Nationalist who upheld pan-Tibetan theories and believed in the creation of a federation that would comprise all the Tibetan regions and ethnic groups, including Ladakh' (Stoddard, 2013). Nevertheless Phunwang's effort to bring socialist revolution in Tibet were to fail, mainly due to Tibetan's general antipathy towards communism<sup>10</sup> and monastic conservatism, his failure to bring internal changes has convinced him to join the external force and only later to become an instrumental figure in leading PLA forces into Tibet. However it must be underlined that his joining of PLA forces was under the communist ideal of equality between nationalities, whose interest according to the theory was to be safeguarded under a separate national autonomous system, *Phungwang* continued to profess pan-Tibetan theory of unification under national autonomous government (see Goldstein, 2004).

If *Punwang* represented Tibetan's encounter with socialism, *Pandatsang Rapga* was deeply influenced by SunYatsen's republican ideals and subsequently translated 'Three Principle of the People' into Tibetan (Stoddard, 2013). *Pandatsang* family was a powerful *Khampa* trader who had a complete monopoly over the lucrative wool trade business between Tibet and India, their family was associated with *Kunpel-la*, another powerful and the closest of the 13th Dalai Lama, after whose downfall their relationship severed with the Lhasa government. Eldest of the *Pandatsang* family *Topgyal* was a renowned warrior and had a huge following among *Khampas*, who after *Kunphel-la's* downfall declared a revolt against both Lhasa government and Sichuan Warlord *Liu Wenhui*. His effort to establish an independent '*Kham for Khampas*' failed and with that *Pandatsang Rabga* fled to India where he along with *Kunphel-la* and others founded Tibet's Improvement Party (*Nub Bod Legs bCos sKyid sDug*) based in Kalimpong and Darjeeling (Stoddard, 2013; Goldstein, 1989). The expressed objectives of the party was to restructure the entire Tibetan political system along the republican framework, far

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<sup>10</sup> 13th Dalai Lama in his last testament has explicitly warned against the future communist takeover, which in long run became the major policy guidance for the entire interregnum period (See Goldstein, 1989)

radical in proposal than *Lungshar's* reform proposals, and to 'liberate' Tibet from the existing outdated tyrannical government of Lhasa (Goldstein, 1989). The Party took financial assistance from the KMT government and was striving to create an autonomous Tibetan republic under the overall control of Republic of China (Kapstein, 2006). Nevertheless the *Rapga's* plan suffered a huge setback due to British finding out about the existence of the secret party and subsequently passing on the information to the Lhasa government. *Rapga's* residence was raided and despite KMT effort both *Rapga* and *Kunphel-la* was ordered for deportation to China. Another important figure though less active in the party was a famous poet and scholar Gendun Choephel from *Amdo*, who during his stay in India, has become familiar with the literature on Marxist-Leninist political philosophy and anti-colonial ideology thus shared with *Pandatsang Rapga*, the objectives of bringing reforms in Tibet (Goldstein, 1989). He was later sent to Tibet by *Rapga* to collect information about the border regions and also to draw a map of Tibet but Lhasa government informed about his activities was keeping *Gendun Choephel* under strict surveillance, finally resulting into his arrest in July 1947 (ibid). With this, the brief Tibetans experience with republican ideals abruptly ended, however it must be noted that despite the marginality of such movements in the political centre of Tibet, it nevertheless has sown a seed of nationalism or modernism among the literate elites of highly conservative Tibetan society. Both 'Tibet Improvement Party' and Tibetan Communist Party became possible not only because of their dissatisfaction with what they saw as a selfish, unsuitable and tyrannical Lhasa government, but due to the historical intersection of the 'internal degeneration' and 'penetration of external modern ideas'. These were not a mere localised resistance to an outsider or didn't aspired for particular regional 'liberation' but the party envisioned a pan-Tibetan republican polity, where all the ethnic Tibetans are to be united under the 'autonomous Tibetan republic'. It is such nation-wide ideals that has appealed to and united the members from *Amdo*, *Kham* and *U-tsang* around the singular common purpose of bringing change in Tibet. Thus early form of nationalist ideology seems to have its roots in Tibet since the beginning of 20th century but it was due to the traditional ruling elite, especially the powerful monastic communities, whose conservatism and personal interest thwarted the ideology from gaining any hold among the deeply religious Tibetan masses. Earliest nationalistic expression of the 13th Dalai

Lama led to the series of socio-political reforms aimed at self-strengthening through modernisation against the possible external threat. We/they national differentiation necessary for nationalist ideologue was evidently present and it was this perceived external threat from 'other' that resulted into the demand for internal political cohesion (centralisation). The 'grassroots' nationalist movements of 'Tibetan Communist Party' and 'Tibet Improvement Party' envisioned a pan-Tibetan national polity along either republican or socialist model, and this conceptualisation of nation-wide polity was made possible through early Tibetans encounter with the modern ideas of nation and nationalism. Thus by making an analytical differentiation between 'nationalism' as an ideology and 'nation' as an imagined political community, one can conclude by saying that the ideology of nationalism was present in Tibet since the beginning of 20th century but in the absence other necessary prerequisite such as technological modernisation, this 'imagined political community' was largely limited among the literate Tibetan elites. Such imagining of a political community within limited literate elite was also engendered by a publication of Tibetan language news paper known as 'Tibet Mirror' (*Yul phyogs so so'i gсар 'gyur me long*'). This new paper was first founded in 1925 by an ethnic Tibetan from Kinnaur region of British India called Rev. Tharchin, whose news publication was read, albeit within a limited circle, by Tibetans from all over the ethnic territory. Such nation-wide news publication created a unified field of exchange and communication between the 'fellow Tibetan readers' there by cognitively constructing the linguistic boundaries (see Anderson, 1983). The Tibet Mirror was subscribed by the 13th Dalai Lama and other Lhasan lay aristocrats and monastic hierarchs, some copies even reaching the eastern parts of Tibet (Engelhardt, 2011). Tharchin regularly reported stories from the different Tibetan areas such as Bhutan, Ladakh and eastern Tibet and also provided the detail information and maps of world enabling his readers to experience the wholly new ideas of simultaneity, which according Anderson is essential to the imagining of a national community (see Anderson, 1983).

Despite all these evidence of the early emergence of nationalist ideology in Tibetan society, the nationalist phenomena remained largely limited within few literate elite circle and masses were sense of identity was still mainly imbued with regionalism

and sectarianism, Tibetan society at large was heterogeneous and the intra-cultural differences were experientially reified into a concrete self-identity.

### **Tibet from 1951-1959**

As we have observed in the previous sections of this chapter, Tibet despite witnessing the aspects of cultural and technological modernity from the early 18th century, it nevertheless remained highly 'traditional' society on the eve of Chinese military occupation. This socio-political stagnation was largely due to its century long isolationist policies and monastic conservatism which has thwarted both the external penetration of modern ideas and also indigenous attempted modernisation (See Goldstein, 1989). Thus typical of any traditional agrarian-societies, ethnic Tibetans largely identified themselves based on intra-cultural differences, where individual social identities are produced through self-perpetuating local sub-units. Within Tibetan illiterate masses there was no overt sense of common belongingness let alone that of pan-Tibetan nationalism, thus when Communist militarily took over Tibet, Tibetans resistance were largely confined within the pockets and until 1956 (*Tensung Dhanglang Magmi*) there was no intra-ethnic Tibetans coordinated resistance against the Chinese coloniser. However it must be noted that this united frontal attack was also not based on any nationalist ideology, that is they didn't resisted Chinese occupier based on their perceived national differences vis-a-vis common 'national selves' but instead 1956 resistance was essentially a spontaneous strategic response against an external power for their violation of internal religio-political authority. The common religion in process became unifying force thus providing a new strategic religious identity (*Tensung Mangmi*), which is nevertheless context specific and has not obliterated the older regional/sectarian identities. However as discussed in the previous section of this chapter, there was historically few movements of pan-Tibetan nationalism which are though peripheral and marginal to the centre of Tibetan politics, has nonetheless remains an important chapter in the historical development of Tibetan national consciousness. Similarly in 1954 on the eve of Dalai Lama planned visit to Beijing, a people's resistance group called '*Mimang Tsongdu*' (people's council) was formed led by a *Lithangwa* trader called *Alo Chonzed* (See Shakya, 1999; McGranahan, 2010). The constituent members of this 'people's council'

was that of 'lower government officials' and traders (middle class) from all 'three regions of Tibet', who leaving aside their traditional differences united under a common purpose of safeguarding the person of Dalai Lama. They sought to persuade Dalai Lama from cancelling his planned visit to Beijing and also initiated a series of mass mobilisation campaign to unite Tibetans against their Chinese colonizers. *Mimang Tsongdu* set-up an organisation called 'welfare of the poor' to help refugees from eastern Tibet and to reduce then exacerbating resentment among Lhasan population against new refugee influx due to their perceived economic overburdening (See Shakya, 1999). *Mimang Tsongdu* was a first pan-Tibetan popular movement against Chinese, demanding their withdrawal from the Tibetan territory and which according to Tibetan historian Shakya 'not only challenged Chinese but also the political monopoly of Tibetan elite' (ibid). Subsequently under Chinese pressure Tibetan government declared '*Mimang Tsongdu*' illegal and its ring leaders were arrested by Tibetan police, however due to popular support and appeal from three great monasteries, they were eventually released. In retrospect *'Mimang Tsongdu'* despite its short life-span, nevertheless played a major role in generating a sense of common purpose among the Tibetans populace from across the sections, evident from their immense popularity.

Another instance of pan-Tibetan resistance was in 1958, when groups of *Khampa* traders from Lhasa led by *Andrug Gonpo Tashi* founded a resistance group named '*Chushi Gangdruk*' (ancient name for *Kham*) in *Lhokha* region of central Tibet. The initial impetus for the mobilisation of group was due to pervasive belief among Tibetans that Tibet was going through a period of 'degeneration'(belief reconfirmed by number of natural calamities in early 1950s) and Buddhism in particular would soon be vanished from the land of Tibet (Shakya, 1999). Thus group of people led by *Gonpo Tashi* collected donations from the people throughout Tibet in order to offer a 'golden throne' to the Dalai Lama as a mark of their religious faith and temporal submission. Such ceremony according to Tsering Shakya 'had a serious political and social implications, since all Tibetans were united in common purpose and shared value which helped them identify the common enemy-Chinese as *Tendra* (enemy of faith) and consequently selves as '*Tensung*' (protector of faith) (ibid). The objectives of the organisation though were along the supra-local forms of identifications (religion), whose members consist of



Tibetans from across the region and sect (McGranahan, 2010) but nonetheless the immediate concerns of the most Tibetans were that of their sub-national identities. *Khampas* dominated the organisation and the members of this 'national resistance army' were organised along the principle of '*Phayul*' (homeland), individual's sub-regional identities persisted, often overlaid with new strategic and context specific identity but nevertheless old regional loyalties lingered on. For instance when CIA trained *Khampa* veterans were being dropped into central Tibet, they initially insisted on being dropped in their 'homeland', later only to be convinced of the otherwise (Shakya, 1999). The resistance was only 'national' in form and in substance their fight was mainly against the external occupier of their particular homeland, monastery or lama. *Chushi Gangdruk* was a subaltern resistance army whose concerns were either supra-local (protecting religion) or focused around the immediate impending threat from the communist coloniser to their 'homeland' and 'traditional way of life' (see McGranahan, 2010 for slightly different interpretation). However despite persistence of the regional identities within the organisation, it nevertheless united Tibetans from across the sections against the 'common enemy', thus despite their motivational differences (which was least national), their common outward resistance to Chinese symbolically binded them together under the 'common purpose' of defeating their 'common enemy'-Communist Chinese. These seemingly sporadic resistance in eastern and central Tibet must be understood as a continuation of one revolution after another, gradually developing a sense of common purpose against their commonly identified enemy, which finally culminated into the revolt of 10th March 1959 (see Norbu, 2001). On 10th March 1959, thousands of Tibetans from across the class and region, in defiance of all authority (even that of Dalai Lama), gathered outside the Norbulingka palace to protect what was then a symbol of Tibetan nation; the 14th Dalai Lama (Shakya, 1999; Norbu, 2001). Tsering Shakya identifies the Lhasa uprising as a space for subaltern agency, where people were not only expressing their anger against the Chinese but also against the Tibetan ruling elite, who they felt had betrayed their beloved leader (Shaykya, 1999). Thus the target of Tibetan protestors were not only Chinese but also Tibetan ruling elite, they vented their anger against high ranking Tibetan official who were believed to be 'pro Chinese' and on one occasion protestors stoned to death a high ranking Tibetan official for wearing Chinese

cap, these accounts of subaltern uprising were conveniently buried by Chinese officials under the rhetoric of 'staged uprising by upper class reactionaries' without any sense of historical irony (Shakya, 1999, Norbu, 2001). In fact both the Dalai Lama and Tibetan ruling hierarchs were against the angry demonstrators, former reacting to 'uprising' by calling it as a quickest way to self destruction and later conveniently enjoying the dance performance organized by PLA in the evening of the same day (ibid). The mass uprising in Lhasa was followed by the Chinese military crackdown, which according to PLA's own 'secret' report resulted into the death of over 87000 Tibetans (see Norbu, 1996). Post-Lhasa uprising, Dalai Lama along with some 80,000 Tibetans fled into India and thereafter establishing the exile government, which in long run would play a crucial role in the construction and dissemination of nationalist discourse within the Tibetan world.

### **The Construction of Nation in Exile**

Tibet on the eve of Chinese colonisation was not a nation; since the nationalist imagining of political community was limited among few literate elites and the social consciousness of the peasantry masses were largely apolitical. Nation by definition is a mass phenomenon and unless the substantial masses are incorporated into this novel form of political imagining, nation cannot be said to have existed (see Anderson, 1983; Smith, 1991; Norbu, 1992). Tibet despite the possession of all the seemingly 'necessary' means of collective imagination such as pan-ethnic linguistic means of communication, socially binding 'great religio-tradition' and common historical memories, nevertheless remained politically segmented society, where national and political boundaries were incongruent (see Gellner, 1983). Thus while in exile the 14th Dalai Lama along with his personal entourage embarked upon a series of nation-building project which entails (re)construction of Tibetan past in accordance with its present utility and numerous other invention of traditions and symbols necessary for the construction of nation out of ethnic base. This embracement of modern 'nation-state' ideology was a gradual process; essentially a response to the dominant and hegemonic post-enlightenment western knowledge system (see Chatterjee, 1986). Since the idea of 'nation-state' and 'popular will' has become a legitimate international norms, the exile Tibetan leadership possibly due to an institutional incentives, reorganised its ethno-political struggle along the

nationalist line (see Anderson, 1983; Norbu, 1992; Wimmer, 2008). This pan-Tibetan national project in time became a hegemonic discourse, where according to McGranahan 'central Tibetan norms were recasted as shared, pan-Tibetan identity and this conversion of particular to general, of specific regional identity to homogenous national identity is one means by which regional identities are problematised' (McGranahan, 2010). The new nationalisation project essentially saw diversity as a source of disunity thus sought to homogenise the traditionally heterogeneous Tibetan societies and flatten the earlier highly hierarchical Tibetan social structure. Nevertheless the historical route of national building project in exile was full of bumpy rides, often on occasion leading to furthering of inter-regional differences. These regional tensions are nothing but a reflection of their diverse historical experiences, which though under a new 'objective condition' got overlaid with (context specific) new 'supra-ordinate identity' but when individual/group experiences a sense of 'relative deprivation' and 'marginalisation' earlier regional underlaid identities comes into fro and contextually becomes a primary factor in individuals behavioural patterns. For example when in late 1960s a group of Tibetans mainly from Lhasa founded a new political party called 'united party' (*gcig sgril tshogs pa*) directed/supported by Gyalo Dhondup, which for reasons both personal and political exacerbated the then already increasing sense of marginalisation among some members of *Khampas* and *Amdowas*, who subsequently in reaction founded an oppositional political party distancing themselves from both person of *Gyalo Dhondup* and the organisation of 'united party' (see MacGranahan, 2010). The members of this oppositional party included 13 settlement groups together known as '*tso Khag bcu gsum*' (13 settlement), headed by the then 16th *Karmapa*, however it must be noted that these political opposition was essentially put forward as the intra-national differences, where the overall leadership of the Dalai Lama was undisputed/unchallenged, in-fact it was maintained that the 'oppositional party' was formed with the 'blessing' (permission) of the Dalai Lama (Review, 07/1978). Likewise there are other incidence of regional tensions and political assassinations, which were in essence the result of trying to centralise and homogenise the previously decentralised and heterogeneous societies, albeit along the Lhasan socio-political world. Tibetans of older generations in exile lived with this everyday tension between their older regional/sectarian identities and newer national

hegemonic identity, where former despite being increasingly problematised under new 'objection condition' nevertheless remains more experientially real, since refugees reorganisation in exile was done mainly along their older regional and sectarian identities and most Tibetans continued to remain under their traditional leaders on day to day basis. However the newer generations of Tibetans in exile were born nationals and grew up imagining themselves as a member of unique political community, which historically was a sovereign political entity with clearly defined territory. This nation formation according to Norbu 'essentially resides in escalating social consciousness that is partly a function of existing objective conditions and partly objectified by certain instrumental agents such as leadership/ organisation' (Norbu, 1992). In the following section I will briefly identify some of the objectified social changes and the invention of traditions and symbols under exilic condition that has played a major role in production and reproduction of national citizens.

### **Citizenisation of Tibetan Subjects**

As we have discussed in chapter 3, typical of any traditional polity, pre-invasion Tibetan social world was highly hierarchal, where there was no 'citizens' but 'lord and their subjects' (see Anderson, 1983). The rulers ruled their subjects based on their assumed cultural or 'genetic superiority' thus were least accountable for their rule to the ruled masses. In Tibet people can be broadly classified into 3 categories, Monastic communities, lay aristocrats and 'miser', later often translated as either 'serfs' (Goldstein, 1971) or 'peasantry' (Carrasco, 1959) or 'Commoner' (Samuel, 1993). Misers under Tibet's institutionalised unequal society has inherent social and economic obligation to its lord but nevertheless alongside those obligatory duties, it has its own distinct legal identities and significant rights of both de-jure and de-facto nature (Coleman, 1998). In such a highly stratified society the necessary imagining of 'horizontal political community' for nation is highly implausible, in-fact the vertical world of subjects and lords without any external crisis situation is necessarily devoid of any sense of horizontal comradeship. However Tibetan leadership in exile in keeping with demands of new 'objective exilic condition' gave in for the democratisation of power (beside electoral), for which citizenisation of earlier Tibetan 'subjects' were necessary prerequisite. Now under

new objectified exilic condition 'Miser' is translated as 'citizens' thus the earlier '*Ponpos*' (lords) are now formally 'miser-ised' and the monopoly of few elite over politics has been de-monopolised. Since nationalism entails politicisation of masses, democratization and citizenisation seems to be the logical prerequisites condition for production of nationals.

### **Secularisation and De-monopolisation of Politics**

Traditional Tibetan polity in central Tibet since 13th century was mainly dominated by particular 'sect' or 'sub-sects' of Tibetan Buddhism, in the beginning of 13th century, it was *Sakya* and then followed by different sub-sects of *Kagyü* (*Phakmodru* and *Karma Kagyue*) and finally in mid 17th century, *Gelug* gained pre-eminence, thus the politics of central Tibet for the rest of Tibetan history was under the political hegemony of Dalai Lama's *Gelug* sect (see Chapter 3). However in the eastern parts of Tibet, the religio-political authority was often under the non-*Gelug* incarnate lamas or their lay patron (see Carrasco, 1959; Samuel, 1993). The semi-bureaucratic governmental structure of central Tibet was characterized with ideology of 'Chos-srid gNyi lDan' translated as 'religion and political affair joined together' (Goldstein, 1989), under this system at the top was the person of Dalai Lama who represented the supreme manifestation of religio-political amalgamation. The Dalai Lama ruled by the 'divine right' believed to have been conferred upon '*Avaloketesvara*' (his heavenly manifestation) by Buddha himself to civilise and tame the land of 'red faced' 'black headed' barbarians; Tibet (see Gyatso, 2003; Kapstein, 2003; 2013 ). Like all traditional polity the idea of rule by 'popular will' was virtually absent in Tibetan societies of pre-communist invasion. However it was believed that deeply religious Tibetan's 'general will' would accord with the protection and promotion of Tibetan Buddhism by the state thus large portion of the country's gross national product was spent upon the religious rituals and ceremonies in order to appease local and trans-local deities (Goldstein, 1989). The entire government was structurally dichotomised between the lay and monastic officials, later having a sole jurisdictional right over the fellow members of monastic communities. The '*Tshongdu*' (national assembly) established in around late 19th century and which in modern period increasingly played an important role in deciding the matter of 'national importance', including the selection of regent (ibid). However except for the misleading translation of

the assembly as 'national', the entire structure was highly unrepresentative and overly *Gelug* dominated, where the representatives of three great (*Gelug*) monasteries has a de-facto 'veto like power'. In fact the power of Dalai Lama, it seems was inherently intertwined with the rise and the fall of *Gelug* hegemony thus traditionally, the institution of Dalai Lama has an interest in maintaining the *Gelug* monopoly over the entire political system. However after Chinese invasion, the leadership in exile under new modern condition sought to secularise and de-monopolise the exile governmental institutions. This was done by adapting the old traditional socio-political structure into new modern exilic condition primarily through consciously continuing certain governmental traditions while discontinuing the others. These selective adaptations of old political system into modern condition are mainly due to its inherent incompatibility with new modern objectified condition, later demanding pan-Tibetan unity. Thus the exile Tibetan government retained the 'old forms' including the name '*Gaden Phodrang*', which symbolises the legitimate historical continuation of pre-invasion Lhasan government. However these 'old forms' are infused with new meanings, including the secularisation of government through ending the dichotomised lay/monastic rule and also by de-monopolising *Gelug's* political hold over the govt through the extension of the political rights over other sub-sects of Buddhism. The 'new' democratic exile government with institutionalised parliament now has its members from across the regions and sects of Tibetan Buddhism, later further extending its membership to Bon Tibetan community. This new 'nationally' representative exile governmental structure was instituted to promote ideals of pan-Tibetan unity along with the new common goal of regaining the unified Tibetan nation-state.

### **Invention of National Symbols and Traditions**

The term 'invention' might seem misleading or inappropriate to many but nevertheless this paper chose to use this particular term with certain qualifications. First of the term 'invention' over here means construction or institution of new set of practices as a response to novel situations whose claim to historical continuity are spurious (Hobsbawm, 1992). This invention of traditions seeks to inculcate certain norms and values essentially through 'a process of formalisation and ritualisation, characterised by

references to the past' (ibid). Nevertheless these 'invented traditions' this paper argue has symbolic continuity from the past and are consciously constructed from the repertoire of vast religio-historical memories of the masses, thus is akin to Smith's formulation of the same process as 'reconstruction' or 'rediscovery' instead of 'invention' (Smith, 1995). In other words, the inventive powers of the elite are checked by the historical memories of the masses and thus some invented traditions are more akin to masses acceptance than others. Thus exile leadership after embracing the new modern 'nation-state' ideology, sought to reorganize its ethnic base along the nationalist line through series of invented symbols and traditions for mass consumption purpose. These includes national anthem, national flag, 10 march 'national' uprising day and national celebration of Dalai Lama's birthday and new year.

### **National Anthem**

According to Tashi Tsering, first Tibetan 'national anthem' (*Gyallu*) was composed and instituted in 18th century by lay ruler of Tibet called *Pholanas* in the praise of 7th Dalai Lama (Norbu, 2004), which Charles bell calls a 'national hymn' of Tibet. Such claims of national rituals are misleading, since before the advent of 'modernity', the idea of nation was virtually absent in all traditional societies, let alone the existence of national rituals. However the modern day Tibetan 'national anthem' was created in exile by the junior tutor of Dalai Lama, *Trijang Rinpoche* for the specific purpose of national ritualisation (ibid). This national anthem was later disseminated among the exile Tibetan masses and in time ritualised as a part of daily practices in schools and official ceremonies. However unlike most secular 'national anthem' around the world, Tibetan national anthem has strong religious influences, characterised by the traditional religious themes such as 'Buddha's radiance spreading in ten directions' and 'finally all the people of the world enjoying peace and happiness' leading ultimately to the 'triumph of spiritual Tibetans over dark evil forces'. Such religious theme of Tibetan national anthem probably reflects more on discourse building of official Tibetan nationalism. Nevertheless for the common Tibetan masses, ritualisation of such national anthem brings in the deep emotive sense of being perennially nationals and when they sing "May a new golden age of happiness and

bles spread throughout the three provinces of Tibet”, it reaffirms their sense belonging to a pan-Tibetan political community.

### **National Flag**

The idea of requiring 'national flag' for each 'nation-state' was itself a relatively modern western construct and thus most of today's 'national flags' are essentially post Second World War invention, for e.g. modern Chinese adoption of 'national flag' dates back only to the beginning of 20th century. Likewise the modern day 'snow lion Tibetan flag' though was first introduced in 1912 but nevertheless this flag was adopted not as a 'national flag' but a military one.<sup>11</sup> It was neither used widely nor was raised upon any government official buildings thus before Chinese invasion it was remained conspicuously absent from the memories of Tibetan masses. However interestingly, internationally this flag was relatively well recognised as Tibetan national flag (see Norbu, 2015) and made its first ever international debut in 1934 on National Geographic Magazine's 'Flag of the World' issue<sup>12</sup>. In 1947 Tibetan 'snow lion' (national) flag made its semi-official appearance during the Asian Relation Conference organised by Jawaharlal Nehru; later the first prime minister of Independent India.<sup>13</sup> But again despite all the international appearances and recognitions, this flag was virtually unknown among the common Tibetan masses (Goldstein, Jiao & Lhundrup, 2010). Thus soon after reaching into exile, the Tibetan leadership understanding the necessity of such distinct national symbols instituted a 'flag committee' which was responsible to improvise upon the already existing 'snow lion' military flag in accordance with international standard. The standardised national flag was then widely disseminated among the exile populations through news papers, magazines and public display during the official or non-official

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<sup>11</sup> When Chinese communist official asked Tibetans not to use the 'Snow lion' flag during its military parade in 1952 then acting Tibetan Prime minister Lkhangwa refused to comply by claiming that it was not a national flag but military flag (See Goldstein, 2004; and Shakya 1999)

<sup>12</sup> Jamyang Norbu <http://www.rangzen.net/rangzen-facts/independent-tibet-the-facts/>

<sup>13</sup> Although he was then a provincial Prime Minister and Asian relation conference was held in March-April 1947, before India's independence. Chinese delegate present at the conference protested the presence of Tibetan delegate (claiming it to be a part of China) and later Tibetan flag was taken down and was told that Nehru invited Tibetan delegate in 'personal' capacity. It is said that Hugh Richardson (British diplomat sympathetic to Tibet) suggested Tibetans to carry 'snow lion' military flag as national flag at the conference to consolidate its independent status.



mass gathering. Such invented national symbols despite its historical novelty gained widespread acceptance among the unlettered Tibetan masses, eventually such commonly identified symbol became a new definitional source of individual's pan-Tibetan identity. However as mentioned in the beginning of this section, the elite invention of symbols are negotiated and renegotiated with masses for their acceptance, which through their living historical memories either accepts or rejects the elite inventions. In this case the 'snow-lion flag' was personally designed by the 13th Dalai Lama<sup>14</sup> based on the formats of earlier imperial Tibetan 'snow lion' military flag dating back to at-least 7th century. Moreover the interpretational meaning of the symbols in national flag are related to the ancient myths of Tibetan race along with the traditional beliefs in the Buddhisified protective oracles and infused with the idea of Tibet as snow-land ruled by the 'unique' religio-political system of 'Chos Srid gNyas lDan' (religion and political affairs combined). Such infusion of traditionally accepted ideas into modern 'invented symbols' eases the masses acceptance of elite inventions.

### **National Holidays**

As discussed in chapter 3, Tibetan societies in pre-modern era were relatively heterogeneous in nature thus their daily lives revolve around their local monasteries, lamas or within the regional culture. There was not as single nationwide rituals, let alone the modernist western idea of holidays. For e.g. the today's 'national' celebration of Dalai Lama's birthday though seems to have been prevalent before Chinese occupation known as '*Thrun gla Yarso*' but nevertheless these celebrations were spatially bounded within the limits of Lhasa region. However in 1962, the birthday of the Dalai Lama was officially codified from Tibetan lunar calendar to the international calendar system (Gregorian), which is every 6th of July. From then on, each year's July 6th have been celebrated as national holiday where Tibetan from across the regions and sects would together participate in this particular national event as a mark of their gratitude to the leadership of the Dalai Lama. Likewise the nation-wide common New Year celebration in exile along with 'New-Year national address' from the Dalai Lama is also a recent invention.

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<sup>14</sup> According to eminent Vexillologist Prof Pierre C. Lux-Wum in his published article 'The story of the flag of Tibet'

Historically there is no Tibetan-wide common New Year celebration, for instance, in the Kongpo region; it is celebrated on the first day of the tenth month of Tibetan calendar, and in *Ngari's Puhreng* County, in the south western part of Tibet it is celebrated in the eleventh month. And many regions of central Tibet celebrate farmer's New Year, which falls on the first day of the twelfth month (Woeser, 2013). Nevertheless post-exilic condition with Lhasa-centric nationalisation project seems to have obliterated these diverse historical memories among the new born exile Tibetans 'nationals' thus producing a homogenised Lhasa-centric common New Year celebration. Similarly the 1959 Lhasa uprising, where no doubt Tibetans from across the regions and sects participated but which nonetheless was again spatially limited within the confines of Lhasa region (see Shakya, 1999). This particular historical event has since then been frozen into the memories of the masses and 'ritualised' thereafter as a day of Tibetan national uprising. In exile every year this day is commemorated with the 'national address' by the Dalai Lama, followed by the official commemoration and Tibetan NGO's organised masses demonstrations. This particular repetitive national ritual displaying the Tibetan national flag along with the picture of the Dalai Lama, shouting the slogans such as 'Tibet belongs to Tibetans', are symbolic re-enactment of affirming one's 'national self' done through expressive concern for common national others. Moreover this 'invented tradition' of Dalai Lama's 'national address' during 'national events' such as 'New Year celebration' or '10 March commemoration' has an important role in the construction of Tibetan nation. These 'national address' are brought before the masses through various means of news papers, radio or official ceremonial readings, which in the process effects the readers/listeners to assume the role of being an addressee, thus cognitively imagining themselves as a member of common national group being addressed by their 'supreme national leader'. These messages are typically about the 'common national plight' in the past and the present imperatives of pan-Tibetan unity against the 'common threat' from the 'common enemy' in order to achieve in future the 'common goal' of returning back to their 'common homeland'. This construction of the 'common past' with particular emphasis on the future 'common destiny' has found a strong resonance among the exile born Tibetan nationals, whose imagination of their 'homeland' unlike their elder generations are not limited to a particular region but are cognitively extended to

encompass the whole 'three regions of Tibet', often imagined from the Lhasa-centric point of view.

### **Modern Maps**

Emergence of modern map has altered the ways in which the collective groups are imagined. In pre-modern societies 'territorial domains' are imagined in terms of their sacred capitals (see Anderson, 1983) and whereas the boundaries are porous and often un-delineated. For instance when Japanese mountaineering groups sought for the permission from the Tibetan government in Lhasa to climb mount Everest from the Tibetan side, the government officials were conspicuously ignorant of the fact that northern parts of Everest falls within the Tibetan territorial jurisdiction (Tuttle, 2011). However with the emergence of modern maps, which provided 'a bird eye view' of the clearly delimited territorial space, cognitive capabilities of individuals to imagine political community (delimited by territorial space) beyond one's experiential domain has been greatly enhanced. According to Anderson, 'the emergence of 'historical maps' is designed to demonstrate, in the new cartographic discourse the antiquity of specific, tightly bounded territorial units' that had in fact not previously existed (ibid). The map provides nation's visual form, which in time becomes an iconic or totemic symbol, penetrating deeply into the popular imagination forming a powerful emblem for the anti-colonial nationalism being born (ibid). Thus mass production of modern maps of Tibet; consisting of 'three traditional region' (*Cholkha Sum*) establishes a sense of tightly bounded ancient territorial unit, whose historic continuity from imperial period is visually established.

### **Transmitting the Invented Traditions and Symbols to the Masses**

The above discussed invented symbols and traditions with infused meanings from the ethnic past are produced for the mass consumption purpose. The transmission of these symbols to the common masses is made possible through the modern means of technology and modern western schooling system, both playing a crucial role in producing national citizens.

## **New Media**

As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, the role of print news paper in early construction of Tibetan nationalism is crucial. Likewise after coming into exile, there began a several other governmental and non-governmental news papers printing enterprise, first among these are the Tibetan language based newspapers called '*Bod-mi Rawang*' (Tibetan Freedom) printed from Darjeeling by a non-governmental organisation. A brief study of the early editions of this news paper gives us an idea about the role of print media in whole process of nation building in exile. As the name suggest, the news paper was specifically for the Tibetans (note the term: '*Bod-mi*') with the specific aim to contribute to the ultimate 'common objectives' of regaining freedom. This production of 'Tibetan' news paper has engaged its readers from across the regions and sects into a common act of understanding what's happening to 'clearly defined us' and 'generalised others'. The very format of the news paper carries both Tibetan map and national flag at the centre with ubiquitous picture of the Dalai Lama, thereby disseminating these national symbols to its readers on a daily/weekly basis. Such daily penetration of symbols into the mind of its readers/co-readers engenders a sense of national identification. Moreover throughout early 1960s, the news paper carries a pictorial juxtaposition of 'happy' pre-1959 Tibet and 'miserable' Tibet of post-invasion, however this paper assumes that these relative concepts of 'happiness' and 'miserable-ness' are being related (if at all) by earlier 'commoners' of Tibet through its relative values with the imagined/portrayed miserable present. Additionally these news papers are filled with the pictures of 'Tibetans' visually defined by the pictorial representation of men/women from three regions (*Cholkhas*) of Tibet. Later on with the coming of radios and television the minds of the illiterate masses are also conjured up into an imagined community through mass dissemination of national symbols and traditions.

## **Centralisation of Education**

Traditionally there was no organised secular schools in Tibet, let alone the standard modern curriculums, even in monastic universities such as *Drepung*, monks were required to pursue their education under a knowledgeable scholar monks without any formal schooling system (Goldstein, 1999). From the beginning of the 20th century

there has been some intermittent effort to introduce modern secular schools in central Tibet later only to be thwarted by the powerful and conservative monastic groups. In eastern Tibet, Republic of China has introduced a 'modern' school system to inculcate a sense of 'official nationalism' among its 'national minorities', each families were compulsorily made to sent one of their child to these 'modern' schools (Goldstein, 2004). Apart from these, there were only 2 'schools' in Lhasa run by the Tibetan government known as '*Tse Laptra*' and '*Tsikhang laptra*', these schools were 'training centres' for future government officials from both lay and monks. '*Tse Laptra*' was ecclesial officials training centre whereas the *Tsikhang* run school was for the children of aristocracy, who were taught accounting, law, etiquettes and calligraphy, last one is of particular importance for entry into government service (Bass, 1998). However apart from Chinese introduced ideological schools in eastern Tibet, government 'schools' in Lhasa were not open for masses and was highly gendered and class stratified. Such absence of centralised schools in traditional societies are characterised with the production of social individuals within a particular tribes, village or regional setup. The social identities of individuals are locally produced and thus their world views are limited within the 'face-to-face' experiential domain, in other words, they understanding of 'who they are' in traditional societies are defined by their experience of interaction with a limited space. Referring to this particular phenomena, Gellner expounded that 'Men (*women*) is past were made by village or clan' (Gellner, 1983). However under modern condition, educations are centralised by government which is then taught universally as its citizens, the transmission of social values and norms are no more localised phenomena and are often being complemented by central acculturation. Men (*women*) under this modern condition are made outside their local intimate units. Thus Dalai Lama after reaching into exile prioritised the introduction of modern education system, though not as a tool for his nationalisation project but more due to his commitments to reforms and modernisation of the traditional Tibetan social system<sup>15</sup>. However this effort also has its 'side effects', which is nevertheless profound and revolutionary. The introduction of this particular

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<sup>15</sup> Dalai Lama has earlier initiated a reform in Tibetan socio-political system by introducing a reform committee known as 'Lekchod Tsogchung', however his effort were put to halt due incessant intervention by Chinese, thus his modern reformist outlook in Tibet is in many way the continuation of his earlier efforts (See Shakya, 1999).

centralised education system in exile, which is again Lhasa-centric, has resulted into the collective enculturation of young Tibetan students and by 1961, there were already some 800 Tibetan students from different regional and sectarian backgrounds in 3 different schools (Nowak, 1984). In exile Tibetan schools, Lhasa dialect, etiquettes, and social norms has become a standard for all the refugees, thus illustrates the fact that the project of homogenisation necessarily entails prioritising (imposing) certain aspects over that of others. Nevertheless the emphasis of the exile schooling system is to transcend both sectarianism and regionalism and to put one's national identity above all other identities. Nowak illustrate the following examples from the songs of 2nd grade text whose last 5 lines are as follows:

"These 3 regions of Tibetans,

These 3 types of people are Tibetans,

We are only one race (flesh and bone),

The universal jewel for all Tibetan people

Is the protective lord, the Dalai Lama" (Nowak, 1984)

The above song is a typical example of the roles, centralised schoolings system plays in the exile Tibetan nationalising projects, it inculcates the ideology of pan-Tibetanness and propagates the ideas of Tibetans from three regions being a part common racial stock (*Bod-rigs*). Above all such schooling system seeks to define Tibetanness along the Buddhist identity and quintessentially linked with the person of Dalai Lama. Moreover it disseminates the idea of Tibetans as heir to a 'unique' and 'noble tradition' thus consequently infused with the religio-cultural pride among Tibetans (ibid). Young exile born Tibetan students daily participate in the national rituals of singing national anthems and praying for the long life of Dalai Lama and participating in 10th march demonstration, such formalisation and ritualisation of activities engenders among the participant a strong sense of national consciousness, previously found among their forefathers. Thus in conclusion, the centralised exile education system through deliberate inculcation of pan-Tibetan nationalist ideology produces and reproduces national citizens.

## Other Factors

In addition to the above factors, the production of 'national history', particularly Shakabpa's 'political history of Tibet' in Tibetan context has played a major role in the construction of 'national consciousness' among the common masses. Such process of writing 'national history' reconstructs the 'collective past' into a myth of political cohesiveness, thereby giving a sense of 'collective continuity' from glorious past into the petty state of present. In this nationalist framework of history writing, all past related to the development of the present Tibetan 'nation' are historicised; the nation is projected into the past as perennial entity surviving the various external intrusions of the other nation-states. In the process, it uses various archaeological and ancient historical findings as tools to claim its 'primordially', turning the pre-historic hunter-gatherers into incipient 'Tibetans'. Moreover the role of official historical narratives in exile are highly crucial, often using the 'traditional sources' and (mis)claiming the historical cohesiveness of people from three regions of Tibet. Since for the unlettered Tibetan masses 'getting their history wrong is a part of being a nation' (see Renan, 1992). Apart from the production of 'national history', Lhasa government's resource/aid monopoly in exile has also enhanced its capabilities in imposing its own (Lhasa centric) ideals of unity (see Goldstein, 1975). The role of popular songs among exiles are also of great importance in inculcating a sense of 'pan-Tibetanness', it creates a strong emotive feeling amongst the singers and listeners. I will conclude this section with a excerpt from one such popular songs in exile, inspired from the popular American folks song from 1940s called 'This land is your land'

"This homeland is ours, Tibet is yours, and Tibet is mine  
From *Dartsedo* in the east, to the upper *Ngari korsum*,  
From northern *Kokonor* lake, to the *Kongpo's* forest in the south  
This homeland is ours"

## Nationalism in post 1959 Tibet

The Chinese colonial policies have played an important role in (re)defining Tibetans sense of collective identity. The internally heterogeneous Tibetan socio-political groups were homogenously categorised into a single 'national group' known as '*Zhangzu*'

(*Bod-rig*)<sup>16</sup>, thereby typologically homogenising it (Shakya, 2012b). Furthermore this colonial national categorisation was reinforced by various nationality-based policies, thus giving a way for the gradual construction of pan-Tibetan identity. However it must be noted that, for natives, this colonial imposition of 'collective identity' is mediated through their historical experiences/memories, thus rather than simple process of native's uncritical embracement of colonial identities, there entails of complex process of constant negotiation and renegotiation within the internal and external dialectic of identity interactions (see Jenkins, 2012). In the Tibetan case, the externally defined identity of '*Zhangzu*' (*Bod Rigs*) was in compatible with the aspects of existing in-group identity (see Introduction) and thus both 'external categorisation' and 'internal self-identification' led to mutual reinforcement. However during the initial phases of colonial experience, the common marker of collective identity among Tibetans remained that of Buddhism and its folk-culture, the idea of both 'common race' and 'shared territory' remained conspicuously lacking among Tibetans (see Ekvall, 1960). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Tibet due to Mao's decade long 'Cultural Revolution' remained inaccessible to the outside world thus much of the information necessary to understand the identity formation is unavailable. Nevertheless we may assume that during the period, the pan-Tibetan identity remained largely stagnated due to the absence necessary 'objective conditions' such as 'personal mobility', 'centralised nationality-based education', 'accessibility to communicative technology' and 'relatively open political atmosphere'. However in early 1980s under *Hu Yaobang's* liberalisation policies, the above necessary external factors were now present, throughout Tibet there was a new wave of mass movement of cultural renaissance infused with sense of restoring Tibet's cultural pride identified with the institutions of monasteries. This pan-Tibetan wide movement of restoring the Buddhist monasteries involves (re)imagining of 'self' through the common purpose of reviving Tibet's lost religio-cultural pride. Thus these restoration movements came to symbolise the pan-Tibetan expression of national purpose (Schwartz, 1994). Moreover it is during this period that the increasing contact between Tibetans inside and outside was taking

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<sup>16</sup> However it must be noted that the '*Zhang-zu*' (*Bod-rigs*) identity is not a complete Chinese invention but rather has a long historical root. As discussed before, pre-Chinese invasion the super ordinate identity of '*Bod-Rig*' existed among Tibetans of three regions but due to their limited social experience in pre-modern societies, the imagined political communities were along the experientially real sub-identities of regions and sects.



place, which involves sharing exile's invented national symbols and traditions along with pan-Tibetan nationalist discourse. There is a clear evidence of familiarities of exile produced nationalist materials among the Tibetans inside Tibet but nevertheless these exilic 'materials' and 'discourse' are selectively appropriated in accordance with their historical lived experiences (Sperling, 1996; Schwartz, 1994). Thus this penetration of exile 'nationalist' discourse along with other national symbols provided for Tibetans a new means of imagining 'extended-selves' in contradistinction of 'Chinese'. Moreover during the early liberalisation period, under the instigation of Panchen Lama and Ngabo, a modicum of distinctive Tibetan linguistic, cultural and historical identity expression was allowed within certain parameter of the state. It is within this political framework that new Tibetan art, literature and songs found a breathing space. These artistic expressions were initially heavily controlled by the state but over a period of time it gradually explored new avenues to discuss the most pertinent questions of the time, i.e. 'race', 'nationality', 'tradition' and 'modernisation'. According to Shakya, the phrase that dominated the literary discourse between years 1980 to 1987 was '*Mi rigs Kyi La rGya*' (honour, pride and allegiance to nationality) and this obsession with maintaining Tibetan nationality's pride was discussed within the framework of tradition v/s modernity (Shakya, 2000). Here Tibetans by and large acknowledged the need for some form of modernisation, however when contextualising within a colonial setup 'modernity' was largely identified with the culture of the 'colonisers', thus colonised-traditionalist argued for rejection of 'modernity' as a means to maintain their distinctive (national) identity from that of their 'colonisers'. Such traditionalist discourse seems to have a larger following among the Tibetans (ibid) and it is this inherent contradiction of 'both desiring and resisting modernisation' that exists within the heart of nationalist discourse in anti-colonial Tibetan struggle. Modernisation here is seen as both desirable but at the same time something to be resisted for its assimilative propensities, since the nationalist imagining of 'identity' in colonial context are posited less on 'intra-ethnic' similarities but more on difference with that of their colonisers (Chatterjee, 1993).

Sino-phone poet such as *Yidam Cairang* (Tsering) brought up under the intense communist ideological indoctrination, in post-Mao era became famous among Tibetans for his frequent references to the traditional Tibetan folk cultures, stories and more so for

his fervent nationalist outlook (Dhondup, 2008). He openly urged Tibetans to renounce the imported (alien) culture and return to their cultural origins, in other word to reject modernisation and to (re)embrace traditional cultural values, identified popularly with core of 'Tibetan identity'. Such open rejection of 'colonial modernisation' and their popularities among Tibetans, subverts the coloniser's project of 'demonisation' and 'infantilisation' of native's culture. The Coloniser's propagation of their 'civilising mission' upon which the whole colonial legitimacy is based on, is entirely dependent upon the natives' psychological submission to their 'masters' propagandic cultural interpretation. The late 1980s protest in Lhasa was brewing under such socio-political background, where the crucial immediate impetus was Dalai Lama's visit to U.S. congress, which was widely known and eagerly followed in Lhasa through Chinese language broadcast of VOA, BBC and also through official Chinese media coverage, later although in negative light (Goldstein, 1999). The allegiance to Dalai Lama has become a supreme symbol of resistance among Tibetan nationalist and it is in him that the whole distinctiveness of Tibetan national identity is subsumed. The late 1980s protest in Lhasa was neither for economic reason nor social but was essentially to show Beijing and West, their support of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan independence (ibid). Lhasa protest illustrate the typical example of shifting loyalties among the monastic communities from what was 'religious' flag (*Chos Dhar*) towards a new modern 'national' flag (*rGyal Dhar*). These shifting loyalties cognitively redefines Tibetan 'selves' from a traditionally self-ascribed identity of '*Nangpa*' (a member of a religious community) into a more secularised and politicised identity of '*Bod-rigs*' (Tibetan nationality). Within the context of colonial interactions, the dominant identity effecting individual's behaviour is that of person's political (national) identity. It might be argued that such clear-cut distinction of religious and political identities into two mutually competing identities is spurious and problematic but nevertheless for analytical reason, we can/must separate the two on its ideological ground. Functionally both religion and political identities converges on various aspects of anti-colonial resistance and thus are often indistinguishable from each other but ideologically speaking, their primary aspirations are quite different. On one hand religionist are least concern about who controls the state power, unless it doesn't constrains their religious practices, whereas nationalist are all obsessed with the national

control of state powers (independently or autonomously). The participants of Lhasa uprising chooses to prioritise their national loyalties subsumed in the figure of the Dalai Lama over that of their traditional loyalties to monasteries or Buddhism, thus despite the political relaxations by the state, monks and nuns choose to march in protest through the streets of Lhasa carrying Tibetan national flag; a symbol transmitted from the exile and shouted the slogan of 'independence' and 'return of Dalai Lama' (traditional political authority).

### **Pan-Tibetan Identity in Post 2008 Uprising**

Nationalism in Tibet did not entail a loss of religious cognitive hold over the minds of Tibetans (see Anderson, 1983), most Tibetans still remains deeply religious and attached to its religious induced 'national' culture. Nationalism, this paper argues has in fact 'secondarised' the religious aspects of Tibetan identity to that of 'national aspects' within a context of highly politicised colonial interactions. The 2008 pan-Tibetan wide national uprising, according to Tsering Topgyal, was essentially a consequence of Tibetans' identity insecurities (Topgyal, 2011). These insecurities/interferences are acutely felt by Tibetans within the world of its cultural domain, since it is here that the nationalist, according to Chatterjee, declares their national sovereignty first. The 'cultural core' of the native society becomes a terrain of political contestations between them and their colonial state, much before the political battle over the external domain of state sovereignty begins. In other words, during anti-colonial struggle (like that of Tibet), nationalist "creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before its political battle began" (Chatterjee, 1993), it does so by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains i.e. material 'outside' and spiritual 'inside' and it is within this outer domain that the supremacy of the coloniser is accepted and replicated, whereas in the internal domain sovereignty and distinctiveness of the colonised is maintained (ibid). Likewise Tibetans in Tibet by and large accepts or doesn't challenges Chinese supremacy in external materialistic domains but when it comes to spiritual internal domain, any interference by the state is seen as an attack on their traditional core values and national sovereign sphere. Thus the legislative or administrative (reform)interference by the colonial state in this internal domain is highly

resisted, the right to intervene in such an essential aspects of national's cultural identity, it is argued, rest only with the national self. The 2008 national uprising must be understood in the context of decades long deeply resented colonial state intervention in the declared sovereign sphere of national core culture, such as 'Panchen reincarnation issue' of 1990s, 'institutional restriction on monastic communities', 'legislating laws controlling reincarnation process' and above all 'demonising the sacred person of the Dalai Lama'. All these colonial intervention into the 'internal' religio-cultural sphere of Tibetan nation resulted into the nationalists' perception of identity insecurities. Thus the uprising unlike before in early 1980s spread throughout the ethnic Tibetan areas, thereby engendering the sense of 'collective suffering' under foreign Chinese occupation. Such (re)identification of the 'common oppressor' of the 'common national-selves' perceptually (re)drew the national cartographic map in the imagination of individual Tibetans.

In post-2008 uprising, the Chinese state has become increasingly intolerant of anything symbolising "Tibetan identity" (Woeser, 2012) and thus have imposed 'ethnic-specific' restrictions, including racial profiling of Tibetan migrant to Lhasa. Such homogenising ethnic categorisation has once again reinforced Tibetans sense of commonness. Thus state authority by expelling all the Tibetans with non-Lhasan resident permit (hukou) from the area based on their ethnic background has unintentionally resulted into the active politicisation of their otherwise passive ethnic identity. These phenomena of heightening pan-Tibetan national consciousness are evident from the numerous writings and songs from Tibet, especially with the increasing no of self-immolations. These writings and songs are usually addressed to the people of 'three province of Tibet' and calls for the unity of Tibetan people against the Chinese oppressor. These songs according to Lama Jabb "evokes images of shared history, culture and territory, bemoaning the current plight of Tibetans and expressing aspiration for collective destiny" (Jabb, 2011). It reinforces the territorial identity of Tibetans bound together with unique Buddhist culture along with the imagery of Tibet as a 'snow land' and Tibetans as the 'people of snow-land' (*Gangchenpa*). Here exile plays a crucial role in the formation of modern national consciousness, since in addition to the 'feedback' effect of the exile nationalist discourse; it is through the collective imagination of separated exile brethren from the Tibetans in Tibet that the insiders are purposively

united to imagine selves as a part of this collective whole. The ethnoscape of Tibet since 2008 has undergone a tremendous changes with the emergence of various ethnic-wide grassroots resistance movements/protest such as ‘no losar campaigns’ to ‘Lhakar movement’ to ‘self-immolations’, these recent phenomena has drastically altered the Tibetan sense of their collective identities.

### **De-Sinicisation of Tibetan Culture**

As discussed in earlier chapter (Chapter 2, 3), for the most of Tibetan history, Tibetans particularly from the region of *Amdo* and *Kham* have lived under the nominal control of Qing-China and later Republic of China, which has resulted into the prevalence of cultural syncretism in and around this region. However in post-1959 colonial context, due to increasing politicisation of Tibetan culture as a core of their national identity, this cultural syncretism are now perceived by the nationalist as a part of state-backed de-Tibetanisation project, that is to sinicise and consequently eliminate the distinct Tibetan national identity. This perceived state-led sinicisation process is not entirely a nationalist imaginative invention but has a fair historical precedence (see Chapter 2), however this paper believe that much of (not all) cultural syncretism that we see today, particularly in eastern parts of Tibet has a deep historical root. Nevertheless the nationalist by declaring their sovereignty upon the internal cultural domain of the Tibetan world, first and foremost seeks to homogenise and ‘re-Tibetanise’ the Tibetan culture world with their particularistic and hegemonic idea of what it means to be ‘true Tibetan’. These essentialised constituent of the ‘true Tibetan’, includes ‘speaking pure Tibetan language’, ‘wearing traditional Tibetan dresses’ and most importantly ‘unequivocally following the Dalai Lama’.

Post-2008 uprising, when the state security apparatus has become increasingly coercive, the Tibetans have gradually developed a low-risk socio-economic and cultural resistance movement, that above all seeks to revert the perceived state-led sinicisation process. This movement have gradually been identified with overarching umbrella term called ‘*Lhakar*’, literally meaning ‘White-Wednesday’, Wednesday being a ‘soul day’ (good day) of the Dalai Lama according to Tibetan astrological calendar. The movement though far from being a uniformly coordinated action, essentially seeks to reassert the

Tibetan national identity by following the seemingly simple yet symbolically powerful act of ‘eating only Tibetan food’, ‘wearing Tibetan dress’ and ‘speaking in pure Tibetan language’. For instance in June 2010, a Tibetan blogger on his blog-post invited the fellow readers to pledge for their involvement in the *Lhakar* movement by doing all or one of the following every Wednesday,

“I am Tibetan, from today I will speak pure Tibetan in my family.

I am Tibetan, from today I will speak pure Tibetan whenever I meet a Tibetan.

I am Tibetan, from today I will remind myself every day that I am a Tibetan till I die.

I am Tibetan; from today I will wear only Tibetan traditional dress, *chuba*, every Wednesday.

I am Tibetan, from today I will speak only Tibetan every Wednesday.

I am Tibetan, from today I will learn Tibetan language.

I am Tibetan, from today I will stop eating meat and only eat a vegetarian diet and gain more merit every Wednesday.

I am Tibetan, from today I will only use Tibetan and speak Tibetan when I call or send a message to Tibetans.”<sup>17</sup>

### **‘Losar Phenomenon’**

The year following 2008 uprising, which resulted into numerous deaths and the imprisonment of thousands of Tibetans, there emerged a nation-wide ‘non-celebration of *Losar*’ (the Tibetan New Year) as a collective expression of their ‘national grief’ for the loss of their ‘national inmates’. This act of individual’s participation into the nation-wide ritualised mode of anti-colonial resistance engenders a strong sense of fraternity/sorority among fellow participants.

For instance, among the few privately circulating leaflets in the areas around *Amdo* and *Kham* one reads;

*“Brothers and sisters, monks and ordinary people of the three Tibetan provinces (Amdo, U-Tsang and Kham) of the same root and family, we have to unite, resist together, never*

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<sup>17</sup> <http://highpeakspureearth.com/2011/white-wednesday-the-lhakar-pledge/>

*ever give in to those invading our homeland. The people of the three provinces must stand together through thick and thin, never forget the fellow compatriots that have been shot dead, they did not die for their own benefits but because they fought for freedom and justice. Thus, as Tibetans, we cannot celebrate Losar...*” (Woeser, 2013)

Another leaflet read following;

*“During the incidents on March 10, thousands of fellow Tibetans were arrested and sent to prison, thousands of fellow Tibetans suffered from persecution, thousands of fellow Tibetans disappeared; we Tibetans living our quiet and simple lives, if you have a conscience, if you want to live a life sharing joy and sorrows, then we ask you to do the following two things: don’t indulge in singing and enjoyment; don’t light firecrackers or fireworks. Hopefully everyone will be able to follow these two requests, helping us to commemorate the dead and pray for the living!”* (Woeser, 2013)

These collective expressions of national solidarity made the colonial regime uneasy, leading to various ‘carrot and stick’ responses, which is either incentivising conformity or criminalising dissents. E.g. in *Rebkong* area of *Amdo* (Chinese: Tongren County, Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province), according to a Beijing based popular Tibetan blogger Woeser “the local government has gone house to house with documents requiring Tibetans to sign their name or leave their thumbprint on the documents which says: ‘I will ensure that there will be absolutely no demonstrations this year as there were last year, I will ensure I am obedient to the Party and government, and I will ensure that I will celebrate the new year.’” (Woeser, 2009) In the Tibetan areas of *Labrang* (Chinese: Xiahe County, Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu) and *Ngaba* (Chinese: Aba, Sichuan), Woeser reports that the local government has given firecrackers to government workers and cadres, telling them to set the firecrackers off at New Year and in Lhasa, Tibetans who put the word out not to mark the New Year are even being detained.

In addition to these outward resistance act, the ‘*Losar* phenomenon’ has reached an another height of nationalist expression when Tibetans from eastern part of Tibet, many of whom for decades if not centuries have been celebrating either both Chinese and

Tibetan New Year or in some areas only Chinese New Year (Woeser, 2013) are now increasingly giving up Chinese New Year celebration and instead are celebrating traditional Tibetan *Losar*.<sup>18</sup> Moreover as discussed in the earlier section of this chapter, the Tibetan custom of celebrating *Losar* on different dates depending upon the region<sup>19</sup> were now seen as by nationalist as an ‘obstacle’ for ‘unity’, which needs to be overcome; keeping in tradition with nationalist homogenising tendencies!. Logic goes ‘one nation’ must have one ‘national culture’; clinging to regional customs traditions are problematised under new objective conditions. Thus many of the bloggers within Tibet while discussing upon the subject of *Losar*, argues that the lack of common *Losar* celebration affects the national unity thus it is imperative for the Tibetans to have one national *Losar* celebration. For instance one such comment argues;

*“If in all parts of Tibet only one Losar is commonly celebrated, then it will help to have a common language and unity among us! So many good things will come out of it. So let us spread the benefits by celebrating a common Losar...”* (High Peaks Pure Earth, 2011)

Another comment from *Amdo Chentsa* writes

*“The people from Amdo Chentsa will celebrate the central Tibetan Losar from this year; starting from this year, they will not celebrate the Chinese New Year.”* (High Peaks Pure Earth, 2011)

Such comments, particularly the later one, where *Amdowa* for the sake of ‘national unity’ is ready to forgo its century old regional custom (which is crucial part of his regional identity), reflects the radical identity transformation that nationalism has brought about in the Tibetan society. This is not to argue such opinions are shared by most Tibetans, which may not be true as of now, or to argue that nationalism has obliterated the traditionally dominant regional identities, which is again a fallacy, however it attempts to illustrate a fact that how nationalism within the context of colonial interaction, *Losar* celebration becoming the focal point of power contestation between the colonised and the

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<sup>18</sup> It appears that nation-wide non-celebration of *Losar* was in 2009 and since then in many parts of Tibet *Losar* was celebrated in a way that didn’t accord with the demands of state authorities.

<sup>19</sup> Nationalisation of *Losar* in exile (as discussed before) didn’t have much resonance in Tibet, where it was continued to be celebrated on different dates according to local custom.



coloniser, engenders a strong emotive sense of national identity that transcends all other sub-identities. However these regional/sectarian sub-identities are not completely obliterated but instead are overlaid with new context-specific super-ordinate identity of the nation.

### **Immolations and Secularisation of National Ethics?**

Self-immolation is an act of lighting a fire to one's body to protest against the present socio-eco-political status-quo. The phenomena is widespread throughout the world beginning from the 1960s protest in Vietnam by a Buddhist monk 'Thic Quang Duc' to 1990s Women's right protest in Iran to various socio-economic or even political protest in various part of India numbering over sixteen hundred in total to right group protest in China. However as argued by Katia Buffetrille and Françoise Robin in the preface of the book that "they (self-immolation's) have to be interpreted in a network of meanings and values belonging to the society in which they take place", thus in their concluding remarks both suggest that in the specific case of Tibet "self-immolators manifest a full and final mastery over their bodies, by ultimately offering them for the sake of their collective identity, giving new meaning to the "political lives of dead bodies" (Buffetrille, Robin, 2012). In fact the political aspect of the self-immolations in Tibetan case has been suggested by various other prominent scholars (see Shakya, 2012b; Barnett, 2012). However for our specific interest in understanding nationalism, we will briefly examine why they are immolating themselves and how their 'co-nationals' are responding to it.

First modern political form of self-immolations in Tibetan world happened in Delhi 1998 by *Thupten Ngodup*, thereafter Tibetan Youth Congress erected his bust in Dharamsala named '*Cholsum Pawo Doring*' and his memory has been ritualised and today is a part of national memory of Tibetan diasporas (Shakya, 2012b). Next self-immolation happened in Feb 2009 by a young monk from *Kirti* monastery of *Ngaba* region called *Tapey*, he was reportedly holding a Tibetan national flag and a picture of the Dalai Lama. Since then there has been 142 reported numbers of self-immolations inside Tibet and the ubiquitous message that we get through their last testaments or based on report from within Tibet is that of 'return of Dalai Lama', 'Freedom in Tibet' and

‘unity of the six million Tibetan race’. These makes few things apparent that, first, these act in contrary general understanding, are not meant to coerce a concession from the Chinese state but are primary focused to their fellow ‘co-nationals’ and part international community to unite under the figure of the Dalai Lama in their fight against China. Both though are evidently to alter the status quo (that is to coerce concession) but their primary audiences of targets were different, there political interaction was more with their ‘co-nationals’ than their colonisers (Shakya, 2012a). Second, it is clear from these messages that, it is within the person of the Dalai Lama that the Tibetan nation is subsumed in. The Dalai Lama and the Chinese state are cognitively imagined into two polarised end of the trajectory, thus nearer to Chinese state, lesser you become Tibetan. The legitimacy to rule Tibet is bound within the figure of Dalai Lama and the further is away from him, one loses the legitimacy in the eyes of Tibetans. Thus this call for the ‘return of Dalai Lama’ must be understood within the context of ‘what Dalai Lama symbolises to Tibetans?’ As seen in the chapter 3, the Tibetan Buddhism is devoid of ‘pope like figure’ and is essentially diffused in terms of its religious hierarchy, thus for a believer her/his ‘root guru’ is the sole savoir in a religious sense, however politically the idea of ‘Tibetan nation’ is tied with the figure of Dalai Lama at-least since late 17th century. It is true that the Dalai Lama also represents a revered religious figure and such ‘secular/religious’ dichotomisation might appear problematic but however in line with my earlier proposition that ‘nationalism, ‘secondarises’ the religious aspects of Tibetan identity to that of ‘national aspects’ within a context of highly politicised colonial interactions’, this paper maintains that majority of the self-immolators when calling for the ‘return of Dalai Lama’ are doing so within the highly ‘politicised context’ thus with nationalism rather than religionism.

The second important aspects of the self-immolations protest concerning our chapter is the kind of response it generated from their intended audience, which is their ‘co-national Tibetans’. Despite the presence of historical precedence and Buddhist philosophical justification for the act of self-immolations (see Buffetrille, 2012), these writings are confined within inaccessible part of the ancient text thus known only to few literate elite. Within the historical memories of the most Tibetans, these texts doesn’t exist thus most Tibetans see the act of self-immolations not as pure religious devotion but

as an act of political protest for the well being of the Tibetan nation. Nevertheless this deeply religious Tibetan society, in whose understanding the act of killing oneself and others constitute a major sin, largely avoided the ‘un-Buddhist’ critique of the act (Sperling, 2012). The burning of ‘self’ for the nation constituted in the mind of a nationalist, a supreme act of sacrifice thus achieves martyrdom (*Pawo*), a political equivalent of nirvana. There was an outpouring sympathy and support for the families of the deceased from all parts of Tibet. Once again throughout the Tibet, people expressed their collective grief by not celebrating *Losar*, this collective act of memorialising dead(s) strengthens their sense of commonness. This paper argues that it is nationalism that has made Tibetans acceptance/support of this seemingly ‘un-Buddhist’ act of self-immolation possible. Throughout the Tibetan areas, these perceived supreme acts of sacrifice for nation has left its mark and now more and more Tibetans are starting to see themselves a part of their national whole. For instance, according to Woenser, “in *Darlag* County where *Sopa Rinpoche* self-immolated, several hundred Tibetans spontaneously destroyed thousands of knives, hunting guns and bullets together and swore that from then on they would never use weapons again, would never fight any internal battles, steal or kill; they strengthened internal unity.” In other areas such as *Dzamtang* County, where six Tibetans self-immolated in a row; several thousands of Tibetans spontaneously collected huge numbers of knives, guns and bullets and handed them to the main *Dzamtang Chode* Monastery and *Tsangwa* Monastery to destroy them. They also swore to never quarrel or kill again (Woenser, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

At the turn of this century there was no single collective group called ‘Tibetan’, which internally identified themselves a part of a single political community; i.e. Tibet. However with the intersection of Chinese colonisation and experience of modern technology and elite engineering, Tibetans worldview went under radical changes. This began in exile through the series of invention of traditions, symbols and mass rituals. This national discourse made its way into Tibet during the liberalization period, where it was selectively appropriated by Tibetans in relation to their lived experience. Moreover Chinese nationality policy and ethnic categorisation process also has its role in fomenting

pan-Tibetan national identity. However this passive ethnic identity was activated by the politicisation of societal consciousness through series of Chinese state intrusion to the sovereign domain of national culture-sphere. Especially in post-2008 national uprising, Tibetans resolved to various grassroots movement/protest, which further heightened mass national consciousness. It is also argued in this chapter that nationalism in Tibet though didn't entail the religious loss of cognitive hold over the minds of Tibetans; it nevertheless secondarises the religious aspect of Tibetan identity to that of national under a particular politicised context of colonial interactions. In conclusion As expounded by Ashis Nandy "colonialism minus a civilisational mission is no colonialism at all (Nandy, 1993)", the Tibetans act of reasserting pride in one's own cultural identity and rejection of Chinese modernity, subverts the colonial claimed project of 'modernising the native barbarians' thus loosing the colonial legitimacy. Or probably it would be more fitting to say that Chinese have never gained its colonial legitimacy in the eyes of native Tibetans, thus their colonialism in Tibet has always been that of, what Ranajit Guha says, "dominance without hegemony".

## CHAPTER SIX

### Conclusion

This dissertation has focused on the historical transformation of Tibetan identity with the advent of nationalism. In doing so, it has in the beginning laid down the theoretical framework within which most of the analyses are confined into. The theoretical approach used in this research is understood in general as 'ethno-symbolism', whose basic argument is that, despite the historical novelty of 'nation' as argued by most 'modernist' theorist of nationalism, 'nations' have deep ethnic roots and thus are not complete 'invention' or 'root-less'. This dissertation argues that, 'modernist' understanding of nation and nationalism is euro-centric and thus devoid of non-European experiential understanding. Modernisation, as crucial for mass politicisation, was unlike in West is a colonial imposition in third-world countries thus the non-Western experience of nationalism is bound to deviate from the West. National identities under colonial context were formed essentially in opposition that of their colonisers. After laying down the theoretical framework, the dissertation seeks to outline the historical overview of the Sino-Tibetan relations and mainly argue that the so called 'Tibet Question', looking from its long historical trajectory, is a modern invention, mainly the result of imposing western knowledge system upon non-western political entities, whose particular historical interaction were then being increasingly interpreted from the particular European understanding of 'sovereignty' and statehood'. Such imposition of European knowledge system delegitimises the non-European modes of interactions where inter-states relations where not necessarily based on the ideas of 'sovereignty' and 'Subject-hood'. Moreover Chinese state's embracement of this post-enlightenment Western form of reasoning, where the 'progresiveness' of an entity is to be judged by one's productivity level and where development is conceptualised as linear evolutionary experience. Tibetan is denied of any alternative forms of modernisation. The development of trajectory of the Tibetan civilisation is judge from how similar are they becoming to the 'modern' Chinese (Han), sinicisation is equated with modernisation.

With this background understanding of the Sino-Tibetan relations, the dissertation seeks to focus on the diverse lived historical experience of Tibetans, leading to certain particular identity formation among Tibetans based on their intra-cultural or intra-regional differences. However these sub-identities are yet again contextualised within the theories of identity formations in general. It is also argued that, pre-Chinese colonisation, there was a loose-knit pan-Tibetan identity based on the idea of belonging to a common ancestors and unique religious landscape protected by the patron deity; *Avaloketesvara*. However this pan-Tibetan identity in the absence of overt out-group presence and other necessary objective conditions remained throughout the history at the backdrop and were non-crucial determining forces in individual day to day life. In everyday social experience Tibetan identities were based on their local leaders, monastery, region etc, thus during the Chinese colonisation of Tibet, there was no sense of pan-Tibetan unity among the masses, the resistance were mostly localised and even when there was an overt united front, it was based on their sense of strategic necessity to protect religion.

This dissertation maintains that nation or nationalism is by definition a mass phenomenon and unless substantial masses are incorporated into imagining of such common political community, nation can't be said to have existed. In traditional societies, the necessary means of mass communication were absent thus mass politicisation was inconceivable. But with the Chinese colonial displacement, Tibetan masses traditional social experience was altered thereby politicising the common masses. These politicised masses were later mobilised by the exile Tibetan elite through the use of modern means of mass communication into the 'imagining of nation'. This dissertation argues that the Tibetan nationalism is the product of complex intersection between the colonisation and modernisation, which creates a necessary objective condition for the Tibetan nation to emerge. This national identity is hegemonic today, displacing the other traditional ways of identifying selves, it seeks to homogenise the traditionally diverse Tibetan communities and it is this hegemonic national identity assertion that has become the major obstacle for Chinese colonial project in Tibet. Most of the colonial attempt to eliminate Tibetan identity in recent times have backfired and resulted into evermore greater national consciousness among Tibetans and it is this national identity, this paper argues, will in long run becomes a major source of problem for Chinese rule over Tibet.

This dissertation has largely focused on discourse analyses and has argued against or for of earlier writings on Tibetan nationalism. The main idea is to deviate from the simplistic arguments that the Tibetan nationalism is simply a product of Chinese colonialism or to say 'collective Tibetan identity emerged with the advent of Chinese colonialism'. As mentioned earlier, I maintain that pan-Tibetan identity formation has other factors to take into considerations such as exile nationalising project, Chinese colonial identity imposition and above all the modern technology's impact on the Tibetan world-view. Moreover traditional Tibetan sense of collectiveness never aspired for singular nation-state thus the earlier Tibetan sense of collective identity and modern national identity though evidently have certain linkage but both identities are radically different from each other, especially in-terms of latter's homogenising and centralising tendencies. Tibet traditionally was a politically diffused and religiously/culturally united entity, that is the 'cultural Tibet' did have its centre in the form of Lhasa where *Jokhang* was unanimously considered most sacred Tibetan religious site, but in-terms of politics, there was no one centre in Tibet historically. Each region have their localised political centre, especially in eastern part of Tibet, which except for brief historical period in 17th century has never came under the political rule of Lhasa. The espoused mission of nationalism among Tibetan is to bring both political and cultural Tibet into congruent.

As noticed above, Sino-Tibetan conflict is essentially an identity conflict and is bound to exacerbate in the absence of any mutually agreed conclusive arrangement which will allow both distinct identity to evolve. Chinese assimilationist policy aimed at eliminating distinct Tibetan identity is backfiring and instead strengthening Tibetans in-group solidarity and out-group resistance. In post-2008 uprising, what we see is that, the resistance in Tibet has outgrown all its previous forms and the idea of new 'collective self' has emerged among Tibetans, thereby individuals are suppressing their distinctive 'self' for that of 'group' and are increasingly identifying self interest in congruent with group interest. This new group identity is no-more that of earlier fragments of regions and sects but is of nation, imagined in contradistinction of 'others'. Chinese leadership in China are facing policy dilemma, neither suppression nor liberalisation seems to be a viable political option, for suppression has created a nation out of fragmented Tibetan ethnicity

thus stronger resistance, whereas 'controlled political liberalisation' will as in 1980s inevitably lead to cultural revival thereby also strengthening Tibetan identity.

The present research has various limitations, especially considering its vast area of analyses and limited time period within which the study undertaken need to be completed. Most of the sources cited are secondary in nature and thus very less of archival researches are done. The vast period of study (7-21century) inevitably resulted into some generalisation and leaving out on other important events in the history of Sino-Tibetan relations, nevertheless I hope this study provides a general overview of the identity formation/transformation among Tibetans throughout the history and does some contribution in understanding the emergence of nationalism among Tibetans. This paper hasn't dealt extensively on the constituent of Tibetan nationalism, whether it is purely a religious nationalism or is emerging in other more secularised forms. It is important that we do not see Tibetan nationalism as monolithic phenomena and understand the internal contradiction within the umbrella term 'Tibetan nationalism'. There is 'official nationalism' which seeks to channelise the Tibetan historical trajectory into certain direction and there is also popular nationalism, which voice for the alternative forms of resistance against Chinese. Former seeks autonomy within the Chinese state and later seeks independence; this dichotomy must be understood within the Sino-Tibetan history of elite realism and mass radicalism. Moreover due to the necessary generalisation of such broad historical work, this paper have not been able to look into the margins of Tibetan nationalist discourse or one would say an alternative forms of national imagining from groups of Tibetans lying outside the dominant social groups; these are non-Buddhist religious groups such as '*Bon-pos*' or for that matter also 'Tibetan Muslims'. The gender has increasingly become an important factor in understanding the nationalism today, in a sense that, what solution this political ideology offers (if any) for this all pervasive social inequality.

Future research options in this particular field are plenty, since very less or unsatisfactory work has been done on the Tibetan nationalism. The penetration of nationalist ideology among Tibetans, especially amongst the Tibetans in Tibet during the period of 1950-1980s is still largely unexplored. Though it is generally assumed that



there exists a pan-Tibetan identity consciousness amongst Tibetans in Tibet, but more research on the subject will illustrate on how far the nationalist discourse enjoys legitimacy among the common masses. Moreover despite the prevalence of pan-Tibetan identity consciousness, it is most possible that common Tibetan masses in rural community may least share the nationalist concerns, thus a need for further research into the subaltern Tibetan voices.

In conclusion, the dissertation's hypothesis that "Tibetans before Chinese colonisation has some form of loose knit-collective identity and it is upon this traditional sense of collectivity that the modern Tibetan nation is formed" has been proved, we have done so by empirically showing that how despite the absence of modern means of mass communication, the traditional cultural aspects like that of 'wandering bard' (chapter 3) act as a pre-modern means of mass communication, through which certain ideas throughout the linguistic border of Tibet can be disseminated. In chapter 4, we have shown how this pre-modern collective sense later acted as a base for the development of modern nationalism. The second hypothesis that "post-2008 uprising, the Tibetan sense of collective identity has undergone a radical changes to a point where individuals are increasingly identifying themselves as a national members imagined in opposition to their colonisers" has been validated in the final section of the chapter 4, where it has been shown through songs and writings from within Tibet, that how under increasing conflicting situation, Tibetans sense of their collective identity is getting increasingly crystallised. In other word, in post-2008 uprising the societal consciousness of the common Tibetans are increasingly being politicised into imagining of singular political community in contradistinction with the Chinese others.

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