

**THE DYNAMICS OF RELIGION AND NATIONALISM
IN TIBET**

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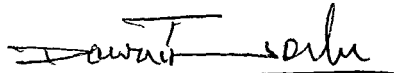
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Dissertation titled "**THE DYNAMIC OF RELIGION & NATIONALISM IN TIBET**" which is being submitted by **Mr. Rahul Srivastava** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master Of Philosophy (M.Phil.)**, carried out by him under my guidance and supervision, is his original work and to the best of my knowledge this Dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this university or any other university.

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


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Dedicated to

*Respected Nanaji and Papa
(The Angels above the clouds)*

and

*my dearest Mother
(the wind beneath my wings)*

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*THE DYNAMICS
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INTRODUCTION

The Dynamics of Religion and Nationalism in Tibet-TIBET the name alone conjures up visions of mystery and fantasy - visions of spirituality, exoticism and mysticism. The 'Shangri-La' is so wrapped in obscurity that almost any fantastic tales about it, or allegedly from it, are received with awe and believed unquestioningly by countless individuals the world over ¹

On the face of it this cloud of mystery is not surprising because of its geographical isolation and total lack of roads and modern communication networks, Tibet escaped, for the most part, the great advances of western imperialism during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. When European travellers, missionaries, merchants and military forces were combing the world, Tibet remained impenetrable, aloof, separate and unmolested (with the most minor exceptions).

'BOD(or 'Poyul) 'The land of snows', as the native inhabitants call it is predominantly a plateau averaging 3,600 m (12,000 safte.) above sea-level, its landscape not only includes snow-covered mountains but also glaciers and green forests, grasslands and salt lakes. It lies north, the Hingduan in the east, the Himalayas in the south and the Pamirs and Karakoram in the west.

¹Grunfield Tom A, 'The Making of Modern Tibet' Delhi OUP 1987

The early Tibetans, those of the imperial period (from 7th-9th (AD) were very proud of their own national identity. They were very proud of the geographical location of the country. One such Eulogy is as follows :-

" Tibet is high and its land is pure,

its snowy mountains are at the head of everything.

The sources of innumerable rivers and streams

It is the centre of the sphere of the Gods"

Tibetans live in an area of about 3.8 million sq.km. (1.5 million sq. miles) or about fifteen times the size of UK and half the size of United States. The political boundaries, however (the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), covers an area of only 1.2 million sq.km. (470,000 sq. miles).

The population of Tibet in the Central Tibet (the Tibet Autonomous Region) in 1990 totalled to 2,196,000 inhabitants of which 3.7% are Hans. The total Tibetan population scattered covers several Chinese provinces has grown continuously from 2,501, 174 in 1964 to 4,593,130 in the 1990 census.²

Tibet can be divided with several regions. In the Central Area, with the capital of Lhasa is the province of U. To the south-west is the province of Tsang, Centering on Tibet's second largest town, Shigatse. To the east is the area known as Kham, today politically

² Donnet Antoine – Pierre, 'Tibet : Survival in Question' P-23

divided between the province of Sichuan and the TAR. North of Kham is an area known to Tibetans as Amdo, to the Chinese as Qinghai while to the far west is Ngari. The area just north of U and Tsang is called the Change Dang (Chang Taug), the northern plateau with its desolate deserts and seemingly endless grass less lands.

The land is a fountain of many of the great rivers of Asia like Indus of India, Irrawadi and Salween of Burma and the great Yangtse and Hwang Ho of China begin their journey from the Tibetan plateau, the Tsangpo, which meanders first east and then south to become the Brahmaputra ('son of Brahma') and the Sutlez into Pakistan

Scholars are in unison over the fact that Tibet's original social order has been irreversibly altered by the influence of Chinese communism and the upheavals of 1959. The changes in Tibetan society since 1959 have certainly made it impossible for anthropologists fully to reconstruct what life was previously like. There were some scholars, such as the American trained Chinese Scholar Li Anzhe (Li An-Che), American anthropologist/missionary Robert Ekvall, who lived among the Tibetans before 1950; but for the most part scholars have been forced to study necessarily inexact replications of that society in the communities of exiles in Nepal and India.³ The best single description of pre-1950 Tibetan society is 'Feudal'. The word is in quotes here only because it has been a catchword in the seemingly never ending political battles over what Tibetan life used to be like. The Chinese tend to use the term in popular media in a pejorative sense (although many Chinese journals have used it more

³ Barbara Nimri Aziz, 'Tibetan Frontier Families', Reflections of three generations from Ding-RI ' P—67

descriptively)⁴, and naturally the knee jerk reaction of China's opponents has been to deny that feudalism ever existed in Tibet or even to go so far as to argue that it was beneficial.⁵

Prior to the seventh century of the Christian era, Tibetan history is wrapt in myth and legend, helped out from time to time by sidelights from contemporary Chinese history. According to the native tradition the Tibetan race was descended from a monkey into whose body had entered the compassionate spirit, known as in Tibet and Avalokiteshvrara in India. This spirit, with a she devil produced the first Tibetan offspring

SPIRITUAL TEMPORAL INTERPLAY

Marriage of religion with politics or nationalism or in other words the alliance between spiritual and a temporal authority is embedded in History.

Long ago mankind discovered that the constitution of state or something similar to it alone would ensure their survival. They entrusted their material and spiritual welfare to the king and the priest the two principal organs of the state. But neither the king or the priest rose to the expected heights of the two, the king proved worse. Plato was so disgusted that he declared that no solutions would emerge till philosophers become kings in the world.

⁴ Yeh Hu and Ho—Shih, 'A Preliminary Analysis of the systems of the Feudal Serfdom in Tibet'P—45

⁵ Marco Pallis, 'Peaks and Lamas' (London :Woburn Books Ltd. 1974)p—89—92

The sages of ancient India solved this enigma by using a conjunction of the king with the priest, as out of this union would emerge a government based on Dharma which would result in the happiness of the subjects.

The unique experiment of spiritual temporal mixture carries till date in Tibet.

A detailed discussion of the mutual dynamics of 'religion' and 'nationalism' in Tibet makes it imperative to briefly explain the two by categories here (viz. 'religion and nationalism') and then situate them in the Tibetan context.

RELIGION

The very attempt to define religion, to find some distinctive or possibly unique essence or set of qualities that distinguish the 'religious' from the remainder of human life is primarily a western concern. So many definitions of religion have been framed in the west over the years that even a partial listing would be impractical. With varying ~~with~~ success they have all struggled to avoid, On the one hand the scylla of hard, sharp, particularistic definition and, on the other hand, the charybdis of meaningless generalities.

As early as the late eighteenth century an attempt was made to shift the emphasis from the conceptual to the intuitive and visceral in defining religion. In a very influential statement, Friedrich Schleiermacher defined religion as 'feeling of absolute dependence' absolute as contrasted to other relative feelings of dependence. Apart from the formalistic and doctrinal definitions there are other definitions which have tried to include what William

James called "the enthusiastic temper of espousal". with the rise of sociological and anthropological disciplines, another factor has been projected into definition making the social, economic, historical and cultural contexts in which religion comes to expression. Emile Durkheim, a pioneer in the 'societal interpretation' asserted in the elementary forms of religious life (New York), 1926). That 'a society has all that is necessary to arouse the sensation of the divine in minds merely by the power it has over them'.

Thus the Gods are nothing more than societies in disguise. In Durkheim's theory the collective aspects of religious rituals is to affirm the moral superiority of the society over individual members. and thus to maintain the solidarity of the society.

Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown have shown in field studies how religion works in primitive societies to maintain social cohesion and to centralise individual conducts. The father of sociology August Comte talks of three stages of theological, metaphysical and positive. He regarded theological thinking as an intellectual error which would be dispersed by the rise of modern science. But later on Comte propounded his own 'religion of humanity and thus recognised in some sense a universal need for religion'.

Contrary to the above views Marx held religion to be an illusion. In his own words it was the sigh of the oppressed creature the heart of the heartless world, it is the opiate of the masses.

But Marx himself and many others neglected the point that opiates are addictive. Heroin addicts can be weaned from their drug only by the use of methadone an equally addictive drug that is dispensed by government authorities. This is analogous to the relief comprehensive secular ideologies that revolutionary requires after try to push onto the masses from above in lieu of religion. They must be imposed continually and bring relatively little satisfaction. Moreover, the substratum of religious beliefs after continues to exist underground, awaiting some opportunity to reassert itself as our ideology.

Indeed Marx's contemporary Moses Hess, also understood ~~for~~ better than Marx! the social function of religion. He used the word opium to denote a medicine, rather than a drug. In his words "The people as the scriptures say, have to work in the sweat of their brows in order to maintain their lives of misery. Such a people, we maintain, needs religion, it is as much a vital for its empty stomach. There is no irony more cruel than that of those who demand from utterly desperate people to be clear headed and happy... Religion can turn the miserable consciousness of enslavement into a bearable one by raising it to a state of absolute despair, in which there disappears any reaction against evil and with it the pain disappearing as well just as opium does serve painful maladies.


Religion integration of society :-

Religion has been especially singled out as the prime force in the creation and maintenance of social integration. This integrating role of religion is seen as manifold. One through its belief system, it gives basic support to social and individual values. Two through its rituals, it repeatedly reinforced identification with and commitment to these values. Three, through its system of eternal rewards and punishment it helps to ensure the embodiment and acting out of values in behaviour.

It should be clearly borne in mind that what contributes to social integration is not necessarily institutionalised religion, but what society defines as sacred that is, a value orientation. The reinforcement is not necessarily provided by religious rituals. It may be provided by entirely secular forms of social support. Indeed, Leni Riefenstahl's famous documentary film, "Triumph of the will", shows the proliferation of effective secular ritual in Nazi Germany.

The above functionalist explanation of role of religion in societal integration should not be misconstrued to understand that religion always leads to societal integration and secondly

That religion is the sole possible source of social cohesion. Rather religion threatens social integration as readily as it contributes to it and further religion is never the exclusive base for social integration; it can only be more or less important.

There have been societies in which religious authority was dominant; we know of many today in which its role is negligible. There is good reason to believe that, where religious authority is accepted its power to generate and sustain commitment in the face of opposition, and even of persecution is very great.

Historically revolutionary political movements have often been closely associated with revolutionary religious movements. In contemporary societies this is not usually the case. Yet, because they also require commitments that are difficult to carry out in practice, present day revolutionary movements construct secular ideologies that have much of the flavour and many of the characteristics of transcendental religious belief.

Social scientists have given varying explanation for the overarching role of religion in human affairs. One of the most tenable explanations argues that religion answers some fundamental human needs for which no substitute has yet been found. Man's sense of identity is so much tied up with one religion's tradition or the other that any wilful rejection of religion is tantamount to self-negation. The central meaning of life and the universe as provided by religion seems to be meaningful to a large section of humanity that a world without religion would be a huge lunatic asylum.

The fundamental human needs which only religion on a societal scale has managed to satisfy may be summarised as follows.

- a) The structural framework..... of identity
- b) Psychological security Value system

First the value system refers to a set of ready made definitions of significant situations which no ordinary human beings can work out on their own every time they face unusual events or situations, such as birth, sickness, death. It broadly defines the relation of its believers to each other and to the universe in which they live.

Although, it performs all of these vital function, the value system is perhaps the least indispensable, the value system is perhaps the least indispensable of the three fundamental roles of religion in human existence.⁶ Indeed Marxism may be considered the only functional equivalent of religion with considerable mass appeal. But it has yet to stand the test of time. The undying religions belief as surfaced in Poland some parts of soviet union and China might suggest that Marxism has not been able to satisfy the fundamental spiritual human needs that traditionally religion had provided for centuries Marxist leaders might not acknowledge this social fact but they are coming to recognise religion as a great social force to reckon with. Thus, the recent Marxist revolutions in Nicaragua and Afghanistan religion freedom.

⁶ Dawa Norbu, ' Culture and Politics of Third World Nationalism' P—66 (Routledge, London 1991)

Nationalism :- The nation, from which nationalism is directly derived, is later in origin - ratio was used in medieval times without 'most often any political connotation' It means like the Greek term *ethnos*, people, nation, country.

During the middle ages the word ratio no longer referred to the people who actually constituted it. The nation became associated with that aristocratic class which usually had greater say over the state affairs and who owns means of production. During the absolute monarchy the nation became synonymous with the monarch's centralised state.

Nationalism has in essence sought to restore the original Latin meaning of *natio*, people or country with the rise of egalitarian politics, increased social communication and mass mobilisation the concept of the nation was no longer confined to the literate states; It reached the masses of people as well.

It was Rousseau who first rejected this elitist equation of the nation with the ruling class, and instead equated the nation with the people.

The word nationalism was first used by a French anti-Jacobin priest in 1798 in a derogatory sense. It signified a popular protest against the status quo of state power structure. It was a populist transclass concept that embraced the whole nation. But nationalism is not simply populism... though it has that great populist quality too.⁷ The recent debates

⁷ *ibid*, P—26

between the modernist and post-modernist discourses on nation and nationalism goes a long way in properly highlighting the matrix of nation.

For modernists like Deutsch, Learner, Kedourie, Gellner, J.H. Kantsky, Tilly and Tom Nairn, the nation is a modern category emerging in the late 18th C. along with the ideology of nationalism. The modern nation is a product of national conceptions, but nationalism itself is a force generated by needs of modernity, that is of modern societies. Hence nationalism and nations are intrinsic components of modern capitalistic, industrial and bureaucratic world. They are an integral part of its failure. Though the fires of nationalism may burn less fiercely with the advance of affluence, nations and national states will remain the basic forms and elements of modern society. Hence every society and population must forge a viable large scale community and build a nation where now existed, because the nation is the only tested framework for economic and social development.

The above optimist and activist accounts sees the nation as a community of participants sharing common values and purposes, appropriate to a modern era of economic growth and political emancipation. In this account, nationalism may be a regrettable even destructive force in a plural world, but the nation is the only really viable unit of political organisation and community today.

This is because for the modernists, the nation is socially and politically determined. Its foundations lie deep in the economic social and political process of modernisation since

the French revolution, if not earlier and the nation partakes of the social and political benefits of modernity.

From a post modernist perspective the above account of nation is absolute and out of synch with the grassroots realities.

The modernist account tends to reify the nation to treat it as a 'thing' out there, with a dynamic of its own. The modernist account also fails to grasp the elusive, shifting character of all communities, including the nation.

But there is something even more fundamental that divides post modernist appearance from all their predecessors. This is their emphasis on cultural construction as opposed to social and political determination. Here there has been a twofold shift from structure to culture as the locus of analysis and second from determination to construction and representation.

The post modernist reading of the nation into a narrative to be recited, a discourse to be interpreted and a text to be deconstructed constructing the nation is more a matter of disseminating symbolic representations than forging cultural institutions or social networks. We grasp the meaning of the nation through the images it casts, the symbols it uses and the fiction it evokes in the novels, plays, poems, operas, ballads, pamphlets and newspapers. It is

in these symbolic and artistic creations that we may discern the lineaments of a nation. For the post modernists, the nation has become a cultural artefact of modernity, a system of collective imaginings and symbolic representations which resembles a pastiche of many ... and forms; a composite patchwork of all the cultural elements included in its boundaries.

In the light of above argument, modern Israel represents an imagined community incorporating a medley of ethnic groups and cultures of widely differing provenance.. Christians and Muslims Arabs, Druse, Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews comprise its main components but the later include religions and secular Jews from many lands and times, from America and Yemen, from India and Romania from Ethiopia and Russia. The in gathering of the exiles is a perfect reflection and precise symbol of the Israeli nation as an imagined and invented community. What is taking place in modern Israel is the cultural construction of a new nation which we witness daily in the work of cultural representation in Israeli 'texts' in its newspapers, plays, poetries, film broadcast etc. In an through concepts like Sabra ,Kibbutz Aliya, yored, Ziomut used in official pronouncements and everyday life the work of symbolic construction permeates the fabric of social life and creates a community of shared assumptions and cultural practices out of ethnically and social heterogeneous populations, in other words, a nation.

Mention should be made of the fact that spiritual religions beliefs are not primordial phenomenon. Nonetheless they like science, art and literature become incorporated into

nationhood . They become partly incorporated into the national collective self consciousness. They are not exhausted by it. They acquire an existence outside their national collective self consciousness or what Hegel called the 'national spirit'.

Authors like Gellner are of the opinion that "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to 'self - consciousness. It invents nation where they do not exist.

Nationalism in the political sense is a modern phenomenon among Tibetans, an outcome of their recent experience with the Chinese communist state. Concepts developed to explain the rise of nationalism in European societies during the 19th and 20th centuries must be used with caution. Religion and nationalism have a mutual interplay in Tibet in the sense that religion is conditioned by the development of a nationalist political consciousness, assuming here an outward looking and progressive form in response to the ideological claims of the Chinese state. On the other hand the texture of nationalism is woven with strong strands of religion which gets subdivided into fine threads of monks, Nuns, Monasteries, the institution of Dalai Lama, the Monlam festival, the Tikhang temple and the 'Khorra' ceremony as Protest.

In a study of the nationalism of Sri Lanka and Austria Kapferer argues (1988, 1989) observes that like other ethnic ideologies, nationalism lays claim to symbols which have great importance for people and argues that these symbols represent the nation state. The point has

been brilliantly elaborated upon by eminent Tibetan social scientist Dawa Norbu who opines that nationalism has both a traditional and a modern component and the social potency and mass appeal of nationalism resides in the unique combination of the two contrasting idea systems. Traditional culture provides the emotional power that mystifies the rational mind, while egalitarian ideology provides a rational framework for the resolution of social problems. He opines that, religion induced culture is a vital part of the traditional element of nationalism, and this is precisely why it is so important in political mobilisation. Unlike most western theorists Prof. Norbu does not contrast religion and nationalism. Rather he recognises that world religions have the potential for mass politics.

Tibetan nationalism is a fusion of religions and secular aspirations and it also reflects the traditional Tibetan theory of the state as Chos-Srid Zung' - bril ('religion and politics combined). The 'notion of the religious land', the polity based on and legitimised by religion, is reflected in the term 'chosrgyal' which is a Tibetan expression for the Buddhist conception of Dharma king: The kind who turns the wheel of the law (dharmaraja). The Indian king Ashoka offers a paradigm for the Dharamaraja - the "righteous ruler" - who is not just a patron of religion, but also a religious king, one whose policies and regulations derive their legitimacy from the Dharma itself, and are validated by the Sangha. This conception of polity and political legitimacy has a widespread canonical basis in Buddhism throughout Asia. In the case of Tibet, the crucial status of the Dalai Lama epitomised the political system.

The roots of Tibetan nationalism lie much deeper than simply ethnic differences separating Chinese and Tibetans and are linked to basic institutional features of Tibetan

society. The political dimension to Buddhism in Tibet is intrinsic. Continuity with the past is strongly emphasised by Tibetans, and the way this is done should be seriously taken into account. Recollecting the past is certainly not an accidental or spurious activity, it is a vital political tool. Symbolic constructions, creative negotiation and representation are inherent aspects of all social life.

In general nationalism, like other ethnic ideologies, appropriates symbols and meanings from cultural context which are important in people's everyday experience. During the period leading up to the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, the U.S. was depicted as an adulterous infidel who raped and mistreated Iran, which was depicted as a woman - as a mother country (Thaiss, 1978). This kind of symbolism can be extremely powerful in mass politics.

The revitalisation's of a Tibetan national identity which has accompanied the revival and culture has happened in spite of every effort by the Chinese to thwart it. The Tibetans strong sense of collective identity has been noticed by several observers. R. Ekvall⁸ has described the religious folkloric, linguistic, racial and ethnic dimensions of this phenomenon. He shows how Tibetans have identified themselves as followers of Buddhism, as practising certain customs (such as partaking the same food without distinction), and as recognising their language as unique. He also shows how they have a sense of belonging to a unique racial

⁸ Robert Ekvall, 'Religious Observances in Tibet' (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1964) P-78

descent and living in unique habitat. Besides this they also have a sense of belonging to a separate political community, a country, which they recognise their own in some unique way.

SUMMARY

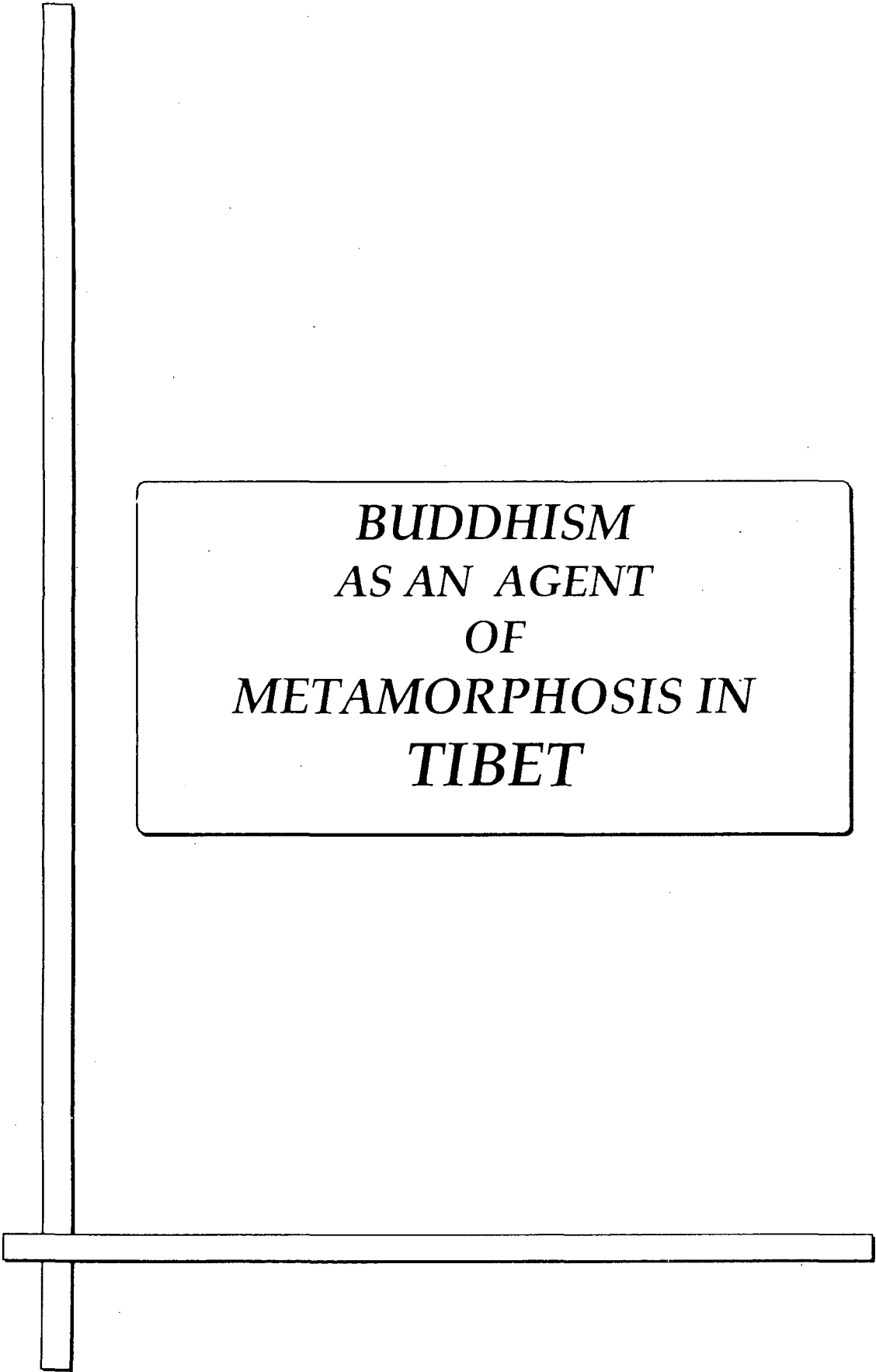
This chapter provides for the environmental setting for the dissertation. It mentions the unique Geo.-political significance of Tibet, besides the social structure of Tibet. It traces the spiritual-temporal interplay down the sands of history by citing examples from India. It makes an attempt to discuss the major perspectives on religion where specially notable is the contrast between the functionalist explanations of religion (Durkheim, Malinoski & others) and that of Marx who dubbed religion as an opium of masses; The chapter focuses on the adhesive role of religion in society which nowhere suggests that religion is the sole source of cohesion in society or that it always leads to societal interpretation.

The chapter also focuses on the debates between the modernists and the post-modernists discourses on nationalism where the post-modernist account is found closer to the realities in the Third world countries.

After discussing the nuances of religion and nationalism their interplay has been situated in the Tibetan context

The relevance of this chapter lies in the fact that it helps to establish (via the Tibetan case) the propositions that

- a) Religion can be an instrument of social change and solidarity.
- b) Nationalism has twin components tradition^{al} and modern.



**BUDDHISM
AS AN AGENT
OF
METAMORPHOSIS IN
TIBET**

BUDDHISM AS AN AGENT OF

METAMORPHOSIS IN TIBET

Tangle within, without, Lo ! in the toils

Entangled is the race of sentient being

Hence would I ask thee, Gotama, of this

who is it can from this tangle disembroil ?

Kindred sayings, 1:20 Pali Canon

One of the most intriguing features of Buddhism for anyone interested in religious source for conflict resolution is that it arose precisely as a method for coping with just such dilemmas. The opening verse of the Visuddhimarga in the Pali Canon, quoted above, bears witness to this characteristics.

Before tracing the journey of Buddhism in Tibet it becomes imperative here to throw some light on the Buddhist ethic which acted as the locomotive of transformation in the Tibetan past and it shapes its present and future to a large extent.

To cope with the perplexities of the world Buddha advocated an approach to religion and to life informed by three simple principles : compassion, "critical tolerance", and the wisdom

that can come only from experience (Prajna). Critical tolerance means that one must begin by giving those with whom one differs even on vital questions, the benefits of the doubt, It is an attitude shaped by compassion. The real key to the encounter with fundamental disagreement, however is the experiential one. The Buddha taught that no teaching or idea - his own included - should be accepted simply because it is taught by an authority or is said to be revealed. In everyday behavior Buddha was an exponent of "middle way". He spurned both external asceticism and self indulgence, exemplifying a life of balance, sobriety and gentleness.

Does this demanding ethic have any relevance in the world of organised power within which statesman and politicians operate. To cast some light on this question, one can look to the man who is often held to be the best example of the Buddhist ruler, the great Indian King Ashoka (269-232 B.C.). The story goes that just as Ashoka was feeling the pangs of regret that arose from the sufferings he also heard the enlightened ones teaching. As a result he left behind his Hindu upbringing and became a Buddhist. He then went on to try to forge a kingdom in which the various religions could dwell together peaceably. Even more importantly he decided that his commitment to the "middle way" of the Buddha, although it allowed for self defense, excluded all wars of aggression.

Ashoka's career is important because it marks a turning point. In his lifework the Buddha's demanding moral and spiritual teachings which had previously been practiced mainly by monks because they were considered too difficult for those involved in the



troubling ambiguities of governance, were shown to represent an ethic that could also guide public policy. Ashoka's reign raises another question about religion and conflict, however as a convert, he displayed the zeal converts characteristically do and while tolerating other paths, adopted a goal of converting all of India to the Buddha's way. He erected stupas, and sent out missionaries, to places as distant as Egypt, Syria and Greece. The Buddhist "Conquest" of south east Asia, however took its toll. Today in Sri Lanka some of the negative effects of using a religion even such an essentially pacifist one as Buddhism to Bolster a national and ethnic ideology (is for all of us to see).¹

Similar to the transformation of Ashoka from a warrior king to a pacifist, was the transformation of Tibet from a warrior nation to a peaceful community, both under the aegis of Buddhism.

The cumulative effect of Buddhism's long patronage by successive kings of Tibet and the country being later ruled by successive religious heads, has been immense, both to Tibet as a nation and to its people. Buddhism has not been a mere system of belief to the Tibetans; it encompasses the entirety of their culture and civilization and constitutes the very essence of their lives. Buddhism permeated the daily lives of the Tibetan people and formed the social fabric connecting them to the land of all the bonds which defined Tibetans as a people and as a nation, religion was undoubtedly the strongest.²

¹ Johnston and Sampson (eds.), 'Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft'

² 'Tibet: Proving truth from facts', P—78, DIIR Publications

In the words of 14th Dalai Lama, Buddhism thus caused the "metamorphosis that changed the entire course of Tibet's history. Tibetan history bears eloquent testimony in support of the above statement of Dalai Lama.

The description in the forthcoming pages lays no claim to be an exhaustive account of that period. The discussion is limited to those aspects of history which concur with the theme of the paper i.e. religion as an agent of transformation in Tibet

In the year 127 B.C, the first Tibetan king, Nyatri Tsenpo, united the different class of the Tibetan plateau into a single nation up until the assassination of the last king, Lang Darma in 842 A.D. Tibet was ruled for the subsequent almost thousand years by forty one kings of the Yarlung dynasty. During this time Tibet was an important political and military power in central Asia, whose authority and influence reached far beyond its neighbouring countries.³

The beginnings of this empire can be traced to about the 6th Century, when the Yarlung dynasty was founded. This brought about a period of relative stability to a region that had been characterised by clan rivalries.⁴ One of the most important rulers of this royal line who has the credit for the consolidation of Tibet was king Songsten Gampo (617-649). He began his kingship while still a minor after the assassination of his father, Namri (gNam-ri) in about

³ Petra K. Kelly, Gert Bastian and Pat Aiello (eds.) 'Anguish of Tibet'

⁴ Snellgrove and Richardson 'Cultural History of Tibet' (London 1968)

627, Songsten Gampo created a particular form of representative government with one representative at the royal court in Lhasa for every hundred families.

During his reign Buddhism was brought to Tibet, the Tibetan script was developed, and the first coins were minted. Songsten Gampo also promulgated a codex consisting of 16 general guidelines for moral behaviour, which Tibetans consider their first book of laws. His reign was characterised by large military campaigns in every direction including incursion into China. Songsten Gampo raided border areas of western China after a request for a marriage alliance with the Chinese ruler was rebuked. Songsten Gampo also married a Nepalese prince.

The portrait of the Tibetan people that emerges from contemporary Chinese records during the tsan period (pissant mighty powerful, strong and violent) is one of warriors.⁵

The Sung Annals depict them as always wearing swords and arrows. The Sui annals while recording a tribute mission, registered Tibet as a 'woman's nation (Nuerguo), being ruled by a queen and an assistant queen.' Men were engaged in 'military activities'. A similar pattern is apparent in the even earlier Chinese description of Tibet; the Young were held in high esteem, the old were not. 'Those who are strong are made leaders', and the weak are forced to be subjects. A Sung historian, Li Shang describes what might be termed warrior ethic. Those who died in the battlefield were honored those who died a natural death in bed

⁵ Prof. Norbu is of the opinion that the myth of Choegyel or Dharamrajya is a legacy of Lamaist historiography.

were contemptuously treated as if no purpose was served; and those who were defeated or ran away from the battlefield were put to shame by tying a fox's tail on their heads, suggesting that they were as cunning and cowardly as the fox.⁶

In other words, physical process was the criterion for leadership as well as social prestige. This warrior ethic and warrior spirit pervades the whole of Gesar epic which Tibetans believe actually happened in history.⁷ Both the Tibetan and Chinese sources confirm that the entire country was organised on a war footing. The Chinese sources in particular note the severity of military discipline maintained in the Tibetan Army. A contemporary Chinese historian describes about the military organisation of Tibetans. According to him, the entire country was organised into four major and four minor regiments (ru), and each regiment was broken down into groups of one hundred and one thousand soldiers. Effective control was exercised through the army unit of one hundred soldiers. The military chiefs were also head of the civil administration.

The conclusion of a treaty with China or of a swearing in ceremony was always marked by animal sacrifice. Sometimes the swearing in ceremony was done by dipping fingers in the blood of the sacrificed animals.⁸

⁶ Dawa Norbu, 'Culture and Politics of Third World Nationalism' (Routledge London 1991)

⁷ Dawa Norbu, 'Tibet the Road Ahead' P—365 (Harper Collins 1997)

⁸ *ibid* P—366

In addition to the material and political resources of the sedentary population of the Central Tibetan Valleys, nomadic economy, especially wealth of mounted manpower, played a large role in Tibetan state formation.

The nomadic tribes of the plateau were weak in political organisation but strong in terms of resources of men and animal power. All of these resources shared the characteristics of nomadic mobility and were therefore ideal for military campaigning.⁹

During the reign of Ti-sung, De-tsan, Tibet was at the zenith of her power and was indeed one of the great military powers of Asia. Her empire touched those of Arabs and Turks across the Pamirs. Turkistan and Nepal seem to have been subject to her, and her victorious armies overran the western parts of China. The terrified Chinese paid tribute to Tibet to save their capital, Changan.¹⁰ A chronicle describes the extent of the Tibetan kingdom during the reign of Ral-Pa-cha thus "During the time of king Ral-Pa-Chan, the Lord of Power, the frontiers held with the kings of the four borders were as follows. The range of the shro-long-shen mountains resembling a curtain of white-silk, was the frontier with the Chinese king of astrology, near the great river, Ganges, there was an iron pillar, which was the frontier with the Indian king of religion; the gate of Patasha dung was the frontier with the Persian king of wealth....."

⁹ Warren Smith Jr. 'Tibetan Nation : A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino—Tibetan Relations' P—60 (Westview Press 1996)

¹⁰ Charles Bell, 'Tibet—Past and Present '(London OUP 1968)

In the treaty of 822 the Chinese were forced to treat with the Tibetans as equals, recognising Tibet as a separate state with its own inviolable territory.¹¹ The treaty marked the high point for Tibetan empire. The terminology of "nephew and maternal uncle" was common diplomatic phraseology implying amicable relations as close as family relations.

The Tibetans had also not spared the Arabs in the west. According to Bretschneider, the Tibetans were continually engaged in military operations against the Arabs between AD 785 to 805 crossing the river Oxus, they penetrated as far as the Farghana and Samarkand. Today a lake in the north of the river stands as a monument to their expedition aptly called Al-Tubban (little Tibetan lake). The extent of Tibetan threat to west Asia may be gauged from the fact that the caliph of Baghdad, Harun Al-Rashed had to ally himself with the Chinese against the Tibetans.¹²

The lengthy description in the preceding paragraphs is sufficient to establish the existence of Tibet as a dreaded military power in their past. The description helps in establishing the contrast between two phases of Tibet i.e. its transformation from an imperial power to a peace loving community in which Buddhist played a nodal role. This will be clearly established in the remaining portion of this chapter.

¹¹ The Treaty reads as follows "The sovereign of Tibet, The Divine King of Miracles and the Great King of China, Hwang Te have agreed to unite their kingdoms.

¹² Dawa Norbu, 'Tibet : The Road Ahead ' P—367 (Harper Collins 1997)

When Buddhism first appeared in Tibet in the seventh century, it represented a foreign novelty taken up by the royal family and a few families of nobles. It was ignored or even repudiated by the adherents of the old animistic Bon religion only in the last decade of the eighth century, during the reign of king Tri- song De-tsan (742-797 AD) did the new religion really become established in Tibet.

During this period Tibetans were ordained as Buddhist monks, and in the year 779 A.D. the first Tibetan monastery Samye was founded. Buddhism spread rapidly, and by the end of the eighth century Tibetan clergy had secured the highest positions in the administration¹³. Since the middle of the seventh century, sovereignty over both the spiritual and the temporal realms of the Tibetan society was in the hand of Dalai Lama and the government and administration were composed of representatives of clergy and nobility. This close alliance or spiritual and temporal authority was the Zenith of a long and complex historical process of the mutual accommodation of Buddhist hierarchy and worldly aristocracy.

Since Sakya pandits accession to power in 1249 it had become virtually impossible for any non-priest, no matter how powerful to rule or even reign in Tibet without some religious sanction and active support provided by one sect or the other. By now legitimacy from Buddhist had become essential, which forbade the use of force as a matter of policy. In this respect the effect of the myth of choe-gyal was actually felt by the Lama rulers. Few of

¹³ Petra Kelly, Basten and Pat Aiello (eds.) 'Anguish of Tibet' P-5

the orders passed during this period amply bear it out. An account refers to some of the orders such as "The high should be pressed down by law, the poor should be governed by according to a reasonable system. Fine those who quarrel; compensate for murder; make thieves pay ninefold the amount of stolen property. Banish one who commits to rape to another country and cut off one his limb. ' Return good for good. Do not fight with the gentle people believe in Karma, forsake every thing that is irreligious. ¹⁴

Gradually the influence of religion increased considerably. Peace was being preached everywhere and the taking of life become forbidden. As a result of such teachings the warlike propensities of the Tibetans gradually diminished¹⁵. Mongols and other non-Buddhist tribes attacked and defeated Tibet.

It would be not out of place to describe in brief the changes brought about by Buddhism in the religious sphere in Tibet. Before the introduction of Buddhism, a kind of nature worship flourished in Tibet which has been described as shamanism. Animal sacrifice and magic played a very important role in it.¹⁶ Devil worship was also unrivaled there. After the introduction of Buddhism it showed a gradual diminution in strength.

¹⁴ Charles Bell op cit

¹⁵ Bell, ' The Religion of Tibet' (OUP 1968 London)

¹⁶ ibid

By the latter end of the 11th century Lamaism had firmly established throughout the century. A tremendous impact was given to the faith in the second half of the 13th century. This was due to the great interest shown by Kublai Khan the first Mongol emperor of China. Inviting to his court the high priest of the large Tibetan monastery at Sakya, Kublai Khan became a convert to Lamaism and gave the sovereignty of Tibet to the Sakya Lama. This was the beginning of the rule of the Priest-kings of Tibet.

As the wheel of history rolled on in Tibet there seemed to have been keen rivalry and competition among the well-to-do about inviting gurus from India and Nepal. The patronage of Buddhism had become a matter of social prestige and means of political rivalry. It was no longer the royal prerogative and monopoly that seemed to have been the way in which Buddhism was transformed into a social force. This social transformation was a prerequisite for the rise of Lamas to power.¹⁷ Over the centuries the nations of kingship have changed. But the basic pattern of institutions formed under the early kingship continued. Both Bon and Buddhist nations regarding kingship continued to co-exist. One common thread is the belief that the ruler is a possessor of magical powers which can be employed to eradicate public woes. Such a nation was radically different from the pre-Buddhist belief that the *btsan* the ruler can magically transform himself into a fierce demon called *btsan*. As Buddhism began to rapidly replace Bon, Buddhism ideas naturally dominated the concept of kingship. Thus with the Dalai Lama the idea reaches its full climax.

¹⁷ Dawa Norbu, 'Tibet The Road Ahead' P—370 (Harper Collins 1997)

The ideological or mythical basis of royal authority has gradually undergone a change in Tibet from Bongo notions to Buddhist concepts as Buddhism progressed in Tibet; from power (btsan) to compassion (snying-rje) as the ideological basis of their rule.

However, it would be naive to assume that such a conceptual transformation was either complete or absolute. Bonpo notions were used by even Buddhist priest rulers in the 12th and 16th centuries as we have seen. But the basic trend is unmistakable from violence to non-violence as a way of life.¹⁸

Geoffrey Samuel in his encyclopedic work has viewed Tibetan Buddhism as one of the great spiritual and psychological achievements of humanity.¹⁹

He observed that the Avalokiteshwara correspond to analyzable historical process if they are regarded as not some kind of supernatural entity but as a label for a transformative mechanism acting through the lives of Tibetan people. The Avalokiteshwara (Manjushri, Tara and other Tantric deities) performed a number of activities such as the initial fathering of the Tibetan population and the introduction of agriculture.

Buddhism survived and flourished in Tibetan society because it established itself outside the context of state sponsorship, as a part of the Tibet village communities. One significant aspect of the adoption of Buddhism by the common people of Tibet was the fact

¹⁸ *ibid*

that the folk religion was concerned with power, with defense against the dangerous powers of the physical and social environment and with the utilisation of the beneficial powers of the Buddhist clergy (primarily the Lamas) for the good of the community. Ordinary Tibetans too, were interested in the morality and holiness of the Lamas to whom they turned for aid.²⁰

The Lama rulers tried to model Tibetan government on the basic principles of Buddhism which were more conducive to a peaceful way of life. The pacifying transformation of Tibet led to the development of an apolitical state, which in turn led to military dependence on external powers. Force as the basis of polity and policy disappeared from Tibetan social life after 842 AD and this brought about a great attitudinal transformation in Tibetan life and mind.

The above discussion nowhere implies that violence has been consigned to the lumberyard of history in Tibet or that the Lamas are the quintessence of virtuous living yet the metamorphosis of Tibetans from a martial community to a pacifist one is remarkable and it is in this sense Prof Dawa Norbu regards Tibet as one of the greatest Tribute to Buddhism.

¹⁹ Geoffrey Samuel, 'Civilised Shamans' (Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and London, 1993)

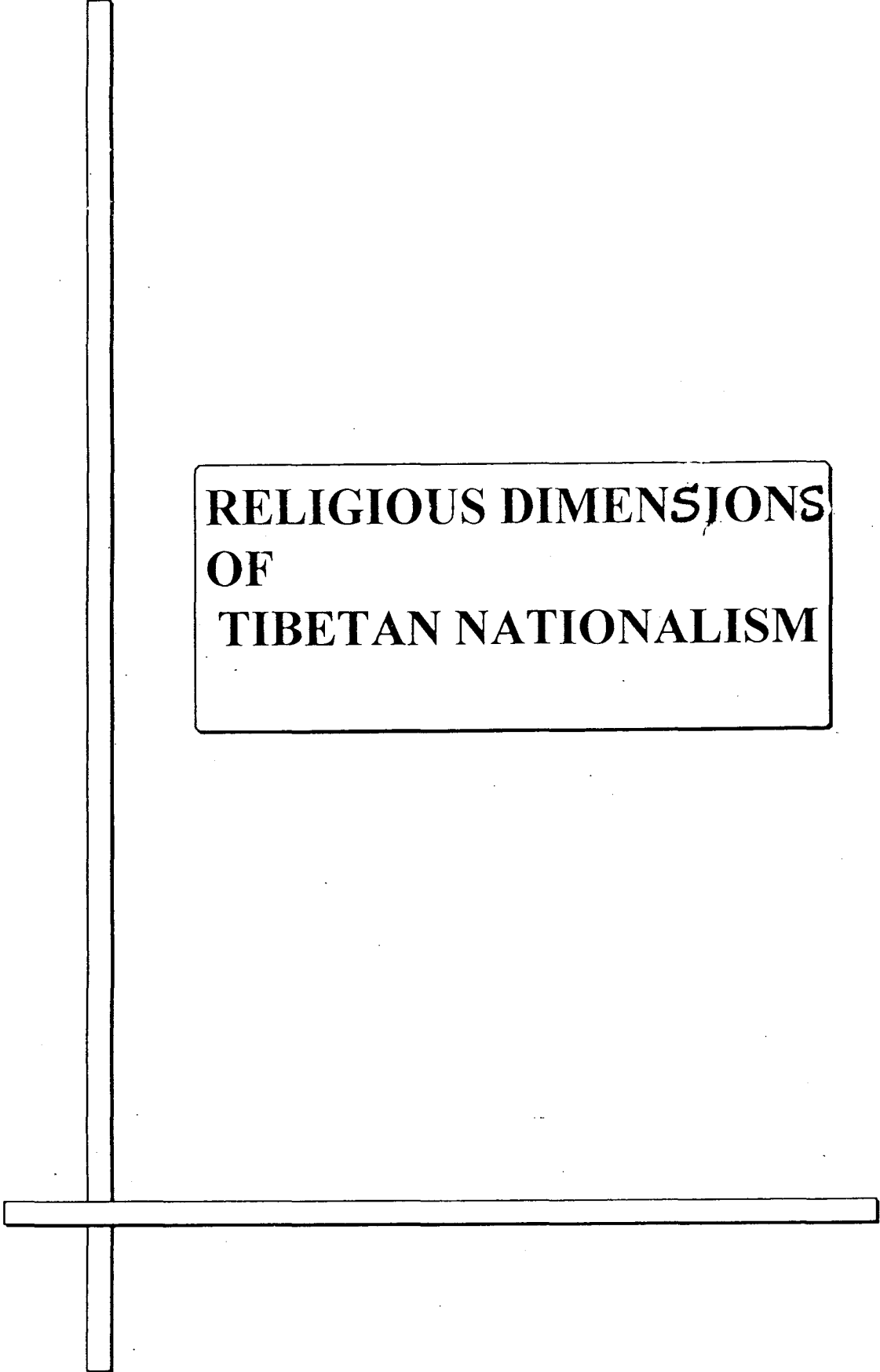
²⁰ *ibid*

SUMMARY

This chapter highlights the nodal role which Buddhism played in Tibet's transformation from an imperial power to a peace loving community. Since then Buddhism has persistently acted as a catalytic agent in the nations "tryst with destiny". Though the transformation from "power to compassion" has not been complete but the basic trend is unmistakable from violence to non-violence as a way of life. Under the aegis of His Holiness, The Dalai Lama and the other Lama's the dominant undercurrent of their liberation struggle is Ahimsa (non-violence).

The significance of this pacifying transformation of Tibet has been manifold for Tibetan liberation struggle and the rest of the world also.

- a) That they have been able to sustain their liberation struggle over a long period of time because of its non-violent nature and as a result of this have gained worldwide sympathy.
- b) The Buddhist ethic has made their nationalism accommodative, inclusive and compatible with modern progressive ideas such as democracy, human rights, liberalism, egalitarianism etc.
- c) It also gives an unequivocal message to the world community that non-violence, compassion, humanism and other universal human values should be the leit-motif of our social, political, ethnic, religious discourse.



**RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS
OF
TIBETAN NATIONALISM**

RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF TIBETAN NATIONALISM

The chapter along with the dissertation highlights a very vital fact that religion is much more than creed and faith; its most fundamental and enduring elements are social; that is rite, ceremony hierarchy and community. The greatest power of religion lies not in what it teaches man about the after life or about Cosmology, but in what its symbols and rituals, its cults and churches and sects do to stimulate in man the sense of membership in society, the feeling of belonging to what Edmund Burke had called the partnership of the dead, living and the unborn. The sacraments and the varied other rites concerned with birth, marriage and death bespeak the inalienable union of religion with the crisis of social existence.

There is also an unbreakable relation between religion and the origins of human Language and thought. From the time that the conservative - Catholic writer Bonald at the very beginning of the 19th Century.; writing in fierce opposition to both enlightenment and revolution, set this proposition forth in his remarkable work, the theory of authority, we find unremitting interest in this problem. Not all, to be sure, were willing to go as far as Bonald had in his declaration that religion and society precede man and his reason, but more and more minds in the century commenced exploration of the relation between religion and the rise of reason and as we have already seen, Durkheim himself derived the very categories of the mind from the prior authority of society and religion.

Nationalism in itself belongs neither on the left nor on the right of the political spectrum. Through an emphasis on equality between citizens, it may be an ideology of the left. By emphasising vertical solidarity and the exclusion of foreigners, it may belong on the right. Anderson suggests that nationalism (as well as other ethnic ideologies) should be classified together with kinship and religion rather than with fascism and liberalism(Anderson 1991:15). it is an ideology which proclaims that Gemeinschaft threatened by mass society can survive through a concern with roots and cultural continuity.

In a study of the nationalism of Sri Lanka and Australia Bruce Kapferer (1988;1989) describes nationalism as an ontology; that is a doctrine about the essence of reality. Through his examples from the two very different societies, Kapferer shows how nationalism can instil passions and profound emotion in its followers. Through his examples from the two very different societies, Kapferer shows how nationalism can instil passions and profound emotions in its followers. It frequently draws on religion and myth for its symbolism, which is often violent in character which according to me is shaped by the ethics of that community in weberian sense

Like other ethnic ideologies, nationalism lays claim to symbols which have great importance for people and argues that these symbols represent the nation state. Like Anderson, Kapferer thus stresses the religious aspect of nationalism and its ability to depict the nation as a sacred community.

In his study of nationalism in Quebec, Richard Handler suggests that Quebecois nationalists imagine the nation as a 'collective individual'. In general nationalism like other ethnic ideologies, appropriates symbols and meanings from cultural contexts which are important in peoples' everyday experience. During the period leading up to the Islamic revolution in Iran (as already mentioned in the Introduction) in 1979, the US was depicted as an adulterous infidel who raped and mistreated Iran, which was depicted as a woman - as a mother country (Thaiss, 1978). This kind of symbolism can be extremely powerful in mass politics.¹

This example also confirms the view of nationalism (and other ethnic ideologies) as a form of metaphoric kinship. Kinship terms are frequently used in nationalist discourse (mother country, father of the nation so on) and the abstract community postulated by the nationalists may be likened to the kin group

Along with Tibet, historically the Buddhist sangha has always played an important role in Asian state formation. Buddhism offers a canonical model for the state, specifying the obligations and responsibilities of the rulers, and provides a formula for legitimising political authority on the basis of an idolised moral polity in which religion flourishes (Tambiah 1976).

¹ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ' Ethnicity and Nationalism—Anthropological Perspectives'

Buddhism in contemporary Tibet is identified with progressive political ideas such as democracy and human rights as well as nationalist opposition to Chinese rule. Tibetan Buddhist Monks and Nuns have played leadership roles both in initiating protest and disseminating new ideas. Within the last five years movements for democracy have occurred in other Asian Buddhist societies including Mongolia, Burma and Thailand. These countries may have very different social and political histories, but they all represent societies and cultures that have been shaped by Buddhism. Buddhism constitutes a moral community in Tibet and the largely spontaneous rebuilding of Buddhist institutions has been a collective project uniting Tibetans. The roots of Tibetan nationalism lie much deeper than simply ethnic differences separating Chinese and Tibetans, and are linked to basic institutional features of Tibetan society. The political dimension to Buddhism in Tibet is intrinsic - a fact which should be no more surprising in the case of Tibet than it is with any other Asian Buddhist society.

Tambiah's insights into the relationship between religion and politics in the Theravadin countries of south east Asia also applies to Tibet.

A secularist politics that does not seek its legitimacy in Buddhism is implausible as things stand now. This is partly because.... the traditional polities of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand and so on, have always been Buddhist kingdoms in the sense that the consciousness of being a political collectivity is tied up with the possession and guardianship of the religion under the aegis of a Dharma practising Buddhist king (Tambiah 1976 :430).

Actually the relationship between Buddhism and state is as old as Buddhism itself. The Indian king Ashoka offers a paradigm for the Dharmaraja - the "righteous ruler" - who is not just a patron of religion but also a religious king. Buddhism understands the state in terms of fulfilling social obligations. It does not specify social codes or political structures, rather it provides a moral yardstick against which the state can be measured. In turn the sangha retains the right to withdraw legitimacy from the state.

In fact this relationship has been throughout history an unstable and problematic relationship, constantly negotiated and renegotiated typically the state, while offering patronage seeks to control and regulate the monasteries which resist incorporation and subjugation. This tension between political and religious authority is inherent in the dual organisation of Buddhist societies.

Tibet poses something of a special case in terms of the traditional paradigm of Buddhist kingship. The Tibetan state assumed its final form with the ascendancy of the Gelugpa sect under the 5th Dalai Lama in the 7th C. It arose under the special historical circumstances that proceeded from the collapse of royal power in the 9th century. The final consolidation of a Tibetan state which gave the Gelugpa sect and the Gelugpa monasteries a direct role in government, involved outside military intervention. The continuing autonomy of this state depended on maintaining a precarious balance between external power and competing internal interests (Norbu, 1985). The legitimacy of the Tibetan rested on a duality of functions. The

traditional formula for the Tibetan polity under the Dalai Lamas who "religion and politics combined" (chos srid gayis Ldan). This formula was epitomised by the Dalai Lama who combined in his person both functions. The government of the Dalai Lama was both the most powerful patron of religion, protecting the interests of the monasteries (and transferring revenues to them) and at the same time, was headed by the highest religious figure, the Dalai Lama. The Tibetan state thus continued the universal paradigm of statehood - the righteous King (Chos rgyal) who serves as a protector and defender of religion.

As the political crisis in Tibet has unfolded over the past few years, the Chinese have come to realise that virtually every expression of religion carries a message of political protest. Indeed one of the salient aspects of current protest has been the ability of Tibetan to engage the secular Chinese state in a political confrontation on Tibetan terms, where religion is pitted against anti-religion. Tibetans have found that even the most innocent display of religiosity can be used to convey a powerful message of opposition to the regime. The Chinese state has been forced to contradict its own expressed policy of toleration, and Tibetans have been quick to seize on this as evidence that there is in fact no religious freedom in Tibet. Tibetans have thus able to overcome their objective powerlessness by drawing the Chinese into a symbolic competition on terms where Tibetans control the meaning of the symbols.²

Tibetans now associate their struggle for independence with demands for democracy and human rights. Tibetans have been able to sustain, at considerable cost to themselves on

² Ronald David Shwartz, ' Circle of Protest—Political Ritual in the Tibetan Uprising' P—737 (Hurst and Company, London, 1994)

on-going lack of protest that confounds Chinese efforts at suppression. The basis for Tibetan resistance lies in religion and culture, the revival of which was encouraged by Chinese policy during the 1980s. Chinese cultural and religious policy in Tibet has aimed to control and manage expressions of religion and culture and make these serve the interest of the Chinese state. Clearly the policy has not worked. The revitalisation of a Tibetan national identity which has accompanied the revival of religion and culture has happened inspite of every effort by the Chinese to thwart it. The Tibetan sense of legitimacy and legitimate rule seems to be heavily bound with the Tibetan Buddhist culture which has shaped Tibetan identity society and history for the last 1000 years. In the absence of a plebiscite, self determination or referendum, a commonly shared culture reflects the social consensus on fundamental values and issues of a society and polity. In the past -1950. Sino Tibetan conflicts the Dalai Lama has increasingly figured as a Pan Tibetan figure, symbolising Tibetan cultural values and popular aspirations. At several public meetings in Lhasa during the early 1980s some Tibetan shouted "long live his Holiness Dalai Lama and in the same breath, " Tibet is independent."³

The importance of the symbolic role of religion and religion induced culture in the pro- independence demonstrations of the late 1980s cannot be overemphasised. Most of the protests where initiated, led and largely organised by Tibetan monks and nuns. They chose religious sites and auspicious dates that correspond to religious festivals to hold their major demonstrations in Lhasa. The Tibetans are deeply dyed in religious colour, hence they perceive the Dalai Lama as the symbol of their religion, their culture and civilisation, if no

³ Dawa Norbu , 'Tibet The Road Ahead' P—294 (Harper Collins India 1997)

political sovereignty, and it is psychologically this Tibetan sense of cultural sovereignty that resists and opposes Chinese rule in Tibet.⁴

Contrary to Chinese expectations that economic and social liberalisation would remove the basis for Tibetan discontent, the loosening of social restrictions led to a spontaneous revival of Tibetan civil and cultural life and a resurgence of Tibetan nationalism. The reconstruction of religious monuments and monasteries to which Tibetans devoted a large portion of their newly recovered economic resources, was at least in its beginning stages, free of Chinese control and interference. The revival of Tibetan Buddhism was for Tibetans a communal experience with the inevitable political significance, given the traditional relationship between Tibetan religion and politics. The revival of religion and the restoration and reconstruction of religious monuments became a focus and centre for the revival of autonomous Tibetan social and political life.⁵

That, religion serves as the demiurge of Tibetan nationalism, is also clearly evident when we analyse the Chinese religions policy vis-à-vis the Tibetans. The Chinese are deadly sceptical against granting full religious freedom to Tibetans.

Since 1979, a much heralded programme of "liberalisation" began in Tibet under which some superficial facade of religious freedom is allowed. This includes limited and selective renovation of places of worship, and allowing people a degree of ritual practice - such as

⁴ *ibid* p—294

making prostration's, circumambulating places of worship, offering butter lamps, reciting mantras, turning prayer wheels, burning incense, putting up prayer flags etc.⁶

The promise of the new policy on religion was that the physical manifestations of Tibetan Buddhism would be restored as cultural museums, but institutional Buddhism would not be allowed to revive.⁷

The Dalai Lama, in his March 10, 1987, statement said "The so called religious freedom in Tibet today amounts to permitting our people to worship and practice religion in a merely ritualistic and devotional way. There are both direct and indirect restrictions on the teaching and study of Buddhist philosophy. Buddhism, thus is being reduced to blind faith rather than what it really is; a functional and scientific philosophy".

In a document acquired by the second Dharmashala delegation in 1980, the CCP's policy on the restoration of religion was set out. The document (from Chamdo reveals that the party's policy on religion had not changed religion was still condemned as a "tranquillising person", and "blind faith and was still against the law and counter revolutionary". Tibetan cadres were prohibited from engaging in any religious practices, public or private. No one was allowed to contribute money to the revival of religion or to "try to revive the power of

⁵ Warren Smith Jr. op cit P—577

⁶ 'Tibet — Proving truth from facts' P—82 (DIIR Publications, March 1994)

⁷ *ibid*

religion that has already been destroyed.⁸ The political threat that the revival of religion posed is evident in the documents warning "under the guise of religious practice, counter revolutionaries may pass messages, conduct espionage, and urge people to destroy communism and organise themselves into organisations".

Today's Chinese policy is aimed at bringing about a gradual and natural death of Tibetan culture and religion, thus reducing the Tibetans to an uncultured, superstitious nation, fit only to be ruled and reformed by them.⁹ CCP cadres' opposition to the religious revival and their attempts to limit its effects were apparent.

Nowadays in the name of religious freedom people create ugly rumours. They say that the Dalai Lama is being invited back to Tibet, which is a sign of weakness of China and the victory of the Dalai Lama. They say that the Dalai Lama will come, the times will change, the peoples communes will break-up and the old Tibetan system of chosi - government according to religion - will be restored. They dig up old prophecies.... This is all wrong. Also people take youngsters to religious places and try to teach them religious ideas. Some school teaches even try to use their position to talk about religion... This is strictly against the constitution and as it says in Article 165; "If anyone collects money or commodities in the name of God land in blind faith, he will incur a minimum punishment of two years

⁸ Phuntsog Wanyal, ' The Report from Tibet ' , P—144 . Infact cadres fear of being seen at religious sites contributed to the autonomous character of religious revival.

⁹ 'Tibet : Proving Truth from facts' P—83

imprisonment, or in some cases upto seven years."¹⁰ Despite the efforts of local cadres to restrict the religious revival, Tibetans took maximum advantage of religious freedoms promised by Beijing. Tibetans of all ages flocked to the newly reopened temples and monasteries and enthusiastically devoted their labour and economic resources to the restoration and rebuilding of religious monuments. Lhasa Tibetans and pilgrims, especially those from Amdo (birth place of Tsongkhapa began the reconstruction of Ganden, an important symbol of Tibetan nation and state, having been the first of three great state monasteries founded in the early 15th century by Tsongkhapa.¹¹ The rebuilt monasteries attracted former and new monks, all of whom were supported by private donations. Many Tibetans, alienated by the continuing propaganda and denigration of Tibetan culture encountered in the Chinese schools, began to send their children to the monks for schooling. Monasteries became the locus of the Tibetan of little or no religious faith because of the symbolism of Buddhism and religious institutions in Tibetan national identity.

The resurgence of Tibetan culture and nationalism was an inevitable result of the liberalisation of previously very repressive policies. The Chinese miscalculated in imagining that liberalisation would allocate Tibetans remaining discontent with Chinese rule. The Chinese remained oblivious to the actual sentiment of Tibetans and the fact that the legitimacy of China's rule in Tibet was still an issue for the Tibetans.

¹⁰ Phuntsogwangyal : ' The Report from Tibet ' P—144

¹¹ Warren Smith Jr. op cit P—579

Recognising that the policy of allowing the unsupervised revival of religion had led to a revival of Tibetan nationalism, the CCP moved to restrict the reconstruction of monasteries, the number of monks being initiated and the religious institution by monks. By 1984 the CCP has substantially re-established political control over the religious revival, confining it primarily to individual expression of faith.¹²

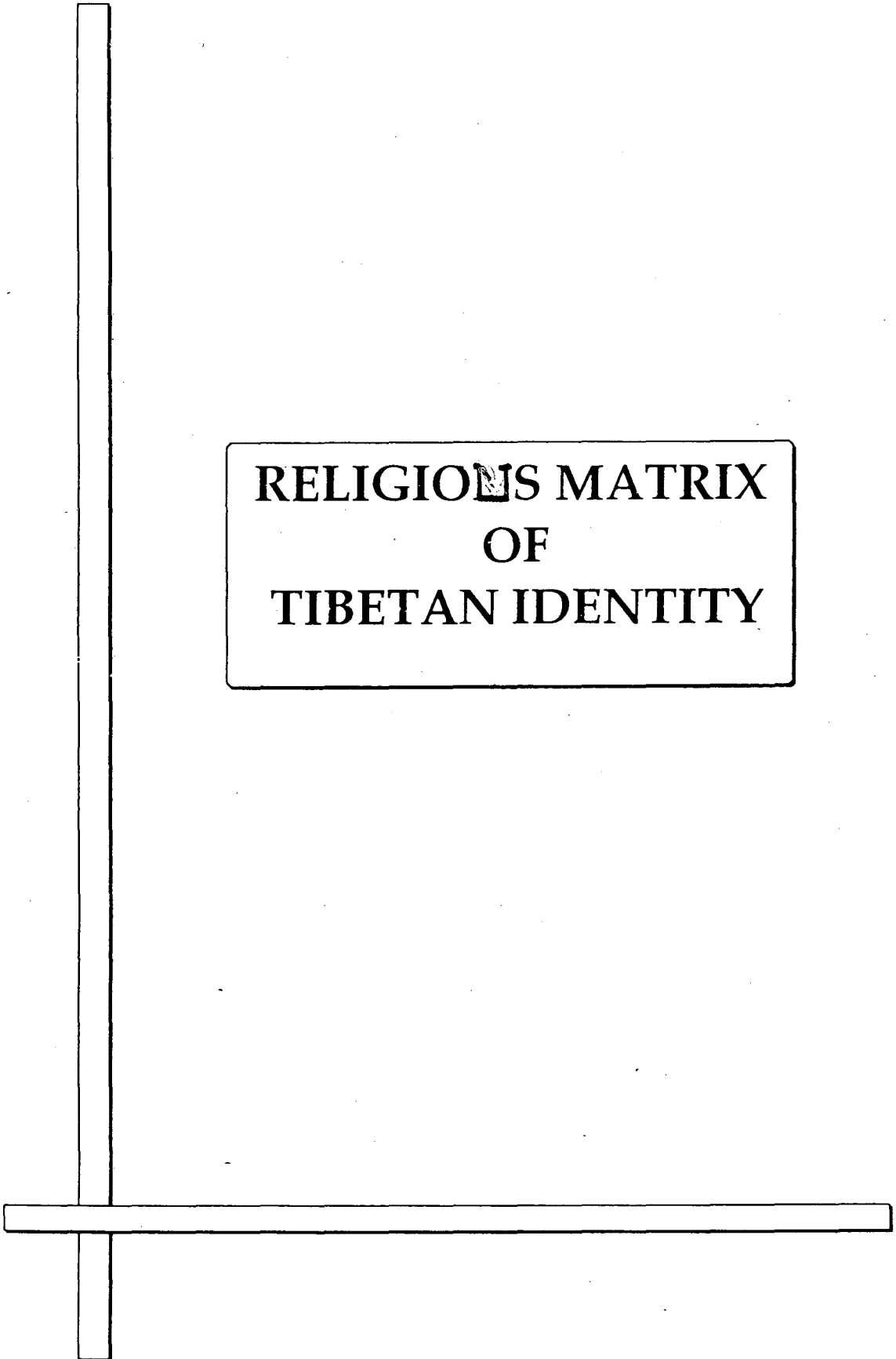
SUMMARY

To sum up the discussion it could be said that Buddhism, the religion of Tibetans occupies a central place in the onward dynamics of their nationalist movement. Demonstrations are led by monks and nuns, and Tibetans have come to see political protest as religiously - sanctioned action. What is noteworthy is the fact that it is the ethical aspects of Buddhism as a religion - rather than its magical elements - that shapes their worldview, political protests etc. The demonstrations draw on traditional forms of Buddhist religious practice that ordinary Tibetans understand and value. Buddhism offers Tibetans assurance about ultimate religious ends as well as effective means to realise those ends through individual behaviour. Religious discourse is the one area where Tibetans retain confidence

¹² ibid

after decades of assault on their society and culture. It is not surprising then, that political protest has come to be framed in religious idioms. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the complex phenomenon of nationalism in its entirety through the Tibetan case. It aims to establish the fact that the unfolding of civilisation does not necessarily put nationalism on a trajectory implying a movement from its religious to secular variant. Rather even in the modern era nationalism can have both a secular as well as religious matrix.

**RELIGIONS MATRIX
OF
TIBETAN IDENTITY**



RELIGIOUS MATRIX OF TIBETAN IDENTITY

If we are to understand! the persisting facts of ethnicity, then I believe that we need to supplement the conventional sociological perspective by paying greater attention to the nature of ethnic identity."

A.L. Epstein (1978 : 5)

Eric Fromm has rightly observed that man has a fundamental need for belonging to a larger group which can give him emotional support. The growth of economic and political freedom in modern society has tended to isolate the individual and deprive him of the older social and emotional ties and support system. The national identity propagated by the state, increasingly fills that psychological vacuum and need for security, meaning and larger purpose previously provided by world religion.¹

A national identity may be defined as a reference point, by means of which one societal group, relates to another societal group, the generalised other(s). The logical structure of that reference point or identity system in multi religious societies is supplied by a word religion and that identity in general is characterised by psychological similitude as cultural continuity.² National identity is tacitly shaped by tradition and culture both of which originate from religion in most complex society. Indeed religion is the reference point par excellence

¹ Fromm Erich, *The Fear of Freedom* (London 1942)

in any traditional society with a great tradition as a morally binding force. There are specifically formal terms in almost all the world religions conventionally used to designate the non-believers. It is heathen as opposed to Christian, Ye Vs Confucianism, maleksha vs. Hindu, Kafir Vs Muslim in different religions respectively.

A world religion per se (except Islam) does not directly or substantially constitute social identity; it may give only a membership in a certain transnational religions or ideological community and manifest itself as mechanical solidarity forex. The pan Islamic movement, and the international communist movement.³

The fact is, man's identity is not tied up with a world religion sui generis but with the native version of religions (tradition). This is largely a function of syncretic adaptation and socialization process.

The world religion merely provides only the logical structure of a particular national identity and that structure or skeleton has inevitably been fleshed with local genes which include prior culture patterns, language, popular disposition (local psyche) and economic base. We must therefore as a research strategy focus our analysis on the sociological interaction between religion and local genius which together produce a unique national tradition; from which national identity is ultimately derived under the conditions of mass politics.⁴

² Dawa Norbu : Culture & Politics of third world nationalism. p.71, Routledge Publications London (1991)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

The early Tibetan i.e. those of the imperial period which lasted from the 7th C to 9th C AD were aware in many different ways of their own national identity. The concept of national identity in Tibet was however much more clearly expressed in ancient times than in say, the middle ages. with the advent of Buddhism and particularly from the 11th C onwards, the national consciousness of Tibetan people suffered greatly. This is really not surprising when we consider the manner in which Buddhism took hold on the minds of the people at large, except with the prevailing monastic education. If patriotism is the core of nationalism and if it were ever felt, it is often expressed in terms of protecting Buddhist doctrine and its institutions and not the country as a nation or a state. In other words there were periods when, immersed in the tranquillity of Buddhist compassion, the Tibetan people had almost forgotten who they were and where they were. When a Tibetan Lama met a Mongol khan or a Manchu emperor, it was only on very rare occasions that the Lama took the trouble to put his national interest first.⁵

Since 1950 Tibetans have been merely reduced to a drop of ethnic essence in a vast sea of chinese; as the Dalai Lama put it in a statement in 1985. But its national identity nevertheless remains alive and has even been reinforced and highlighted by chinese repression since 1987. During the last forty years, however, Tibetan Buddhism which once worked to counter a strong sense of nationality, now works the other way, with the Dalai Lama as its spokesman and with his policy of non-violence, Tibetan Buddhism has come to

⁵ Samten G. Karmay Identity : Language, Ritual and Culture in Tibetan Studies Ed . Per Kvaerne, p.114 (OSLO, 94)

symbolize Tibet's national identity. Moreover it is providing an effective ideological counterbalance in the face of the advance of the Chinese brand of Marxism in Tibet.

In the process of awakening national identity there are two governing factors in Tibet's case; the close contact with westerners in foreign countries and in recent years, also in Tibet itself. The modern Tibetan nationalist after consciously wills his identification with the Buddhist culture. The greater the repression of his culture and identity, the more articulate he becomes.⁶ An important fact about Tibetans is that they take enormous pride in their identity. This phenomenon has obviously been strengthened by the difficulties this people has encountered since the 1950s.⁷

The fusion of Tibetan culture and identity with Buddhism is difficult to sort out because there is a very close relationship between them. Religion has indisputably played more than an incidental role in Tibetan history; politics and culture. The very structure of the Tibetan government prior to 1959 hinged on religion and the roles of religious personages in government. Dawa Norbu asserts that Buddhism for Tibetans, "is the ultimate source of their Pan- Tibetan Identity.." (Norbu 1992 Himal: 10). He notes that Tibetan Language and literature, "as worthy of academic pursuit and world recognition", must be attributed to the Lama and Lamaist(Tibetan Buddhist) tradition.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Georges Dreyfus Proto Nationalism in Tibet : in Tibetan Studies Kvaerne ed. OSLO, 1994. p.205.

Institutionalization of Identity :-

One of the most potent manifestations of Tibetan national identity is through the spiritual temporal head i.e. the institution of Dalai Lama. Klieger suggests that the institution of the Dalai Lama was something of an "invented tradition", because it was constructed out of earlier Tibetan symbols and conventions that transformed gradually through six hundred years of Tibetan history; since the initial use of the chod-yon, dyad in the 1300s. Three particular though related aspects of cultural inheritance are important in the transformation of chodyon; 1. The belief that the Dalai Lama is the incarnation of Tibet's patron deity Avalokiteshwara.; (2) The Dalai Lama is linked through Avalokiteshwara. to the primal genitor of the Tibetan 'race'; (3) Dalai Lama is linked to seventh century King Songsten Gamp, who is said to have been Avalokiteshwara. and who is credited with the spread of the Buddhist faith in Tibet.

It was during the mid 17th C. under the fifth Dalai Lama that the system of government unique to Tibet was firmly established, the system sometime known as Lamaism. Lamaist rule hinges upon the idea of and belief in re-incarnation, deities. Such cession by reincarnation was and is legitimated on religious grounds. Reincarnated Lamas are attributed with special powers, knowledge and wisdom.

The strength of the system is the sacred authority enjoyed by the Dalai Lama, at least from the common people. In this way he acts as a repository of peoples faith. One example of the influence of the common citizenry occurred during the period of reign of sixth Dalai

Lama Tsang Yang Gyasto who was not a typical monk or monk ruler. He did not observe the rules of conduct of celibacy and sobriety, decreed by his sect. Even the apparent shortcomings of Gyatso did not diminish Tibetan devotion to his person. The institution and person of the Dalai Lama are the quintessential expression of the Tibetan concept of choosing nyi den (ChosSrig nyi den of "politics and religion combined").

As an emanation of the deity chenresig, the Dalai Lama is the embodiment of compassion. There is no contradiction at root between a Dalai Lama engaged in the world of politics and Buddhist religious goals because they are not seen as oppositional in Buddhist cosmology.

The Dalai Lama does not inherit the authority that he wields people invest him with it so that they may be governed in accordance with ancient tradition and with prudence and integrity. The belief of the Tibetans in the transformation of the soul lends the institution of Dalai Lama divine authority. The theory the reincarnation, with its irresistible appeal to the mystical disposition of the Tibetans, affords a practical solution to the problem of succession.

The Tibetans address the Dalai Lama as chamo Rimpoche (precious protector) Kunden (presence) of chenrezi, yishi Norbu (wish fulfilling Gem), etc.

The institution of Dalai lama, being an instrument of social and political order, has been a directive force in the history and politics of Central Asia in recent times. Notwithstanding the Chinese occupation of Tibet in the summer of 1951, there is no decline in its importance and influence. The tremendous force behind the institution lies not in its originality or novelty but its lofty moral character and the spiritual message it holds for the people of Central Asia.⁸

The role of the Dalai Lama in politics can be understood by a study of the philosophy which Buddhism advocates, for this philosophy inspired even the fiery Mongols to embrace it and protect it with unflinching loyalty. The institution of Dalai Lama, like all great institutions has left an indelible mark not only on Tibetan society but also on central Asian society as a whole.

The austerity, discipline and spiritual quality of the high Lamas have a tremendous impact on Tibetan society. They have not only reformed that society but also cast it in the mould of a harsh tradition, any departure from which is considered the height of impudence. One gets a fair idea of the transformation wrought by the institution of Dalai Lama when one considers how it has converted the Tibetans and the Mongols from fierce fighters into extreme pacifists.

⁸ Ram Rahul - The Government and Politics of Tibet pg.12, New Delhi, Vikas, 1969.

The Dalai Lama was endowed with legitimacy based upon a combination of his charisma, and upon the routinisation of those characteristics through the institution of Dalai Lama or the reincarnated Lamas (goldstein and wylie). The masses appears to have been fully complicit in the Lamaist system, in which extraordinary wisdom and knowledge and possibly magical powers were conferred on some Lamas and were attributed with higher levels of rebirth than themselves or other ordinary people.

The Dalai Lama is also the single most important symbol of the Tibetan solidarity in exile, uniting a disparate, diverse refugee population with some degree of success. He enjoys almost unanimous support among Tibetans - at least it is unanimous in public declarations. He is almost never criticized in public, even by Tibetans who are otherwise critical of exile government policies Klieger observes "it is through the medium of Dalai Lama that the articulation of the Tibetan national identity is presented to the world's notable and powerful." In the Dalai Lama the Tibetans have a remarkable ambassador, a man with charisma, who travels around the world championing their rights everywhere.

Religious symbols and Protests :

It is perfectly apt to quote Paul Concretion here who observed that the 'performativeness of ritual, expressed through bodily habits - postures, gestures and movements - provides the basis of collective social memory. He further says "if

commemorative ceremonies for instance function to remind a community of its identity they do so through performances that are habitual and ultimately bodily acts.

Khorra as Protest :

Khorra (bskarba) has a central place in Tibetan Buddhism. It is practiced universally around temples and other holy sites, and is for lay Tibetans a common means of accumulating merit (dgeba). Khorra is just one of a variety of meritorious actions - actions performed to overcome sins committed in this and past lives with the hope of achieving a better rebirth and ultimately salvation in future lives.

Khorra provides Tibetans with visible and obvious evidences of the practice of religion. Unlike other practices, it is done in public and outdoors among strangers and acquaintances alike, and can be mixed with other activities.

Robert Ekvall has pointed towards the ubiquity and ceaseless character of Khorra which literally draws the largest possible circle around Tibetans as a people and a community. It offers a religious practice without status distinction, and thus an opportunity to recognize common features shared with other Tibetans from every background

Robert Ekvall emphasizing the importance of the ceremony opines that to the extent (a Tibetan) feels (that) he is participating in a common endeavor, he is given a sense of oneness

with his follows, for they all, the Dalai Lama not excepted walk the bskor Ba path. This pattern of behaviour gives him sure criteria for recognizing his follows.

Khorra retains its ritual significance as a means of accumulating merit; however, merit making is transposed into the arena of political action and the everyday practice of religion is transformed into public protest. By combining Khorra with symbols of Tibetans nationhood - the Dalai Lama, the flag - the Drepung monks forged a link between the powerful motivation that underlies religious ritual and the national consciousness that divides Tibetans from Chinese.

In the same, the monks are taking the private religious verbalization that ordinarily accompanies the performance of Khorra - the reciting of prayers - and transforming it into public and collective ritual by substituting the slogan of Tibetan Independence. The oath taken in front of the protector - daily Palden Shamo and the burning of bsangs are likewise simple familiar religious acts, performed before embarking on any dangerous or important undertaking, here they initiate protest.

The use of Khorra for political protest by the monks illustrates precisely the limits of Chinese - defined religious freedoms. In effect, the monks are forcing the Chinese to strike out at religion by striking out at nationalism. At the same time, they are showing ordinary Tibetans how to transform their personal practice of religion; which recovering symbols of nationhood becomes an act of rebellion.

THE JOKHANG TEMPLE

Since 1987, the Jokhang Temple has become the hub of the political protest in Tibet. The Tibetan pro-independence activists had made the Jokhang, and thus the old Tibetan quarter of Lhasa, the political focus of Tibet by staging all the nationalist demonstrations of the previous two and half years outside or around the temple.

In contrast, the chinese vision of anniversaries in the reform era has always been centered on the Norbulingka which in comparison with the Potala can be seen as the secular seat of the Dalai Lama; It is not revered by devotees to the same degree as an object of pilgrimage or circumambulation.⁹

The Jokhang temple evokes a multi-layered symbolism of Tibetan nationhood that has resisted chinese efforts to represent Tibetan national history as ancillary to the power of the chinese state. The Jokhang is the center and origin of this feat of nation building in Tibet. Through the founding of the temple Tibet emerges as a realm ordered and regulated in accordance with the tenets of Buddhism. As an evocative symbol for Tibetan nationhood the Jokhang temple has the three terms - nation, state and religion. It thus provides a yardstick against which the exercise of state power (chinese or Tibetan) can be measured and judged.

Monlam Festival

⁹ Robert Barnett: Symbols and protest, in *Tibetan Studies* Vol. II, Perkværne ed. OSLO 1994.

Monlam has a special significance among Tibetan religious festivals. It rededicates Tibetan Society each year to the supremacy of Buddhism. The monastic ceremony of Monlam celebrates the magical victory of the Buddha over six non-Buddhist teachers. thus the ceremony signifies the triumph of Buddhism over other doctrines Monlam links orchaic rituals for restoring and protecting society to the more recently acquired aim of preserving and defending Buddhism.

The key to understanding the significance of the Monlam festival is the special nature of the Tibetan state. Monlam is the ritual expression of the formula " religion and political affairs combined" . The chinese government, by assuming the role of patron of religion, attempted to insert itself into this ritual equation, but under the conditions of Chinese rule in Tibet - and in the absence of the Dalai Lama- the ritual of Monlam can only evoke the counter image of an independent Tibet. The monks did exactly what they might have been expected to do, seizing the occasion to deny legitimacy to the chinese state.

During the Monlam festival the locus of power shifts from the Potala to the Lokhang. The Tibetan state, by publicly submitting to the monastic authority, reaffirmed its raison d'être in the form that it has taken under Dalai Lamas- state whose secular authority is ultimately a dispensation from the monastic hierarchy. The ceremonial attendance of state officials during the events of Monlam in Pre 1959 Tibet likewise signified their submission to

the authority of the religion and their acceptance of the role of custodians of Buddhism. In return the state was once again extended spiritual legitimacy.

During the festival the state is ritually purified, renewed and realigned and its enemies are symbolically driven off. Monlam thus acknowledged that the relationship between state and religion was always potentially strained and could never be taken for granted, but had to be corrected and reaffirmed periodically whether the Chinese authorities were conscious of the special political significance of Monlam is impossible to determine certainly by claiming sponsorship for the festival, they were attempting to shift ceremonial locus of Chinese power from the Norbu - linka, to which they have already laid claim with secular celebrations of Tibetan "minority" culture, to the Jokhang, the symbolic center of the Tibetan nation.

According to WD Shakabpa, the significance of Monlam is not circumstantial. It embodies in itself the theory of the state - church relations in Tibet and it retains an intrinsic power which makes it difficult for the Chinese to reshape it to their own needs.

Mountain Cults

Mountain cults have played a significant role in Tibet's cultural identity. An example of this is the cult of the mount Lhari Gyangto in Kangpo, upon the summit of which according to an ancient myth, the first Tibetan king descended from heaven. The mountain cult in Tibetan culture plays a very significant role in the building up of national identity through each

individuals' identification of himself as an active member of the community and as a patriot of the nation. The nation is at work in the functioning of the social and political organizations in Tibetan society. It is in fact a survival of the ancient tradition which the spread of Buddhism never totally effaced.. Indeed it is deeply rooted and more marked among Tibetan communities in the border areas, where the Bon religion is after dominant and where encounter with people of different cultures who display their own national aggressively are a daily experience.

In a study on mountain cults and state formation in Tibet, J. Russel Kirkland described the evolution of the connection between the ancestor and mountain cults.

The original kongpo tradition shows a mountain cult specifically adapted and responded to a group's need for externalized symbols of its shared ancestry and hence of its common identity to the sacred mountain consequently worked together to provide the sense of common identity which permitted effective group action. The mountain cult and the ancestral tradition provided a combined effective conduct for translating spatial, temporal and consanguinary data into a profound social reality.

Food and Identity :-

One food that has acquired a political significance and become a tag of identification is Tsampa. Tsampa is extensively used in religions rituals. Forex. it is used in the Sang or

incense burning ceremony for such festivals as the Tibetan New year Losar. It is used to make the " long life pills" blessed by the Dalai Lama.

The political significance of Tsampo can indeed be traced to a time just after the chinese occupation of Tibet. Tibetan historian Tsering Shakya notes that in 1959, at the height of the Tibetan resistance to the chinese occupation Tsampa was considered by some as " the most basic element which united the Tibetan speaking world". A letter appeared in Tibetan language publication of that time, which was addressed to all "Tsampa eaters". Shakya notes, "if Buddhism provided the atom of Tibetanness, then Tsampa provided the sub-particles of Tibetanness. The use of Tsampa transcended dialect, sect, gender, and regionalism" (Shakya 1993:9).

SUMMARY

The chapter begins with the premise that since man is a social animal he constantly defines and redefines the relations with the broader whole which he is a part. It is in this sense that the question of "identity" has become an overwhelming concern of the human beings under the conditions of a "mass society". The process of identity formulation has a cultural, religious and politico—historical matrix.

Tibetans identity expresses itself in an institutionalized way through the Dalai Lama, besides drawing sustenance from the temples, religious festivals, mountain cults and even food (Tsampa eaters).

Besides being symbolic these benchmarks of Tibetan identity play a very vital role in the consolidation of the Tibetan natives and Tibetans in exile into a single whole. Dalai Lama apart from being their spiritual head is also their ambassador to the rest of the world. The most significant aspect of the various manifestations of their identity is the fact that it also acts as a conduit for their political protest against the Chinese.

CONCLUSION

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Though nationalism is a complex phenomenon,¹ it typically expresses itself as the impulse of a "nation" or "people" (however defined) to gain political control over a given territory.² Thus, nationalism involves "a theory of political legitimacy"³ in the sense that it rests on a belief in the right of a people to govern itself. This belief follows in part from a generalised need of human beings to be convinced as Max Weber said, that the possession of political and other forms of power is "sanctified" in some way. It also derives from the conviction popularised since the nineteenth century, that a people fulfils and legitimates itself only by exercising self government.

Religion attaches itself to nationalism in the first instance because of its capacity for providing political legitimacy. There is something close to sacred about the way many peoples or ethnic groups come to regard their language and cultural tradition. They readily think of themselves as being in Weber's words, a "chosen people" with "a providential mission" that is undergirded by a belief in "the superiority, or at least the irreplaceability of the [group's peculiar] cultural values."⁴

¹ See Liah Greenfeld, 'Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity'

² Gellner has defined nationalism similarly in "Nations and Nationalism". also see Yael Tamir, 'Liberal Nationalism'

³ According to Weber there is a "need of social strata privileged through existing political, social and economic order, to have social and economic positions "legitimised".

⁴ David Little, "Religion and Self Determination" In "Self Determination – International Perspectives" eds. by Donald Clark and Robert Williamson

Coming to Tibetan case it would not be out of place to mention here that Buddhism has figured prominently in national independence movements opposing colonial rule in a number of Asian countries in the twentieth century, and has undergone a variety of ideological transformations in adapting to the modern world. Interpretations of doctrines are shaped by the political exigencies of nationalist practice, even as religion in all its popular forms continues to provide meaning and purpose to people lives⁵.

In a similar vein Prof. Norbu has forcefully argued that religion per-se (except Islam) 'does not directly or substantially constitute social identity..... . The fact is man's identity is not tied up with a world religion sui-generis but with the native version of religion (tradition). For example Buddhism spread to Bhutan from Tibet, but since the 16th C. Bhutanese have developed their own version of Buddhism that is today called the Drugpa Kargyud sect. It is only on this basis that we can explain the drastic contrasts between Tibetan nationalism and Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka inspite of the fact that both are Buddhist countries. Bruce Capferer, writing of religion and nationalism in Sri Lanka describes the process of ideological transformation through which Buddhism acquires a nationalist political form;

While Sinhalese nationalism may be Buddhist, the Buddhism which is brought to consciousness is that conditioned within the nationalist process. The Buddhist ideas practised by Sinhalese and to which they refer are wide and various. Sinhalese nationalism selects

⁵ ibid

within the many possibilities of Buddhism in practice and realises a particular logic, a logic made integral to Sinhalese nationalism and forceful to its process.

Kaperfer is writing in the context of the tragic conflict between Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka, and thus identifies the totalizing form of Sinhalese nationalism with those aspects of Buddhist tradition which stress hierarchical subordination and the violent subjugation of the threatening "other" Sri Lanka displays its own brads of aggressive or domineering nationalism⁷. Sinhala Buddhist "revivalists" of the late 19th and 20th century have artfully manipulated ancient legends concerning Buddha's alleged associations with Sri Lanka, as well as the patterns of co-operation and mutual support between king and monastery that are part of the Island's history.

These appeals have done much to mobilise support for Sinhala nationalism among the monk and laily, and to provide the movement with sacred authority. [But] what is most menacing about the types of religious and ethnic nationalism that have appeared in Sri Lanka is preciously their more or less systematic incompatibility with the human rights norms [which are universally recognised]. Sri Lankan historian K.M. de Silva has pointed out that the Sinhala language the word for nation, race and people are practically synonymous and a multiethnic or multi-communal nation or state is incomprehensible. to the popular mind.

⁶ Dawa Norbu , ' Culture and Politics of Third World Nationalism ' P—78 (Routledge London 1991)

⁷ See Little , 'Sri Lanka : The Invention of Enmity ' , Supra Note 2

In contrast to the Sinhalese case the Tibetan nationalism has taken a different path, selecting Buddhist values and practices that sustain a symbolic dialogue with the "other" however one sided it may be Tibetan protest, while drawing its strength from religious passions, remains morally and politically "rational", committed to universalistic values and appealing for human rights and democracy. Despite the expression of dissent the monks have not been as openly violent as other ethnic groups in the region, such as Sikhs in the Punjab or Tamils in Sri Lanka⁸. But the human cost of non-violent protest has been high, since it calls for a constant supply of heroes and martyrs prepared to accept death or imprisonment. Here again, Buddhist values of meritorious action and self-sacrifice, exemplified in the monastic vocation, provide the inspiration. Thus Tibetan nationalism situates Tibetans in modern world, and non-violent forms of protest will continue as long as they remain locked in symbolic competition with the Chinese state, and are able to overcome the realistic of powerlessness and isolation through symbolic "victories". The symbols of Tibetan protest, linking Tibetan to leap over the ideologies of Chinese domination and build a bridge to the modern world.

The fact that Tibetan independence movement is led by monks and nuns underscores the religious 'significance of the Tibetan aspiration for self determination. The right to political and cultural self-expression is wrapped up with the right to protect and cultivate the Buddhist tradition, which is so central to Tibetan Identity.⁹

⁸ Michael Weisskopf , ' Foreign Journalist Impressions from Lhasa ' , "Tibetan Review" September 1983 ,Vol. 18 , No. 9 , P—15

⁹ Little and Hibbard , Supra Note 2 , P—17 to 19

The potential remains for Tibetan protest to acquire a violent form but it has no place within the symbolic construction of Tibetan protest; the Dalai Lama, speaking from exile, has repeatedly called on Tibetans to refrain from it and has emphasised the need for the Tibetan struggle to be perceived as non-violent. This emphasis to be perceived as non-violent. This emphasis open non-violence has given special authenticity to another theme of equal importance to the Tibetan cause. The urgency of observing human rights norms as a basis for just and peaceful relations between the Tibetans and the Chinese.¹⁰

The interplay of religion and nationalism in Tibet is evident in the rituals of political protest which build continuities between the recollected Tibetan past and contemporary political experience. The Jokhang temple, the legends of Congestion Gampo, the Dalai Lama constitute a rallying point for Tibetans besides reinforcing a collective political identity and sustain a sense a political agency in the face of Chinese political domination. Monks and Nuns have played a leading role as organiser and initiators of demonstrations, drawing on Buddhist religious ideas and practices to oppose the power of the Chinese state. In most of the demonstrations that have taken place in Tibet since 1987 Young Nuns have been active. Monks and monasteries have been attributed the role of "preservation of traditional Tibetan Culture." Monks too view themselves as guardians of traditional validity to either claim.

¹⁰ In Sudan the various factions of the SPLA have also advocated a reconstituted Sudanese government based on human rights principles, including the principles of non discrimination secular government. However because of the undisciplined use of force and other instruments that they widely practice, their deeds do not regularly match their words.

✓ The rebuilding of Buddhist institutions has, more than anything else, been an opportunity to reassert an independent Tibetan identity and restore the integrity of Tibetan social institutions. Religion, which has always had political salience for Tibetans, has acquired a new self-conscious political significance under the Chinese rule.

But what merits our attention here is the fact that the politically active Buddhism developed by young monks and nuns in Tibet does not represent a retreat into religious orthodoxy. Religion in Tibet is itself conditioned by the development of a nationalistic political consciousness, assuming here an outward looking and progressive form in response to the ideological claims of the Chinese state. Because of it the Tibet identity successfully mediates i.e. between the nation of an archaic divine kingship on the one hand and the modern values of egalitarianism, democracy human rights etc.

Last but not the least are the couple of important issues which the Tibetan case brings to the fore, which are of universal concern and significance.

Firstly it throws some soul searching questions about the nationalist discourse, a theme which has been brilliantly elaborated.¹¹ The Tibetan case validates Prof. Norbu's proposition that structure of nationalism consist of two equally powerful components traditional (such as race, language, literature, tradition, territoriality) and egalitarian ideology (much as freedom, equality and fraternity). The predominance of traditional data

characterises the early third world nationalism, and that of western nationalism by egalitarian politics. However in practice the essence of any contemporary nationalism in the third world is the fusion of modern and traditional components. The social potency and mass appeal of nationalism resides in this unique combination of two contrasting idea - systems, traditional culture provides the emotional power that mystifies the rational mind; egalitarian ideology a rational framework for the resolution of social problems.¹² The above description challenges the Eurocentric notions of nationalism, where it is regarded as a modern phenomenon and linked with Industrial society.

The Tibetan case also questions the equating of nationalism with modern concepts of secularism, egalitarianism etc. As Prof. Norbu also contends that though religion induced culture has given the basic orientation to third world nationalism, but this does not mean that non-western nationalism was without any egalitarian element. For example Bal Gangadhar Tilak whom Ernst Haas classifies as a tradition bound restorationist (1986:733) among the pantheon of Hindu nationalism in fact was the first to raise the battle cry of Indian nationalism; 'Swaraj (freedom) is my birthright. Similarly 'Mr. Science" and 'Mr. Democracy' became the major themes of post -1911 Chinese nationalism (Chow 1969:59). Thus Prof. Norbu's opinion that Religion -induced culture embellishes and substantiates national identity and egalitarian politics renders unprecedented motivations for nationalism and visions of a new political order is well established by the Tibetan case.

¹¹ See Dawa Norbu , ' Culture and Politics Of Third World Nationalism ' , where he demolishes the Eurocentric version of Nationalism .

¹² ibid

Secondly Tibetan issue focuses our attention on one of the most hotly debated contemporary topics i.e. the mutual compatibility or incompatibility of religion and politics. According to the fashionable view point religion and politics should be divided into watertight compartments and both should not meddle with each other. To me it seems to be a restrictive view of religion; where religion is merely viewed as an inflexible, ossified dogma, which is out of synch with the contemporary realities. According to the Tibetan perspective there is no contradiction at root between a Dalai Lama engaged in the world of politics and Buddhist religious goals because they are not seen as opposition in Buddhist cosmology¹³. Tibetan Buddhism cannot be said to be a religion that eschews secular affairs in the way that other ascetic religion or schools of religious do, and as the principle of cho signyi dew suggests; Tibetans have had exactly the opposite tradition of politics being infused with religion for Tibetans bifurcating "secular" and spiritual would be antithetical to one of Tibetan Buddhism's fundamental or underlying tenets - that dualistic thinking in any form is usually erroneous or promotes illusions.

The conjunction of religions and politics in Tibet into a harmonious whole demonstrates that the mixture of religion and politics is not necessarily volatile. Religion becomes an anathema to politics or the nationalist discourse when it acquires a fundamentalist and orthodox hue and used as an instrument to whip up passions and feelings of animosity and hatred towards others. This explosive potential of religion was very well capitalised upon by

¹³ See Batchelor's "Engaged Buddhism " P—353 to 369 (1994)

MA Zinnah who made religion as the seedbed for divisive politics and desiccation of Indian subcontinent. The oppression of Non Muslims in Sudan and Afghanistan is also legitimated and inspired by religion. Infact the revival of religious fundamentalism has often accompanied and even fuelled ethnocultural and national rivalries , thereby stoking the fires of discord.

But such catastrophic consequences do not occur when politics is guided by a religions ethics based on universal values of compassion, tolerance, brotherhood and Non-violence. Such an ethics shapes the nature of politics in the weberian sense where Protestant ethics led to the rise of capitalism. In a similar fashion its' the ethics of the Tibetan variant of Buddhism which has moulded the Tibetan literature struggle along progressive lines¹⁴. It would be perfectly opt to recall here what Gandhi said in a reply to Lord Montague "you cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into water light compartments. I do not know of any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activity, which they would otherwise lack, reducing lip to a maze of sound and fury signifying nothing". Again in 1925 he wrote "I do not believe that the spiritual law operates on a field of its own on the contrary it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the social and the political fields."

¹⁴ Tibetans in exile are advised not to hate the Chinese but to separate people from policies .This in keeping with the principles of madhyamika the " the middle way " ,a hallmark of Buddhism and a philosophical position that avoids taking extreme stances but strives for equanimity in all the situations .One high monk even suggested once that it matters little what happens to Tibetans cause as long as the dharma is spread .

The third point which merits our attention via the Tibetan case is the expectation that religion would inevitably decline in the process of third world modernisation was wrong. Noting the secularising process in most of the west during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century, some observers have assumed that the rest of the world would follow the same pattern. It was expected that modern ideas such as science, technology and secularism and humanism would overcome the religious concept of the universe that dominated premodern society. However the prevailing realities have belied the above held expectations. The third world countries because of not having a long period of communal fusion into a nation, these societies continue to see religion, ethnicity and such other factors as markers of community identity. Thus the secret of the influence of religion in contemporary world politics is that the modernisation process, rather than causing religion to weaken and disappear, often makes its public role stronger and a more necessary part of the process of state building or revolutionary transformation. On a subnational level, religion underlies the definition of communities each of which may contend for political power or some degree of autonomy, consider for example the Muslims of the Philippines whose guerrilla war against the Central Government has led them as far afield as Libya in order to obtain aid.

Given the lack of other strong social institutions, the church or mosque and their clerical hierarchy and laypersons come to play an important function. In this way religion also serves as an alternative route to mobilisation in these countries.

SUMMARY

This chapter begins by establishing the contrast between the traditional and modern paradigms of nationalism . According to the conventional definitions of nationalism it is supposed to be secular ideology consisting of popular sovereignty and democracy . This case study on Tibetan nationalism with illustrative evidences from other similar cases proves that religion has played a leading role in shaping the nature and dynamics of nationalism . It begins with transformation of Tibetan warrior society in to peaceful Buddhist community and ever since then it has shaped the very nature of Tibetan society , culture, polity and

economy .Under such circumstances it was very natural that Buddhism shaped the structure and notion of Tibetan nation , national identity and the expression of Tibetan nationalism . This does not mean that `democratic ideas are absent from the discourse of Tibetan nationalism .They are present, but because but because Tibetan psyche and social structure are legitimated by Tibetan Buddhism .The above discussion clearly establishes the fact that Tibetan nationalism is heavily impregnated with religious idioms and also throws a fresh perspective on Third world nationalism in general .

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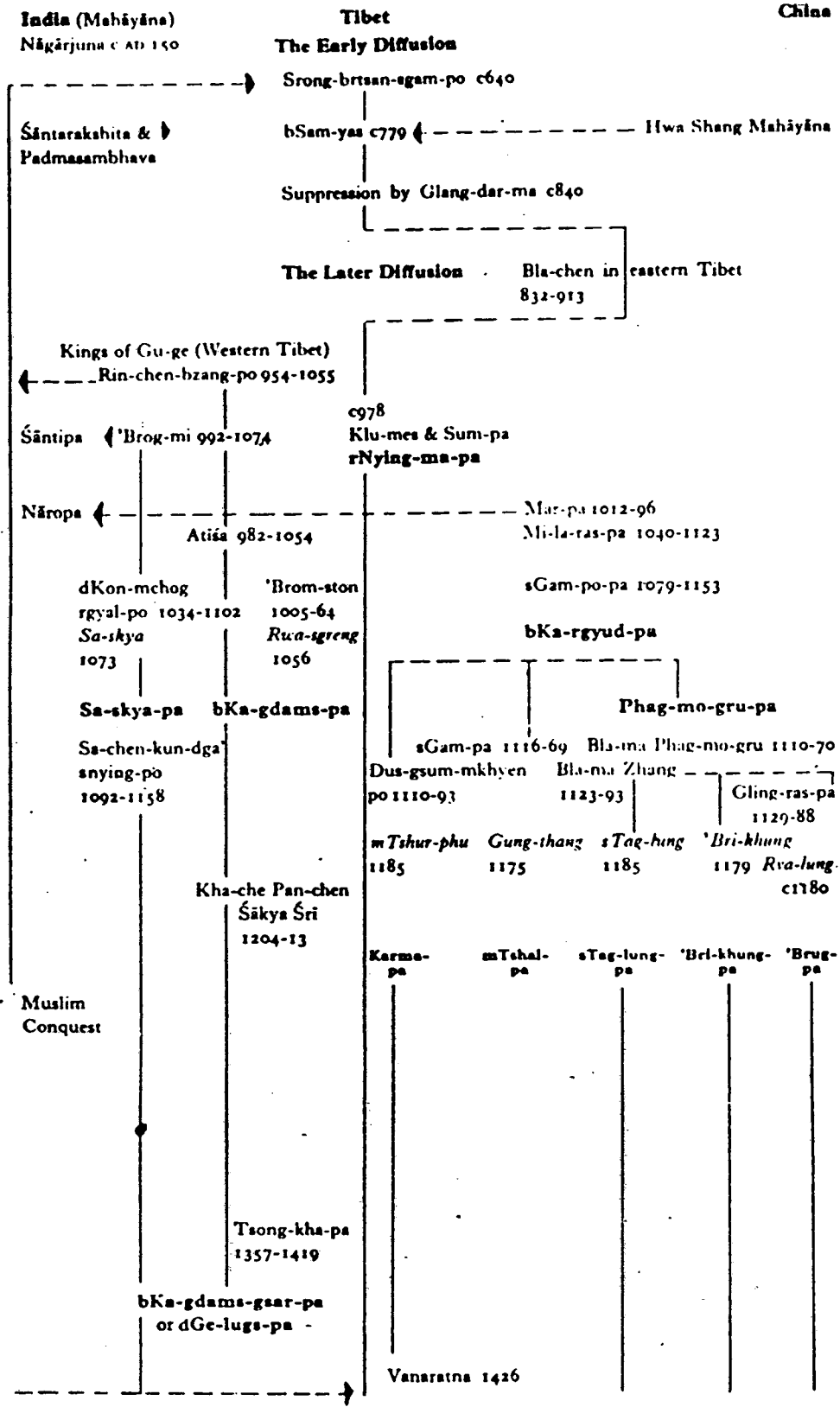
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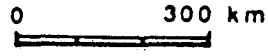
Succession of Religious Schools



Map 1 TIBET c. 1920

LEGEND

— National boundary



Ballistan

• SRINAGAR

LADAKH
Zaskar
Lahul
Spiti

WESTERN TIBET
(NGARI)

30°N

• DELHI

GANGES RIVER
INDIA

80°E

Dolpo
Lo

NEPAL
KATHMANDU

GOGRA RIVER

CENTRAL TIBET
TSANG
(Ü-TSANG)

Dingri
Mt Everest
Sherpa

SIKKIM

BHUTAN

90°E

BRAMMAPUTRA RIVER

Lhasa RIVER

Mön

EASTERN TIBET
(K'AM)

DRI RIVER

DERGE

LAKE KOKONOR

• XINING

NORTH EASTERN TIBET
(AMDO)

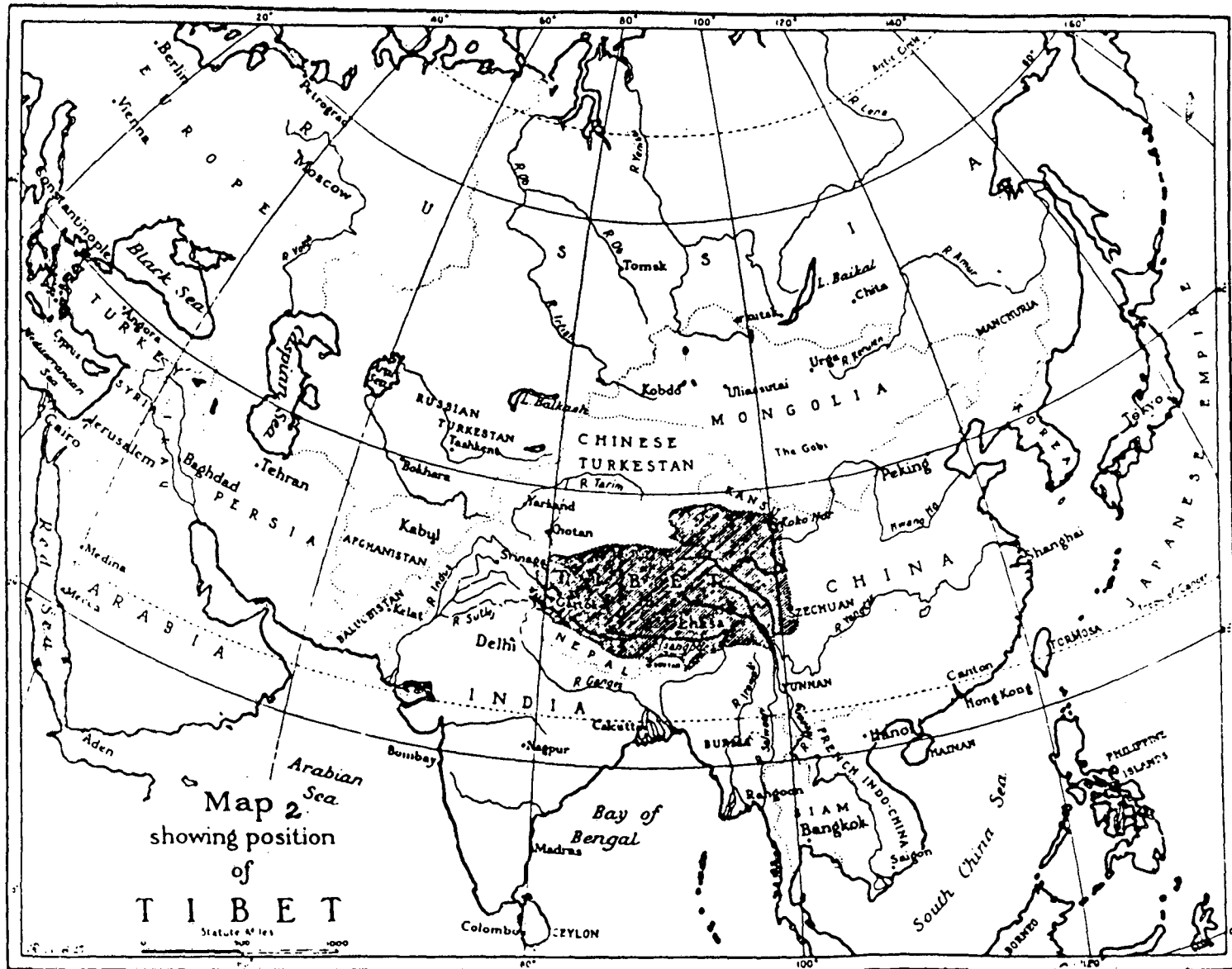
CHENGDU

CHINA

YANGTZE RIVER

BURMA

100°E



Map 2
showing position
of
TIBET

GLOSSARY

(All words listed here are Tibetan except those described otherwise.)

Amban(s)	Chinese political officer(s), generally of the Manchu race, stationed in Lhasa by the Manchu rulers of China. (A Manchu-Chinese word.)
Chagzo (<i>Phyag mdzod</i>)	Manager or treasurer in the Government of Tibet or in a monastery.
Chagzopa (<i>Phyag mdzod pa</i>)	Treasury officer.
Chila (<i>Spyi bla</i>)	Short for Chikyab Lama (<i>Spyi khyab bla ma</i>), which is the title of a district governor in Bhutan.
Chikyab Khempo (<i>Spyi khyab mkhan po</i>)	Head of the Monastic Establishment of the Government of Tibet.
Chinda (<i>Spyi mdah</i>)	Highest military position in the old days, short for Chikyab Dapon (<i>Spyi khyab mdah dpon</i>). The word "Dapon" literally means "arrow chief," and refers to an officer of the rank and status of a colonel in the army. "Dapon" and other similar basic military terms were formerly in use in Ladakh. Recently some of them, particularly "Dapon," have gained currency in the Bhutanese armed forces. The term "Chinda" and "Chinda Chungwa" (<i>Spyi mdah chung wa</i>) disappeared from Tibet's military parlance with the creation of the post of <i>Magchi</i> (<i>Maga spyi khyab</i>), Commander-in-Chief of the army, in 1913.
Chogyal (<i>Chhos rgyal</i>)	Religious King. This was the title of the early kings of Tibet (and Ladakh) who patronized Buddhism. It is now the title of the ruler of Sikkim.
Cholkha Sum (<i>Chhol kha gsum</i>)	Collective name, according to tradition, for the three units of the entire ethnic Tibet.
Dabdop	Lama policeman in a monastery.
Dalai Lama	Lama whose learning is as deep as the ocean and as vast and all embracing. The expression "Dalai" (Mongolian for "ocean") corresponds to "Gyatso" (<i>Rgya mtsho</i>) in Tibetan. The expression "Lama," spiritual teacher and guide, corresponds to the expression "Guru" in Sanskrit.

Depa (<i>Sde pa</i>)	Title of chief or officer of varying importance. From <i>Sde</i> , community, Province.
Depa Shung (<i>Sde pa gshung</i>)	Government of Tibet.
Depa Tsangpa (<i>Sde pa gtsang pa</i>)	Chief of Tsang.
Depon (<i>Sde dpon</i>)	Descendants of the early kings of Tibet.
Desi (<i>Sde srid</i>)	Regent.
Depung (Tib.)	The 'Mound of Rice' monastery or College of Lamas outside Lhasa, at one time containing eight to ten thousand students. Founded in 1414. Wealthy and powerful, it has long exercised much influence on Tibetan Buddhism.
Dogen (Jap.)	The Japanese Founder of Soto Zen Buddhism in Japan (1200-1253). Dogen studied the teaching of the T'sao-tung School in China for four years before bringing it, in 1227, to Japan. He stands along as the Founder of the Japanese School, and is by far its greatest name.
Drungyig Chemo (<i>Drung yig chhenmo</i>)	Chief monk secretary of the YIKTSANG.
Dzasa (<i>Dzasag</i>)	Title, below that of GUNG. (Originally a Mongolian word borrowed into Tibetan.)
Dzasa Lama	Title of the monk-cadre head of the Chigye Lekhung (<i>Spyi rgyal las khungs</i> , Foreign Department).
Dzong (<i>Rdzong</i>)	Fort. Also the headquarters of a district where the DZONGPON and his staff live.
Dzongpon (<i>Rdzong dpon</i>)	Governor of a fort, i.e. the official in charge of the fort and district.
Garpon (<i>Gar dpon</i>)	Chief of a camp, governor.
Gegen Chemo (<i>Dge gan chhenpo</i>)	Principal.
Gelukpa (<i>Dge lugs pa</i>)	The reformed yellow-hat sect founded by Tsongkapa (<i>Tsong kha pa</i>). The DALAI LAMA is its head.
Gampo-pa (Tib.)	Tibetan saint and author (1077-1152). Regarded as a reincarnation of Srongtsan

Gung	Highest hereditary Tibetan title conferred on the father or any one of the brothers of a DALAI LAMA. (Originally a Mongolian word borrowed into Tibetan.)
Guru	Spiritual teacher and guide. (A Sanskrit word.)
Gyalpo (<i>Rgyal po</i>)	King
Gye Tsab (<i>Rgyal tshab</i>)	Deputy of Sovereign, i.e. the DALAI LAMA.
Kalon (<i>Bkah blon</i>)	Minister of the KASHAG LHENGE. Also called Shappe (<i>Shabs pad</i>).
Kalon Lama (<i>Bkah blon bla ma</i>)	Lama minister of the KASHAG LHENGE.
Kargyupa (<i>Bkah rgyud pa</i>)	Semi-reformed red-hat sect founded by Marpa (1012-97) and his disciples.
Karmapa (<i>Kar ma pa</i>)	Subsect of the KARGYUPA. It was politically dominant in Tibet from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries and gave its support successively to the Phagmo Drup, the Rimpung, and the Tsang lay rulers of Tibet. Its chief monastery was Tsurphu (<i>To lung Mtshur phu</i>), west of Lhasa.
Kashag Lhenge (<i>Bkah shag lhan rgyas</i>)	Council of Ministers. Kashag, for short.
Khan (<i>Qan</i>)	Chief, king. (A Mongolian word.)
Khenchen (<i>Mkhanpo chhenpo</i>)	Senior Khempo.
Khenchung (<i>Mkhanpo chhungpo</i>)	Junior Khempo.
Khutukhtu (<i>Qutuqtu</i>)	Mongolian title for an incarnate lama. The Tibetan form of this Mongolian word is "Hothogthu."
Mipon (<i>Mi dpon</i>)	Magistrate.
Misser (<i>Mi ser</i>)	Yellow men. Applied to the peasants in Central Tibet.
Monlam Chemo (<i>Smon lam Chhenmo</i>)	The Great Vow festival. The expression "Monlam" (Vow) corresponds to "Pranidhana" in Sanskrit.

Nyingmapa (<i>Nying ma pa</i>)	Oldest sect of the Buddhism of Tibet widely believed to have been founded by GURU Padmasambhava.
Panchen	Short for <i>Pandita Chhenpo</i> , Great Sage.
Panch Sheel	Five Principles. (From Sanskrit <i>Panchasheelu</i> .)
Phokhang (<i>Phogs khang</i>)	Army treasury.
Phokpon (<i>Phogs dpon</i>)	Paymaster (in the army).
Ponchen (<i>Dpon chhen</i>)	Great Chief.
Po Gyalpo (<i>Bod rgyal po</i>)	King of Tibet.
Rimpoche (<i>Rin po chhe</i>)	Precious one. An honorific applied to learned lamas.
Rimshi	Title, below that of THEJI.
Sakyapa (<i>Sa skya pa</i>)	Semi-reformed red-hat sect which had political dominance over Tibet during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Its seat and main monastery was at Sakya (<i>Sa skya</i> , Grey Earth) in Central Tibet.
Senampa (<i>Sras rnam pa</i>)	Sons of nobles.
Serpon (<i>Gser dpon</i>)	Gold superintendent.
Shango (<i>Shal ngo</i>)	Lama proctor. Applied to the head of a district in Eastern Tibet.
Shodrung (<i>Shol drung</i>)	Lay-cadre employees of the Government.
Shoton (<i>Shol ston</i>)	Monsoon festival.
Shung Tsong (<i>Gshung tshong</i>)	Government trader.
Sikyong (<i>Srid skyong</i>)	Protector of State.
Silon (<i>Srid blon</i>)	Prime Minister. It is now the designation of the highest, most senior administrative officer of Sikkim.

Ta Lama	Senior member of the YIKTSANG.
Theji	Title, below that of DZASA and above that of RIMSHI. (Originally a Mongolian word borrowed into Tibetan.)
Thichen (<i>Khri chhen</i>)	One descended from an illustrious religious house.
Thikor Chuksum (<i>Khri skor bchu gsum</i>)	Thirteen administrative units in mediaeval Tibet, each theoretically comprising ten thousand homesteads.
Thi Pa (<i>Khri pa</i>)	Enthroned one of the Ganden Monastery. Also called Thi RIMPOCHE.
Thipon (<i>Khri dpon</i>)	Chief ruling over ten thousand homesteads.
Trulku (<i>Sprul sku</i>)	Incarnate Lama.
Tsa Tsi (<i>Rta tshigs</i>)	Literally, root word. Administrative regulations.
Tse (<i>Rtse</i>)	Peak
Tsedrung (<i>Rtse drung</i>)	Peak secretaries, i.e. monk-cadre employees of the Government.
Tsikhang (<i>Rtsis khang</i>)	Finance Department.
Tsipon (<i>Rtsis dpon</i>)	Comptroller of Finance.
Tsongdu (<i>Tshogs hdu</i>)	National Assembly. It is also the name of the Bhutanese Assembly.
Yiktsang (<i>Yig tshang</i>)	Ecclesiastical Department.
Yongzin (<i>Yongs hzin</i>)	Tutor of the DALAI LAMA. The DALAI LAMA has two tutors—a senior