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**From the Margins of Exile:  
Democracy and Dissent within the Tibetan Diaspora**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

LITERATURE

by

**Tsering Wangmo Dhompa**

June 2018

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Tyrus Miller  
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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## **Abstract**

Tsering Wangmo Dhompa

*From the Margins of Exile: Democracy and Dissent within the Tibetan Diaspora*

This dissertation considers anew questions of identity, belonging, governance, and nationalism within the context of displacement. While post-colonial approaches to these issues presuppose a nation-state, my project, by contrast, casts critical light on Tibetan nationalism and the future nation as it is articulated and practiced by a refugee and diasporic peoples. My research does this by juxtaposing the external struggle for international recognition by the Tibetan Government-in-Exile— a territory-less entity that behaves like a state—with the less examined internal struggle to command loyalty within the Tibetan diaspora.

I analyze documents produced in the mid-1960s by Tibetan exiles to suggest they were seminal to preparing a disciplined and loyal body of the newly displaced Tibetans coming from myriad traditions of religious faith and regional loyalties to be beholden to one policy: that of the democratic politico-religious system furnished by the Tibetan Government-in-Exile under the Dalai Lama. And it is in this context that the particularly valenced concepts of “unity” and “democracy” gained as their preeminent values the fulfillment of the wishes of the exile government, protest against the Chinese colonization of Tibet, securing the national goal of Tibetan independence, and marking a crossing to a particular kind of modernity. I argue that unity was an exclusionary discourse. It was presented simultaneously as the moral and political responsibility of the modern Tibetan “refugee-citizen” as well as the

traditional duty of a Tibetan Buddhist. Thus, unity became the dominant framework of governance for thinking about the boundaries of belonging, citizenship in exile, political obligation, and the values of the Tibetan people.

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Research gave me a Summer Research Fellowship in 2015 to conduct research in India and Nepal. The Critical Refugee Studies Collective's grant made it possible for me to complete critical research in completing one chapter of my dissertation. I thank the Dalai Lama Trust for its generous scholarship for three years and the Chapter BM of the P.E.O. Sisterhood.

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## **Introduction**

The attention of the world is riveted on Korea where aggression is being resisted by an international force. Similar happenings in remote Tibet are passing without notice.

Appeal to the UN from the Dalai Lama, 1950

### **A Brief Historical Overview: Tibet, The Nation-State, and Decolonization Movements**

The People's Republic of China (PRC) accomplished its goal of capturing Chamdo in eastern Tibet in a total of two weeks in October 1950. Seven months after the invasion, the negotiation team of the Tibetan government in Lhasa signed the document known as the "Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet," commonly referred to as the 17-Point Agreement, that acknowledged Chinese sovereignty for the first time in Tibetan history. Since then, the Chinese government has determined the status and position of Tibetans, although it has not won the battle for Tibetans' hearts and minds. Tibetan popular resistance and the attendant mobilization of diverse expressions of Tibetan identity, desires, and experiences under Chinese rule, both on the rise since the late 1980s, point to serious fissures in the Chinese state's ideological and cultural project of "liberating" Tibet. However, resistance against Chinese rule does not gain critical global attention due to the effectiveness of Chinese control over Tibet, and the reluctance of global leaders to offend or upset China. This has meant that since 1959, the struggle for Tibet has been represented by Tibetans living in exile under the leadership of the 14th Dalai Lama.

Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, the spiritual and the political leader of the Ganden Phodrang government in Lhasa, left his country on the back of a horse in March 1959. In his memoir, he recalls there was nothing dramatic about crossing the border into the territory of India even as he saw it “in a daze of sickness and weariness and unhappiness deeper than I can express (*My Land* 216). He was accompanied by an entourage of eighty people and by the soldiers of the Chushi Gangdruk, the grassroots armed movement that began in Kham, East Tibet. By the year’s end, as many as 80,000 Tibetans had followed him to seek refuge in the neighboring countries of Bhutan, India, and Nepal. There had been no precedent in Tibetan history for an exile of this magnitude.

Political theorist and author Dawa Norbu explains that the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in 1950 justified their “liberative” action with a “combination of old historical claims, new Marxist mission, and Age-Old security imperatives” (*China’s Tibet* 1). The justifications remain the same today: that Tibet has been an integral part of China since the eighth century or since the Yuan dynasty in the mid-thirteenth century, and that Tibet was liberated from serfdom under the PRC. In recent years, the promise of economic development and a prosperous future is an additional platform serving to buttress Chinese authority.<sup>1</sup> However, the Chinese claim that Tibet became a part of China during the Yuan period assumes a number of things. First, that the Mongols who conquered and ruled China thought of themselves as

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<sup>1</sup> Emily Yeh writes how state intervention is justified in Lhasa, Tibet, in the self-cultivation of Tibetans as desiring subjects of development in her essay “Tropes of Indolence and the Culture of Development” (1).

Chinese and that they established their rule as a Chinese empire. Second, that Tibet was depicted as being part of the “geography” of the Yuan domain (Sperling, “Yuan Dynasty” 13). Both these assumptions are challenged as being modern creations after the British incursion into Tibet.<sup>2</sup> Tibet, as historian Elliot Sperling argues, was not in the *Yuanshi*, the Yuan dynasty’s official history.

Tibetans counter that Tibet has always been independent and that Sino-Tibetan relations were no more than that of a patron and priest. The exile government claims that Chinese troops entered Tibetan territory in 1950 and invaded a sovereign nation with its own language, culture, history, and religion. The Dalai Lama insists that the Tibetan delegation was “coerced by threats into” signing away its sovereignty because the Tibetan government “never ratified the agreement” (*My Land* 5). Both Chinese and Tibetan historical arguments “ignore the fact that the very idea of presenting one’s case in terms of sovereignty or exclusive national jurisdiction is a feature of modernity,” according to historian Dibyesh Anand (288). This modernity is one “where Western ideas have been more or less hegemonic” (288). Indeed, the British, who were the first to establish contact with Tibet “described its status in terms of typical Western political thinking and international relations” (Chayet 23).

The British used the term “suzerainty” to describe China’s relation with Tibet. The term “suzerain” is used to describe a relation between a feudal lord and his vassal and implies the vassal’s submission to the lord by paying tribute, and providing its

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<sup>2</sup> It was during the China, Britain, and Tibet Simla Convention in 1914 that the Chinese official response to Tibet stated, “definite Chinese sovereignty over Tibet commenced only during the Qing dynasty, after the conclusion of the Gurkha war in 1792 (Sperling, “Yuan Dynasty” 14).

army in times of war. The suzerain in return provides “military protection and funds to the vassal” (Blondeau and Shakya 45). Tibet did not pay taxes or send men to China in times of war (45). Ironically, Chinese officials used and continue to use British acknowledgement of Qing suzerainty to claim “Qing sovereignty of Tibet” (Tuttle, *Tibetan* 44).<sup>3</sup> Tibetans, on the other hand, employed the indigenous term *choyon* (priest-patron) to describe their relation with China, which implies the relationship was of a religious nature. That too is not entirely the case, according to renowned Tibetan historian Tsering Shakya (*Dragon* xxix). In *Tibetan*, Shakya points out that the Manchu Emperor is referred to as *Jampeyang Gongma*, “the incarnation of Manjushri,” thereby giving the Emperor a space within the Buddhist pantheon that does not rule out secular authority (xxix).

Shakya states that “Neither the Tibetans nor the Chinese want to allow any complexities to intrude on their firmly held beliefs” (xxviii). This “political myth-making” process has resulted in what Shakya calls “the denial of history” (xxviii). He suggests that the activity of invoking symbols of the past to legitimate the two opposing positions have made it impossible to arrive at a viable solution.

One of the first political decisions made by the Dalai Lama was to formally repudiate the 17-Point Agreement at a press conference in India on 20 June 1959, thereby establishing that it no longer was binding. This gave him room to argue that the Tibetan claim to sovereignty “was the same as it had been before the agreement

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<sup>3</sup> Zhang Yintang, the first Chinese civil official to Tibet, negotiated the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904 with the British and managed to include a clause that stated China was not a “foreign power” in Tibet. In the 1906 Anglo-Chinese Convention, Zhang inserted Qing sovereignty over Tibet.

was signed” (Dalai Lama, *My Land* 221). The Dalai Lama’s second significant political action was the establishment of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, first informally, when he stated “Wherever I am, accompanied by my government, the Tibetan people recognize us as the government of Tibet” at his first press conference in Mussoorie, India (Thondup 196). Not long after the meeting the Dalai Lama formally re-established the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, now known as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), as the “continuation of the Government of independent Tibet” (Phuntso 135).

The Dalai Lama was clear in his address to Tibet Support Groups in Bonn in 1966 that the Tibetan government had a “history of three hundred years,” and that the exiled Tibetan government was “not a new creation” (135). This statement suggested that the condition of exile did not signify the extinction of the Ganden Phodrang government under the rule of the Dalai Lamas. Although the Tibetan Government-in-Exile is a continuation of an earlier establishment, it is an altered polity with new policies and a new historical course. For one, the Dalai Lama could not rule as he had done in Tibet, since his subjects were refugees in a democratic host nation. Under his leadership the exile government shed many older traditions that conflicted with democratic principles, including the scope of his own power. Thus, the Dalai Lama’s leadership is a unique one in that he has cajoled and led Tibetans—who had no prior experience of democracy and democratic leadership as we know it—into taking individual responsibility in producing the future independent Tibetan nation-state.

The question of whether Tibet was independent from China is at the heart of the “ideological difficulties” that both China and Tibet have had to deal with in redefining themselves (Sperling, “Yuan Dynasty” 12).<sup>4</sup> The Tibetan exile government’s attempts to create the future Tibetan nation-state as an always unified entity and the Chinese attempts to produce Tibet as always having been China’s Tibet in the production of “national histories” allow for a study of the relationship between what historian Prasenjit Duara calls recognition and misrecognition (Duara, *Global and Regional* 28). De-colonizing movements in the mid-twentieth century sought to transform themselves as well as the world but nations like China and India had to first consolidate the nation-state internally and externally, according to Duara (“Civilization” 20).

The problem for China and India emerged during the definition of national territories because it meant extending the principle of nationality to parts of the old empires (Duara, *Global and Regional* 190). For China, this was the Qing dynasty’s peripheral regions of Tibet, Mongolia, and Xinjiang whose relations to the old empire had included multiple and “flexible positions” (190). In addition, their “incorporation into the empire was often based on patronage of common religious or other cultural symbols, rather than the modern conception of absolute belonging to a territorial

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<sup>4</sup> On 14 May 1957, the Communist Central Committee of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) issued a document providing reasons why reform in Tibet had to be postponed. Melvyn Goldstein explains that although the document still maintained that Tibet was an inseparable part of China, it captured the historical reality that is no longer admitted by present day Chinese leaders: that “Tibetans’ centrifugal tendencies away from China and their distrust of Han Chinese,” is related to Tibet’s independent or semi-independent status that “existed for a long period of time in history” (Goldstein, *History* 3 454). Tibetans, likewise, are loath to admit that the Tibetan secular and religious ruling class cooperated with the Chinese in the 1950s out of a belief that “Buddhist Tibet and Communist China could co-exist” (Shakya, *Dragon* xxviii).

nation” (190). The chosen interpretation of the new national territory of China elided the “fundamental incommensurability between the principles of the Chinese imperial formation built between elite ruling structures and modern ideas of sovereignty” (Duara, “History” 154).<sup>5</sup> Elliot Sperling explains that in adopting a “Maoist interpretation of history” of itself as a “multinational” state and not an empire meant that China had to postulate Tibet and other neighboring conquered states as “integral parts of China” and “incapable of true nationhood on their own” (“Yuan Dynasty” 12). This claim echoed older imperial Chinese worldviews that looked on frontier peoples as “subnational” (12).

Duara’s reminder of the meta function of misrecognition is helpful in keeping a vigilant eye on how the “new” is presented as old and how the very “construction of the national subject as a unified and unique people – the premise of claims to sovereignty – was a misrecognition of the effort to actually produce such a people” (*Global and Regional* 28). Crucial to the ongoing struggle for Tibetan independence is the dominant misrecognition of Chinese constructions of Tibet. One of the challenges in the early years of the People’s Republic was presenting Tibet as an old member of the new nation-state of China to the Chinese public, who had previously

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<sup>5</sup> Wang Hui admits that traditional Chinese concepts of “All-Under-Heaven” cannot explain the features of the political culture and organizations under different dynasties, just as the empire/nation-state binary cannot explain the particularities of Chinese political culture. In fact, Wang states, “In modern times, colonialists often exploited the empire/nation-state binary for their own ends, using the culture of the ‘sovereign nation-state’ to belittle traditional social relationships and political models” (*Politics* 84).



viewed frontier races as different, and, as barbarians.<sup>6</sup> This situation necessitated a sharp assessment of control and a re-imagining of nation, as well as of Chinese-ness. Such re-imaginings brought the hitherto small Tibetan regions of Kham, East Tibet, into prominence as strategic zones of contact, providing access to the more prized central Tibetan territory as demonstrated in Yudru Tsomu's study of the kingdom of Nyarong. These Chinese narratives contrast with those written by Tibetans whose understanding of Tibetan traditions, culture, and history was separate from China.<sup>7</sup> Consider further, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) shift of rhetoric from self-determination to unity of the nation. Until the 1940s, as Jian Chen points out, the CCP favored giving the regions of Xinjiang, Mongolia, and Tibet full autonomy. Plus, the decision whether or not they would form a federation with China and the Han people was to be guided by the principles of national self-determination. This program of a China federation disappeared from the party's official discourse in 1949. In its place came "a grand plan of pursuing a unified socialist China incorporating Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet" (Chen 131).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The citizens of frontier races had little relationship, direct or indirect, with Chinese rulers. Prasenjit Duara writes that the nation form relies on a "homogenized" and a fairly direct relationship "between citizen and state" ("History" 154).

<sup>7</sup> In her study of the kingdom of Nyarong in Kham, Yudru Tsomu shows how the integration strategies, (or what might be considered revisionist strategies), adopted by the government of Republican China towards the Kham frontier were shaped by the efforts of the new Chinese intellectuals of the Republican period to re-imagine a new geo-space where frontier peoples were made co-nationals.

<sup>8</sup> Jian Chen explains that this new plan rested on the myth of the unity of the five nationalities (*wuzu gonghe*-Hans, Manchus, Mongolians, Hui Muslims and Tibetans) created by the nationalist government. The new China did not come about by destroying the old, but rather by continuing some very salient features of the Nationalists that the CCP had initially repudiated as concealing "its policy of national oppression" (132). This shift from national self-determination to "uniting all nationalities into a big family" seemed to have gone unnoticed by most other party members. The agenda of unifying the country meant defining the territory, and the configuration of the nation was once again found in the historical legacies of the Qing. It was under this context, Jian Chen suggests, that the party leadership "formulated and carried out plans to 'liberate' Tibet" (135). It became important to liberate

Of equal importance and the focus in this dissertation project, are the misrecognitions that arise in official exile narratives of Tibet, misrecognitions that are consequences of the effort to maintain a national struggle in a condition of statelessness. Tibet, as produced by Tibetan refugees and under practice in exile, is for the future. Staged outside the territory of the homeland in postcolonial India, Tibetan nationalism speaks anticipatorily the discourse of postcolonial nationalism. This is not to suggest there is one recognizable and imitable domain of nationalism or anticolonial nationalism but to emphasize Tibet's very particular context of in-between-ness historically (a certain belatedness in the narrative of nations), geographically (a struggle outside the homeland) and temporally (an exile that has now entered its sixth decade). While Tibet's written history attests to historical and cultural continuity going back to the seventh century A.D (Kvaerne, "Bon Religion" 5), Tibetans in exile seek to build a national struggle that emphasizes the shared language, religious values, concepts, and a geographical area. This results in a sense of a Tibetan nation that sometimes skirts around the political changes and foreign occupation since the disintegration of the Tibetan Empire and leading up to the Chinese invasion (5).

### **From the Margins of Exile**

This dissertation arises from questions that ask how the past has been constructed or made sense of in exile and what continuity has meant in the struggle

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Tibet to complete China's unification as well as to show the world that "we the Chinese people have stood up" (138).

for sovereignty and democracy.<sup>9</sup> For Tibetan refugees, nation-building began within a dialectics of exile, that Sophia McClennen explains in another context as reflecting two interdependent historical changes in the latter part of the twentieth century: one, the diminishing value of nation-states and the revision of nationalism, and the other, the postmodern casting of cultural identity and skepticism of master narratives (4-5).<sup>10</sup> Despite these changes, the Tibetan exile government has been able to establish itself as the representative of the Tibetan people. The exile polity is an example of how stateless peoples are adept at navigating novel forms of relations with the state (Bloom et al. 3). I use the term “exile” in this dissertation to emphasize the political reality within which the material, social, cultural, and affective lifeworlds of Tibetans take place, even though the continuing dispersal of Tibetans across the globe makes “diaspora” an equally relevant term. I defer to Trine Brox’s use of exile as one that makes a distinction between the “temporality” of exile as opposed to the “permanence” of diaspora (12). The use of the term “exile” also helps to keep in mind the political hopes for the future Tibet.

Tibetan studies as an academic field is largely based in the West outside Tibet and has privileged Buddhism or classical Buddhist texts over more recent dimensions of Tibetan literature, life, and history. Studies on non-citizenship, exile, and refugees are dominated by U.S. scholarship that focuses on representations of postcolonial

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<sup>9</sup> A stateless person is defined by Article 1 (1) of 1954 *Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons* (1954 Convention) as “a person who is not considered as a national by any state under the operations of its law.” De facto statelessness refers to those who hold a nationality but have concern for lacking protection from the state.

<sup>10</sup> Sophia McClennen suggests that exiles cast out from the nation after 1960 had to become global citizens (4).

narratives or on literatures on immigrants from the Global South, Asia, or South-Asia. Similarly, Governments-in-Exile are analyzed as a passing phenomenon and are usually studied for their unique interstitial structure, their struggle for international recognition, and their reliance on issues of human rights. The question of Tibet sits uncomfortably unmoored at these various sites.

*From the Margins of Exile: Democracy and Dissent within the Tibetan*

*Diaspora* juxtaposes the external struggle for international recognition of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile— a territory-less entity that behaves like a state<sup>11</sup>—with the less examined internal struggle to command loyalty within the Tibetan diaspora in order to present a nuanced understanding of the project of nation building within the conditions of exile. This dissertation shifts emphasis from the nature and modes of sovereignty in both Tibetan exile society and in the government’s constitution, towards a critique of the inner space of Tibetan exile life, in particular, to demonstrate how the formation of the exile government produced its own center-margin political dynamic within the Tibetan exile community. As such, it focuses on the structure of belonging— the establishment of Tibetan values, the difficult job of gaining loyalty— and the struggle to prove its sovereignty within the framework of a classification that expects aspiring nations, that are far from universal entities, to fit into a framework that is fixed and universal.

The consolidation of a culturally, linguistically, and socially united Tibetan political order in exile is a feat made possible because of the shared systems that

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<sup>11</sup> To borrow Fiona McConnell’s language.

existed on the Tibetan plateau. Dawa Norbu points out that Tibetans “have a common historical memory, a common religion,” in addition to one writing system (*China’s Tibet* 342). This “socio-cultural portrait” of the Tibetans makes it “coterminous with a nation or at least a nationality” (342). Still, the exile government had the work of obtaining national loyalty and international support, both important aspects of behaving like a state. Norbu states that the exile government’s campaign for unity was contested by Tibetans in exile, first in the early 1960s by old Lhasa aristocrats such as Surkhang Wangchen and friends, and then in the late 1960s by Gungthang Tsultrim and his “13 Khampa groups” (390). Norbu explains that even then, these figures were contesting Gyalo Thondup, the Dalai Lama’s brother, who was monopolizing “political power and foreign contact” (390). They were not contesting the Dalai Lama. Norbu’s recognition of the Dalai Lama’s centrality, as the symbol of Tibetan Buddhism and of the political struggle is crucial to any discussion of the Tibetan condition.

Scholarship on Tibetan exile life focus on diverse aspects of exile politics: on the relation between Tibetan nationalism and Tibetan Buddhism (Karmay; McGranahan; Norbu; Roemer); the rehabilitation of Tibetan refugees and the development of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile (Brox; Kauffman; McConnell; Roemer); the question of democracy and Buddhism (Brox; Dorjee; Roemer; McGranahan; Norbu; Samdhong Rinpoche); the complex relation between history and Tibetan Buddhism (Goldstein; Karmay; Norbu; Schwieger; Shakya; Sperling;

Tuttle);<sup>12</sup> and the role of western aid and Tibetan politics and society (Frechette; Kauffman). *From the Margins of Exile: Democracy and Dissent within the Tibetan Diaspora* is in conversation with all the above scholarship and more.

Fiona McConnell describes how a visit to the offices of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile in Dharamsala evoked in her a “familiar mundanity” (*Rehearsing* 2) of a bureaucratic system as well as a sense of a particular oddity of a political institution that is not legally recognized by any government. Her book *Rehearsing the State: The Political Practices of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile* is a rich study on the anomaly of the “exiled and unrecognized” government (12). McConnell studies the features of the Tibetan exile polity, its narratives of political authority and legitimacy, the roles it takes on to practice “statecraft” (12), and how individuals are made citizens in exile. Her use of the metaphor of “rehearsing” statehood in discussing the structure of the exile government and its management of the Tibetan population outside the territory of the homeland is an important contribution to seeing the Tibetan Government-in-Exile as an innovative, instructive, and successful entity. While McConnell focuses on the ways in which the Tibetan Government-in-Exile engages in statecraft, my dissertation analyzes documents produced by Tibetan refugees in the 1960s and 1970s to analyze the genealogy of the concept of unity that is crucial to the exile government’s success and authority. I argue that unity is also necessary to discussions of belonging and citizenship in exile.

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<sup>12</sup> Dawa Norbu’s striking phrase “Buddhisization of ancient Tibetan history” (*Road* 363) describes the complex relation between history and Tibetan Buddhism and its role in shaping Tibetan national consciousness and Tibetan cultural and collective memory.

Belonging, as Carole McGranahan writes in *Arrested Histories*, is “a process subject to constant negotiation and change” (3). McGranahan’s account of the war fought by Chushi Gangdruk veterans, the “grassroots Tibetan militia,” and how it came to be that this war is forgotten, makes clear to us that the writing of history is a “social and political process” (3); that belonging is “subject to constant negotiation and change” (3); and that the relation between the Tibetan people and the Dalai Lama is one that is structured on “collective consent” as well as “collective devotion” (4) in which there is very little room for dissent. My dissertation builds on questions of belonging that McGranahan explores in her book, in particular, around the pain of belonging. There are also subjects and ideas in this dissertation that overlap with her work, such as the relationship between Chushi Gangdruk and the exile community. However, while Chushi Gangdruk is important to my dissertation, I focus on another fringe group, the Tibetan Welfare Association (*Bhod Dedon Tsokpa*), known more commonly by the moniker Organization of 13 (*Tsho Khag bcu Gsum*) that resisted the exile government’s resettlement policies in the 1960s. In this dissertation, I refer to them as the Tibetan Welfare Association (TWA). They are named as the “13 Settlement,” “13 Group,” or “13 Khampa groups” in McGranahan, Norbu, and Roemer’s work and described as opponents to the mainstream politics. In this dissertation I write the story of the TWA in an attempt to analyze how the ideology of unity became an anchoring value in Tibetan exile politics.

Drawing from an unconventional archive of ephemeral documents—letters, pamphlets, press releases, articles—produced by the Tibetan exilic community

between the 1960s through the 1970s, materials that I compiled during a series of research trips to India and Nepal, and from interviews I conducted, my research attempts to write an aspect of the story of Tibetan nationalism in exile. In particular, it proposes that unity and democracy are foundational concepts and values that have shaped how Tibetans see themselves as refugee-citizens. By “refugee-citizens” I acknowledge Tibetans as being a stateless people in India but also as belonging to a state-like political administration represented by the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. This refugee political entity was able to consolidate under its authority the three Tibetan regions of Kham, Amdo, and U-Tsang after several centuries of fragmentation. Such a historical and political feat is noteworthy in thinking about the process of nation building under conditions of statelessness.

My research suggests that in adopting state-like processes, while stifling any form of dissent, the government-in-exile became closer to a hegemonic entity whose national goals frustrated diverse ways of belonging. My aim is not to diminish the extraordinary success of the Tibetan refugee community in establishing itself as a cohesive entity, nor to diminish the leadership of the Dalai Lama in the construction of a dynamic exile society. Rather, it is to attempt the following: to draw attention to the particular political innovations that are possible in displaced communities; to illustrate how writing about the future Tibetan nation-state is to write of ambivalences and uncertainties, and not just because of its vocabulary that borrows from discourses on nation-states and postcolonial nations to speak about its statelessness, but precisely because of the difficulty in writing about the figure of the Tibetan nation-state and



nationalism while it is in the process of being created; and to remind ourselves that while excluded groups contribute to or are instrumental in the configuration of the nation, they are not always remembered in the story adopted by the nation.

### **Systems of Recognition and the Role of Democracy**

The Dalai Lama has stated that he began building a “qualified administration in harmony with the time” as soon as he could so that the exile government could “gather greater credibility, respect and recognition” from the Indian Government (*Speeches* 6). He recognized that it was important to gain recognition from “the free world countries around the globe” to counter communist China (14). From the very beginning, the Tibetan national movement was defined as a two-fold political struggle: the first to achieve full democratization of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, and the second, to free Tibet of Chinese rule.

Yossi Shain defines Governments-in-exile as “opposition groups that struggle from outside their home territory to overthrow and replace the regime in their independent, occupied, or claimed home country” (*Governments* 2). Such groups claim to be the only or “the most viable alternative to the existing home regime,” and they seek the support of their “national constituencies at home,” and in the diaspora (2). At the same time, they appeal for international recognition and support (2). Exile groups can be products of decolonization, cessation, self-determinism, and territorial integrity. They can also be “incomplete processes” that fall short of the goal of establishing their power or state (McConnell, “De facto” 344). The peculiarity of this form of political entity is that it has neither a territory nor the people who live on it to

control, nor power to establish mutual relations and obligations with other international territories (Reisman “Governments” 238). The term “government-in-exile” is, in other words, an “oxymoron” (238). Michael Reisman also describes exile governments as a “political and legal technique” (238).

Shain classifies exile contenders into three groups: those presenting themselves as the legitimate spokesmen of the nation in hopes to replace the home country’s regime; those aspiring to statehood or to gain independent political status, and those fighting a foreign invader to regain their lost territory of “political independence” (*Governments* 3-4). An exile government can fall into more than one of these three categories (4). All exile governments seek international recognition and they justify their legal right to rule. Legitimacy in the nation-state today means being able to show democratic political procedures as well as being able to show that democratic political order can be established after national independence (6).<sup>13</sup> Such demands respond to democracy as having “constituted itself as the highest moral principle in justifying political power,” and with being equated with the rule of law (10).<sup>14</sup> Not surprisingly, exile governments present themselves as democratic entities, despite reservations about the unity of democracy and the nation-state (7).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The contesting governments adopt ideas of self-determination and democracy as the core of their character but these ideas have evolved since the French Revolution (Shain, *Governments* 6)

<sup>14</sup> Legality is an important “trait of modern state,” even though as Yossi Shain explains, legality is a word that is applied without “qualifying value” to any form of state organization (*Between States* 11).

<sup>15</sup> New governments in the nineteenth century obtained recognition if they were able to show effective control but that altered after 1917. In the twentieth century governments linked recognition to the “political character of the target regime” and democratic principles became important (Shain, “Governments” 224).

Governments-in-exile seeking political power must first gain recognition from a host state. Every government-in-exile is shaped by its own circumstance, technique, and process. Shain explains that recognition, although justified in terms of the philosophical approval or rejection of claims to power, is in reality a political technique used by governments for selfish domestic and international agendas (“Governments” 219). He suggests that the values determining what is legitimate or illegitimate are themselves in flux, as demonstrated in his study of the international law theories of recognition and recognition practices of a range of sovereign governments and exile governments (219).<sup>16</sup>

The theories or principles of recognition are mutually incompatible. Shain adds that they are also vague and arbitrary, which make it the “most maligned and controversial branch of international law” (“Governments” 223). No surprise then, that despite the Decolonization Declaration in 1960 which deemed colonial rule “inimical to ‘human right and the pursuit of peace’” (226), prohibitions against taking foreign territory, and, the Dalai Lama’s special stature within and beyond the Tibetan society, no major government has taken a strong position to challenge China’s rule over Tibet.

The Palestinian Liberation (PLO), and the Tibetan Government-in-Exile are among the more well-known and enduring exile movements seeking the right to self-determination, and to free their countries from foreign occupation. The exile modality

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<sup>16</sup> Competing governments also have a chance of recognition if the existing home regime is faulted by international patrons on the grounds of illegal rule; being puppets to another state’s structure such as the Vietnamese-sponsored government in Cambodia; when polities are deemed to be founded on suspected ‘original sin’ such as the UN’s refusal to recognize apartheid government in South Africa; and when the home government annexes another state unlawfully (Shain, “Governments” 221-22).

preferred for the Tibetan exile government was that of the nation-state. The Dalai Lama describes the Tibetan exile outfit as a centralized administration with “equal right and liberty, unifying all Tibetans” living in India who shared the same “religion, language and ethnic background” (*Speeches* 6). This description resembles Shain’s definition of the nation-state as “a large scale, centralized political system governing populations who because of language, ethnicity, religion, culture, ideology, propaganda, or some other factor, feel themselves to be distinct people” (*Governments* 5).

### **Democracy and Governance in Exile**

The terms “political” Tibet and “ethnographic” Tibet are used by some scholars and historians to distinguish between the Tibet Autonomous Region ruled by the Dalai Lama until 1951 and the neighboring regions of Kham and Amdo. This differentiation was first made by Hugh Richardson who served in Lhasa as a diplomat for the colonial Indian government in the 1930s and 1940s. According to Richardson, “political” Tibet was the area the Tibetan government “ruled continuously from the earliest times down to 1951,” and “ethnographic” Tibet were regions over which the Tibetan government ruled only in “certain places and at irregular intervals” (1-2). The Tibetan government, on the other hand, did not accept these as permanently lost territories, as is evident in its claim to Kham and Amdo in the Simla Convention of 1913 to 1914 drawn between Great Britain, China, and Tibet (Goldstein, *History* 3

80).<sup>17</sup> The Tibetan exile government's use of the term "Tibet" today includes both entities, thus, eliding Richardson's historical differentiation. Indeed, one of the biggest achievements of the exile government has been in establishing its sovereignty over Tibetans from the three regions of Kham, Amdo, and Central Tibet.

The exile government's primary task of gaining national loyalty and obtaining international support went hand in hand, leading to contradictions and challenges. Chief among which was the question of democratic legitimacy. In his autobiography *Freedom of Exile*, the Dalai Lama writes that he began reforming the Tibetan administration and the "difficult process of full democratization" with the Cabinet from 1960 onwards (165). The Ganden Phodrang government under the Dalai Lama had been closer to a theocracy. It made sense that Tibetans, a novice to democracy, looked to their host (India) for guidelines.<sup>18</sup>

Scholars in the fields of anthropology, critical geography, history, sociology, and Tibetan Studies have analyzed how democracy is defined, practiced, and negotiated by Tibetans in a polity without territory. These are also analyzed as being relevant to broader discourses on the form of the nation-state, citizenship, and the possibilities of democracy. Democracy is theorized as being received by Tibetans as a religious teaching or a "conversion" (McConnell), as an "unopened gift" (Trine Brox) and as "ritual" (Frechette). Such observations also suggest a view that while Tibetan democracy is a distinctive form that is received positively in the Tibetan society, a

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<sup>17</sup> The convention was signed by Great Britain and Tibet. China did not sign the agreement and does not recognize it.

<sup>18</sup> Yossi Shain explains that governments that are in transition from authoritarianism to democracy "have no politically defined rules to consult; they have no choice but to devise norms and regulations as they go" (*Between* 9). Sometimes these guidelines are inherited from the outgoing system, he adds.

majority of Tibetans practice democratic activities mainly because “the Dalai Lama asked them to do so” and not because they desire change in the polity (McConnell, *Rehearsing the State* 98-99). These observations correspond to the dominant interpretation of democracy as a gift in speeches by exile officials and by ordinary Tibetans.<sup>19</sup>

Tibetans understand democracy through various politics, histories, and cultural dimensions (Brox, *Democracy* 25). The various interpretations reveal a struggle between the “values of equality and hierarchy” as well as between the values of “representative government versus enlightened government for Frechette (79).

The significant changes in the Tibetan exile administration in its first decade included ending the traditional practice of a monk official for every lay position (1963) and abolishing hereditary titles (1963). The highest legislative body of the government, the Commission of Tibetan People’s Deputies, was established on 2 September 1960, with members representing the three regions of Tibet (Amdo, Kham, and U Tsang) as well as the four religious schools (Gelug, Kagyu, Nyingma and Sakya) with Bon being added in the 1970s.<sup>20</sup> The first elections for the Representatives took place on 2 September 1960, a day that is observed in exile as the Tibetan Democracy Day. Ordinary Tibetans had never voted for any politician before and most refugees were illiterate save for lamas and aristocrats. Such realities meant

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<sup>19</sup> In his remarks on 19 March 2011 on his retirement day in Dharamsala, the Dalai Lama said, “The Tibetans in exile say ‘our democracy is a gift from His Holiness the Dalai Lama’ and explained that the rule by “kings and religious figures is outdated” (Kashyap 131

<sup>20</sup> Many changes to the Parliament have been made over the decades such as enforcing some seats be reserved for women, increasing membership of Parliament to 46 members (1991), and extending Parliament terms to five years (1985).

that Tibetans learned about democracy and politics step by step. For example, in the first few elections, Tibetan refugees wrote the names of the people from their region that they respected to represent them. This meant, according to Avedon (who wrote the Dalai Lama's first biography) that "all of the thirteen men whose names appeared most frequently were either important lamas, aristocrats or tribal chieftains from Kham and Amdo" (Avedon 107). Such forms of loyalty to one's regional chiefs have shifted today but there remains still a residue of older forms of affiliations among some Tibetans.

One of the important and difficult tasks of moving from theocracy to full democracy was making legislative clauses and changes to the office of the Dalai Lama. This was initiated by the Dalai Lama himself in the form of a synopsis of a "Draft Constitution of Tibet" published in 1961 and presented to the Tibetan peoples for their input (Avedon 109). The draft included a clause that gave the National Assembly the right to remove the Dalai Lama with a two-thirds majority. Exile officials resisted this clause, as expected. The Dalai Lama explains that this clause was "somewhat autocratically perhaps left in" (*Freedom* 170). In March 1963, four years after leaving Tibet and on the fourth anniversary of the Lhasa uprising, the "draft Constitution" was presented to the Tibetan public. The constitution adopted "a blend of socialist guidelines, to ensure the equal distribution of wealth, and democratic procedures for conducting representative government" (106). Avedon writes that this blend reflected the Dalai Lama's belief in the importance of people and in his belief in freedom. The powers of the Dalai Lama were limited by Article

36, section (e). The 77 articles declared the “fundamental rights of all Tibetans to include those of universal suffrage, equality before the law, life, liberty and property, as well as freedom of religion, speech and assembly” (Avedon 107). These were big changes. Avedon suggests the changes were not embraced readily by “a few noble families and Khampa chieftains, who thought that their power would be eroded” (107).<sup>21</sup>

Khampa chieftains and aristocrats did lose their traditional power, first, due to the direct loss of their regions to the Chinese. Then, gradually they lost any remaining authority they might have had to the creation of a new democratic Tibetan polity. Thus, the Dalai Lama had to face new decisions and conflicts in exile. Under the leadership of the Dalai Lama, the first goal of creating an interim democratic model government-in-exile has been successful, but the goal of the liberation of Tibet proves to be increasingly challenging, given China’s growing strength. Liberation seems just as distant even though the exile administration has adjusted its goals from independence to just genuine autonomy.

The Middle Way approach (MWA), the third incarnation of the Dalai Lama’s earlier policies, such as the 1987 five-point peace plan, continues to appeal to China’s morality and to international support. Its significant feature is a concession to respect the territorial integrity of the PRC, while recognizing the uniqueness of the Tibetan situation. The MWA shares the scope and structure of the 17-Point Agreement. Like

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<sup>21</sup> Most likely this is a reference to the chieftains who made up the Association of the 13 as well as members of Chushi Gangdruk, the organization that stemmed out of the grassroots resistance group formed in Kham in the mid-1950s.



democracy, the MWA found great approval from Western supporters and from the Tibetan majority.<sup>22</sup> Chinese leaders, however, accuse the MWA of concealing the exile Tibetan government's true desire for full independence. They also argue that the MWA seeks autonomy for Tibetan regions that fall outside the borders of political Tibet. Tibetans posit that without autonomy for all Tibetans, China will not be freed from Tibetan desires. And so, the Tibetan struggle seems to be pinned between these two positions.

It is also true that Tibetans have been “historically marginalized” in setting up the terms and definitions over the question of Tibet since the early 1900s (Mountcastle 88), thanks to the early part played by India, Great Britain, and the US.<sup>23</sup> Today, most nation-states continue to assert a one-China policy, and political leaders increasingly submit to China's call not to meet with the Dalai Lama nor overtly discuss Tibet. Such responses have their impact on exile Tibetan policies and politics.

The question of what it means to belong to a political community and what it means to belong to a community are different questions and experiences for Tibetans inside Tibet and for Tibetans living in exile. In this dissertation, these questions are explored in the context of life in exile. The focus, therefore, is on cultural documents, events, and discussions that made possible the shift of the more heterogenous subject-

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas Kauffmann points out that the democracy narrative coincides with the establishment of the International Campaign of Tibet (ICT) and how the democratic polity is one that appeals to Western supporters (63).

<sup>23</sup> Gyalo Thondup writes that the Chinese were not the only ones to cheat Tibet, the CIA did too by giving paltry support in the guerilla warfare of Chushi Gangdruk (202); the Indians exploited and sabotaged Tibetan negotiations with the Chinese in 1988 (278).

position of *nangpa* (believer in Buddhism) to a more defined category of a refugee-citizen of a democratic exile polity. The archive I draw from is full of innuendoes, repetitions, and rumors that often serve not to clarify as much as they point to the difficulty of maintaining a linear narrative or truth of the past. This archive of letters, posters, pamphlets, and articles is fragmented and filled with gaps, as are the lives of its authors. Ultimately, in attempting to write a part of the story about a Tibetan State to come, I am simultaneously asking the questions, what constitutes a literary archive for a people who are dispossessed, and, in what way does the in-between-ness of their lives shape the ideals and structure of the future nation?

### **Brief Overview of Chapters**

#### **Chapter 1: The Tibetan Past, Citizens in Training, and the Future Tibet**

In this chapter I begin to theorize the Tibetan struggle for freedom as a practice based on a Buddhist topos. I suggest that the story of Tibetan nationalism is incomplete without an analysis of two events for their crucial role in defining the relationship between the Tibetan subject and the Dalai Lama. The offering of a golden throne to the Dalai Lama in 1956, and the oath made by sixty Tibetan leaders to the Dalai Lama in 1960 shape the concept and practice of unity, as well as the character, duties, and values of the Tibetan refugee-citizen. These events, in particular, the oath, serve as important bases from which to explore how the gift of democracy given to Tibetans by the Dalai Lama becomes a kind of religious ritual whereby dissent is to be adjudicated by religious values.

## Chapter 2: Unity: The Establishment of the ‘Right’ Vision

This chapter analyzes the anomaly of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile as one that is on one hand built in the image of the nation-state, and that on the other hand seems to aspire to a radical community guided by Buddhist values of compassion and interdependence. The exile government has been successful in building a cohesive Tibetan society in exile but I argue that it has not been able to avoid the contradiction of an unequal citizenship.<sup>24</sup>

Debates on statelessness today acknowledge the condition as a violation of the “right to a nationality” as underlined in the international human rights framework, while simultaneously recognizing how it can cause further abuse of rights (Kingston 18). Thus, even as citizenship continues to be the main strategy and legal focus for dealing with statelessness and access to rights, there is a growing sense that citizenship benefits are unevenly experienced, in particular by indigenous peoples and minorities. In short, the obtainment of citizenship or “legal nationality,” alone does not end the struggle for full protection (Kingston 20).<sup>25</sup>

I analyze the concept of “unity” as presented in two manifestos published in 1964 and 1965 by the first exile political organization, the Tibetan United Association (TUA). I argue that unity and democracy were used to differentiate the new exile

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<sup>24</sup> Lindsey Kingston uses Iris Marion Young’s term “differentiated citizenship” to describe the injustices within society and how the state can deny documents to those who are engaged in activist struggles against the state (25).

<sup>25</sup> Most stateless populations lack “legal nationality” because they belong to minority groups that from the very beginning are discriminated against (Kingston 18). While statelessness leaves them even more vulnerable, citizenship alone does not ensure the dignity of rights (18). For example, state sanctioned discrimination against Rohingyas who are not recognized as a national race by the 1982 Citizenship law because they are Muslim (18); Nepali citizenship passes through the mother so there are cases of ethnic and mixed-race Nepalis being denied citizenship. In the US the incarcerated do not have the right to vote.

polity from that of the colonizers ruling Tibet, but that unity's importance was used to suppress political groups from organizing or expressing views that contradicted the dominated view. The friction between the goal of a future democratic Tibet to come and the importance of unity meant that exercising democracy by defending difference ran the risk of being labeled as being anti-Tibetan. Thus, while the TUA purported that it had been formed to avail the freedoms granted in the Article 5 of the new Tibetan Constitution—in particular the freedom of expression, freedom to assemble without arms and to form associations and societies—the organization's five aims were, paradoxically, founded to establish deference to the exile polity a primary duty of Tibetan refugee citizens.

### **Chapter 3: Against the Grain of History: Mutiny at the Ockenden School**

I turn to biographies published in the first decade of exile life to illustrate how history and the nation are intertwined in a project to produce collective memory. Presenting the theories of exile writing and the condition of exile, Sophia A. McClennen reminds us that exile is not an idea, it is not an outcome of fate, or a list of material facts (39). Rather, it is a break in time that serves to simultaneously freeze memory in place, even as it propels one into change. The state of exile creates “a series of oppositions, antimonies, and contradictions” (39). McClennen sees value in considering this dialectic thinking and seeing exile as an “ever-changing unity of opposites” (39). Exile is a product of historical circumstances and its lexicon is tied to history and place. The time of exile and the space prepared for those in exile can be different in that an individual who is barred from returning home might live in “two

different times simultaneously” (74). Writing in exile is a work of recuperation of self, and at the same time, the production of an identity that “struggles against extinction” (153). This dialectic is an integral part of nation building.

This chapter identifies the dominant narratives in Tibetan historical writings, cultural consciousness, and political culture in exile by telling the story of a revolt by 30 Tibetan students in the Ockenden School in Dharwar, India—one of the first schools established in exile—for being taught the “wrong” kind of history. While the majority of Tibetans accepted the dominant national history, there were individuals and groups who felt their own histories were erased. Their representation of alternative histories and desires analyzed in retrospect help to understand the teleology of Tibetan national history under construction in the early decades of exile.

#### **Chapter 4: Minoritizing Dissent: ‘The Thirteen’**

Up until the Chinese invasion, the regions of Amdo and many parts of Kham did not fall under the political rule of the Ganden Phodrang government in Lhasa. They were politically organized into tribes governed by a variety of local rulers, chieftains, and kings who managed to evade, or lived on the margins of the rule of both the Lhasa and Chinese governments. These communities had to face the reality of the extinction of their hereditary rule, their way of life, and the loss of their traditional place. In addition, they felt that the diversity of the nomadic hinterlands was swept aside by the homogenous strokes of a Tibetan national narrative-in-exile. This chapter documents a competing narrative of community offered by the Tibetan Welfare Association (TWA), a coalition of lamas and nomadic chieftains from

Eastern Tibet, who in resisting the TUA's assimilationist policies found themselves doubly exiled. The study of the TWA in part illustrates the difficult passage to a new subjectivity for those on the margins as minorities, for whom the struggle is about internal as well as external recognition.

### **Chapter 5: The Pain of Belonging: Tibetan Exilic Nationalism in the Wake of "The Black Friday"**

The complex relation between belonging and the practice of democracy takes a different direction in this final chapter, which centers on pamphlets and official statements published in response to the assassination of the TWA's leader Gungthang Tsultrim in 1978. I suggest that by awakening suppressed history in the pamphlet "The Black Friday," TWA members pointed to the incommensurabilities between the decentralized and flexible features of Tibetan nomadic polities that were built over generations of relations between tightly knitted tribes, and the modern state cobbled together on concepts of democracy and unity in the first two decades of Tibetan exile life.

By focusing on the understudied rumblings of protest from the margins of the Tibetan exile communities, my dissertation contributes to a complex understanding of the mid-to-late twentieth-century narrative of the Tibetan struggle for democracy, self-governance, and identity. It contributes to contemporary scholarship on theories of exile, nationalism, citizenship, and postcolonial studies in attempts to understand belonging as a process that navigates loss and retrieval of ways of being in the world.

## Chapter 1

### **The Tibetan Past, Citizens in training, and the Future Tibet**

The political world of exile is anything but united. It frequently resembles a lion's den. Indeed, the intensity of the inter-and intraexile conflicts often diverts energy from the attainment of the ultimate group goal, a return to the homeland.

(Yossi Shain, *The Frontier of Loyalty* 38)

### **Shifts in Tibet-China Relations Leading to 1950**

The British invasion of Tibet in 1903-1904 triggered a new Chinese attitude towards Tibet. The Chinese military operation in Batang in 1905, and the deployment of Chinese forces to Lhasa in 1910 were moves to bring Tibetan regions under direct Chinese control (Goldstein, *History 1913* 45-46).<sup>26</sup> Tibetans received these military impositions as a shift in relations from the traditional model of a benefactor and priest relationship to a new intention to colonize Tibet. The 13th Dalai Lama (1876-1933) first expressed his doubt that the two nations could continue the old relations in a letter addressed to Luo Titai meant for the Emperor in 1910. Not long after sending his letter, the Manchu Ch'ing dynasty, the non-Chinese rulers, were overthrown on October 1911. The Dalai Lama—who had fled to India at the news of the Chinese force making its way to Lhasa in 1910— took the opportunity to let the provisional president of China, Yuan Shikai (1859-1916) know that he intended to “exercise both temporal and ecclesiastic rule in Tibet” (59-60). The Dalai Lama returned from India in January 1913 and issued a proclamation affirming his absolute rule in Tibet. He

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<sup>26</sup> Melvyn Goldstein suggests that the invasion played a pivotal role in drawing attention to Tibet's relations with India and Russia, and with China (*History 1913* 46).

assured Tibetans that the “Chinese intentions of colonizing Tibet under the patron-priest relationship has faded like a rainbow in the sky” (60). He stated Tibet could finally achieve a period of happiness and peace (60).

Melvyn C. Goldstein suggests that while these documents may not conform to Western norms of a declaration of independence they indicate the Dalai Lama’s “desire for freedom,” as well as his plan to rule Tibet without Chinese interference given the political framework of Tibet of that era (62). I would add that the proclamation can be seen to introduce the notion of national agency, national independence, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. It is both an expression of Tibetan national self-determination and an assertion of Buddhist values as requisite for national peace and happiness. It is also perhaps the first modern Tibetan document that articulates the desire for social and political change in Tibetan society, and indeed, the necessity for change.

The proclamation suggests that Tibetans felt no ties to the Republic of China under the newly evolving geopolitical categories: the Dalai Lama’s relationship, attenuated as it was, had been with the Manchus. Evelyn Rawski speaks to the difficulty in grasping the historical legacy of physical territories into the modern era by pointing out that the “breakaway movements of the post-1911 period are testimony to the fact that we cannot simply equate the Qing empire with the nation-state called China” (301). Indeed, the Dalai Lama defined the relationship between Tibet and China as one limited to that of the patron-priest. In the proclamation the Dalai Lama affirmed his rule in Tibet by speaking, not as the ruler of a lineage established by the



Mongols in the late 1570s, but by ensconcing the institution of the Dalai Lama into the histories and lineages of both Buddhism and the early Tibetan kingdom. He introduced himself as the “most omniscient possessor of the Buddhist faith, whose title was conferred by the Lord Buddha’s command from the glorious land of India” (Goldstein, *History 1913* 60). The proclamation is addressed to all “classes of Tibetan people” over whom he was prophesied to rule by Buddha himself (60). Unlike the Dalai Lamas who preceded him with limited authority, the 13th Dalai Lama attempted to lead Tibet. He defined himself as the leader of the Tibetan people by redirecting the source of his authority to the realm of religion, confirming the rule of Buddhism as the guiding principle of Tibetan society. The strategic move can be read as attempting to use myth and religion to: 1) break the historical ties with the Mongols and affix the institution of the Dalai Lama within Buddhist history and tradition; and 2) introduce the Dalai Lamas as descendents of the rulers of the early religious kings of Tibet.

The Dalai Lama tried to introduce changes to improve life in Tibet through numerous initiatives: modernizing and updating the military; establishing the Revenue Investigation Office to find new ways of generating income for the government such as imposing taxes on religious and aristocratic estates; introducing paper currency, postage stamps, gold and silver coins for the first time; and sending four young Tibetans to study in England (they would study mining engineering, military science, electrical energy, and telegraphy). It was a period of many firsts: a telegraph line was built between Lhasa and Gyantse; a hydroelectric plant was

planned; and an English school was established in Gyantse in 1924. The 13th Dalai Lama's efforts to modernize Tibet were opposed by conservative religious monastic bodies and government officials who feared the changes. The religious bodies were particularly opposed to the modern schools and military expansion as they believed that Tibet was a Buddhist country and that their work was to preserve its religious character (Thondup 57). Their loyalty was foremost to "Buddhism and the Gelugpa monastic order rather than to any nationalistic entity called Tibet" (91).<sup>27</sup>

The Tibetan government did little when it had the chance—between 1913-1950—to establish its independence, or to make a close affiliation between what John Agnew describes as "political communities to territory," and citizenship to territory, (112) that had become the international norm by 1950. Dawa Norbu blames the fanatic and ignorant lamas, the irresponsible "pleasure-loving" aristocrats, and the simple-minded Tibetan masses for failing to make "herself [Tibet] independent *de jure* as well as *de facto*," when they had the chance in those 38 years (*Road* 61). He explains that the "whole system was rotten to the core, and could not withstand twentieth-century pressures" (63). Similarly, Gyalo Thondup, brother to the Dalai Lama and an important figure in modern Tibetan politics, blames Tibet's failures on "aristocrats and the lamas," and goes so far as to call members of the former "faithful collaborators" of the Chinese government (192).

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<sup>27</sup> There are four schools of Tibetan Buddhism: Gelug, Kagyu, Nyingma and Sakya. The school in Gyantse stayed open for three years and was shut down in 1926 due to objections from the monastic groups (Shakabpa 264).

The lack of political initiative from the ecclesiastic and political orders does not mean that there were no nationalistic stirrings at all, for there were many individuals who offered alternate desires and visions for Tibet inspired by Kuomintang ideology, by Communist ideology, or from local aspirations. Early nationalist groups include the Tibet Improvement Party (founded in 1939) and the People's Association or Assembly (*Mimang Tsongdu*). The Mimang Tsongdu was the first organization of non-elite Lhasa residents set up in 1952 who opposed the Chinese Communist government and was also critical of the Tibetan government.<sup>28</sup> Goldstein suggests that the common people got the idea of engaging in politics through the 13th Dalai Lama's political statement warning Tibetans of the dangers of not guarding their land against external as well as internal self-serving agendas.<sup>29</sup>

One of the problems in the Tibetan struggle is that both China and Tibet followed the logic of bounded territorial states in refuting each other's claims to the territory of Tibet even though political organizations in Tibet and China consisted of a variety of nomadic, clan, imperial, or feudal systems. The Chinese reference to Tibet, or Xizang in Chinese, applies to the western and central parts of the Tibetan plateau (U-Tsang)—regions ruled directly by the Ganden Phodrang government of the Dalai Lama until 1950 (Barnett, "Introduction" 8). The Chinese claimed their

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<sup>28</sup> One of the leaders of this group was Alo Chondze, a trader who was critical of the Tibetan Government's harsh treatment of Tibetans but unable to stand up to the Chinese. The members of the Mimang Tsongdu were not common folk in the sense that these were individuals with some relationship with the elite. Its top leaders, Thamjo Sonam, Jayan Dawa, Tsha Trunyila, Kamika Chondze and Drubthola were all monks or ex-monks (Goldstein, *History 2* 321). By Spring 1952, the Mimang Tsongdu had 60-100 residents from Lhasa as members.

<sup>29</sup> The 13th Dalai Lama wrote, "It is the ...duty and responsibility of all my subjects, the religious and lay members of the various orders, to think and work unerringly in unity and cooperation for the promotion of common welfare and of peace" (Goldstein, *History 2* 315).

sovereignty for the first time over all historically Tibetan regions in the 17-Point Agreement of 1951. However, more than half of the 5.7 million Tibetans today live in the eastern Tibetan plateau in western Sichuan, northern Yunnan, southern and western Qinghai and southern Gansu— areas known to Tibetans as Kham and Amdo (7). Hence, with the Chinese invasion came questions of Tibet’s sovereignty, its territorial boundaries regarding Kham and Amdo, and subsequently the “question of Tibet’s right to independence,” which the Dalai Lama’s government strived to raise in the United Nations (Dalai Lama, *Freedom* 153).

### **The Evolution of the Nation in Exile and the Role of Religion**

In his seminal text, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson suggests that communities are to be understood by the “style in which they are imagined,” and not by accounts of being false or real (6). This follows his famous claim that all communities that are larger than “face-to-face contact” are imagined (6). Questions of loyalty— here defined as allegiance to the Dalai Lama— felt by Tibetans living in all three regions of the Tibetan plateau are taken for granted today, but this was not established with certainty in 1950 when there were barely existent or already extenuated political relations between some of the independent chiefdoms and kingdoms in Kham and the Ganden Phodrang in Lhasa. While the Dalai Lama had influence over the Gelugpa population in Amdo and Kham, the Lhasa government under his rule had no rights, power, or privileges over the territories and members of Amdo and parts of Kham. What helped ameliorate this political reality was an older existing narrative of the Tibetan empire and of Tibetans distinguishing themselves

from the Chinese by identifying themselves as belonging to a larger community of Tibetans as barley-eaters (*tsampa-eaters*) and as Buddhists (*nangpa*).

Still, one of the sensitive problems for Tibetans was whether the Chinese authorities would grant autonomy to the “old political and cultural frontiers of Tibetan territory, as demanded by Tibetans in exile,” or whether autonomy would be limited to the TAR (Blondeau, “How does the Chinese” 124). This question was particularly important for some individuals from Amdo and Kham who lived with the unexpressed anxiety that the Tibetan authorities in exile might in turn give up the regions of Kham and Amdo to secure TAR’s freedom or autonomy. Such fears were based on older historical events these communities had experienced with the Tibetan government in Lhasa, and with the more recent memory of the Lhasa Government’s refusal to help them with the grassroots armed resistance movement against the Chinese that began in Kham in the mid-1950s, as discussed in greater detail in this chapter.

Thus, the territorial dispute over Amdo and Kham is significant for understanding Tibetan tactics in the delicate task of refuting Chinese claims over these regions and for obtaining recognition from the body of legitimate nations. The dominant narrative established for independence had to be sharpened against the illegal Chinese occupation of Tibet, but to do this, Tibetans had to establish national traditions, which Homi Bhabha reminds us are, “acts of affiliation and establishment,” as much as they are “moments of disavowal, displacement, exclusion, and cultural

contestation” (*Nation* 5).<sup>30</sup> For the Tibetan exile government, this meant establishing its hegemony over internal resistance by prioritizing unity and playing down the historical independence and identities of the eastern Tibetan areas even as they undertook the less visible task of winning their trust and political allegiance. The discourse of unity is a product of these historical tensions and political contradictions.

Benedict Anderson’s theorization of the nation as imagined into being and his analysis of the significance of print capitalism in the formations of community outside the purview of the state remains a powerful contribution to understanding nations. However, Anderson’s suggestion that new states after World War II, many of them non-European, formed on the models provided by Western Europeans, Americans, and Russians (113) does not reflect the imagining of all non-European states, as demonstrated by Partha Chatterjee.<sup>31</sup>

Chatterjee points out that anticolonial nationalism in India had begun the task to create its own sovereignty before it began the political fight with the imperial power. It did so by “dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains—the material and the spiritual” (*The Nation* 6). Chatterjee explains that while the external domain was where the West proved its superiority and where the East submitted, the inner or the spiritual was where one’s spiritual culture was

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<sup>30</sup> These foundational fictions of national texts are where the “forces of social antagonism or contradiction cannot be transcended or dialectically surmounted” (Bhabha, *Nation* 5).

<sup>31</sup> Partha Chatterjee argues that nationalist imaginations in Asia and Africa are formed “not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the ‘modular’ forms of the national society propagated by the modern West” (*The Nation* 5). In the later editions of his book, Benedict Anderson reflects that he was too hasty in his assumption that the official “nationalisms” of Asian and African states were “modelled directly on that of the dynastic states of nineteenth century Europe” (Anderson 163). He writes that the genealogy of the colonized worlds of Asia and Africa “should be traced to the imaginings of the colonial state” (163).

fiercely guarded and preserved. Thus, the colonial state was “kept out of the ‘inner’ domain of national culture” (6).<sup>32</sup> It wasn’t however, that this inner sphere was left unaltered, rather, Chatterjee states that it was in the inner space that the nation was already sovereign, and at work in imagining a modern national culture that was not Western. He illustrates how language and the family served as areas in the inner domain of national culture. For Chatterjee, it is this story of nationalism that is often missing in “conventional histories” (6).

While there are many rich nationalist texts that illustrate the ideological character of India’s nationalists existing at the same time as the 13th and the 14th Dalai Lamas—Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-94), Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) for example—the logical and moral positions taken by the fourteenth Dalai Lama and the government-in-exile have to date not been analyzed adequately for their implicit or explicit ideological character. This dissertation attempts to help clarify the relation between the theory of the nationalist thought and the politics adopted by the government-in-exile.<sup>33</sup> The Chinese occupation of Tibet meant that Tibetans had to quickly learn a new language of universalisms— of rights, freedom, and sovereignty—in the attempt to reclaim Tibet’s freedom. This project was initiated

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<sup>32</sup> Partha Chatterjee gives the example that standard nationalist history in India will identify the beginning of nationalism in India with the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. This history also designates the decade preceding the Indian National Congress as the period of preparation and reform, a process where traditional society was being “modernized” by colonial enlightenment, thereby converging with Benedict Anderson’s formulations (*The Nation* 5).

<sup>33</sup> Partha Chatterjee pointed out two decades ago that nationalism was viewed with fear that its unpredictable “force of primordial nature” would threaten the “orderly calm of civilized life” (*Lineages* 215). The *Satyagraha* movement envisioned by Samdhong Rinpoche in 1995 discussed briefly in the concluding pages of this chapter and in Chapter 4 can be viewed as having influenced the national project. Its call to action might still find responders in the future.

in statelessness through the formation of a government-in-exile. The imagining of the Tibetan nation to come continues to be produced by exile Tibetans and this one-sided dance (with/against the Chinese) gives it the appearance of stagnancy, but a closer look shows that Tibetan people continue to find new means to guard their hope and fight for independence, particularly inside Tibet, despite the more conciliatory approaches of the exile government.

The features of Tibetan nationalism formed in the early years of exile are extant particularly in the lingering effect on the political consciousness and self-image among Tibetans today who are born in the diaspora. Tibetan writer and activist Wangpo Tethong distinguishes four features of Tibetan nationalism that he proposes had not existed before 1950: 1) the cultural and political differentiation from China with Tibetan culture and Tibetan Buddhism serving as the core; 2) “the unity and equality of the three regions of Tibet,” and the agenda of unity of the religious groups; 3) the prominence of the Dalai Lama as the symbol of Tibet’s political struggle, and 4) the resistance against Chinese occupation inside Tibet in 1956 and 1959, and the subsequent “glorification” of the resistance leaders (412).<sup>34</sup>

Tethong suggests that the “political mindset” and the “vague but vivid images of Tibet’s past” found in the songs, articles, and texts written by contemporary Tibetan youth can be traced to the images that were produced during the developmental stages of Tibetan nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s (412). He

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<sup>34</sup> Miroslav Hroch distinguishes four kinds of national movements in Europe: three before the establishment of capitalism and the constitutions of governments (*From Nationalist* 83). He states that national movements all stem from the breakdown of the old order and its legitimacy (96).



believes that Tibetan culture is crucial to the identity of young Tibetans in Europe even though they carry an image of Tibet that is fairly homogeneous and their knowledge of Tibet's history has "wide gaps in crucial phases" (411). Tethong points out that the more their lives diverge from the "real Tibet," the more grows their fascination for the lost homeland, and the more "unimpeachable" their ideas and images become of Tibet (418).

Tethong shies away from providing particular details on the events and topics that proved problematic in the first two decades of exile life, illustrating the very tendency for vagueness for which he criticizes other Tibetans for their commentaries and historical writings. Nevertheless, Tethong's observations on unity, the gaps in history, and the cultivation of a homogenous picture of Tibet are important features in writing the ongoing story of Tibetan nationalism in exile. Tethong explains that national unity emerged as a central pillar of Tibetan nationalism and democracy in the early years of exile, but that it was not embraced by all Tibetans.<sup>35</sup> He suggests that Tibetans shied away from a truthful analysis of events and instead there was a great deal of "bunker mentality" (413). In this dissertation, I attempt to fill some of the gaps. Chapters 2-5 identify the topics that were considered taboo in the days when the Tibetan movement was being developed. In this chapter, I analyze two events—the offering of a golden throne to the Dalai Lama in 1956, and the oath made by sixty Tibetan leaders to the Dalai Lama in 1960—that shaped the definition of the concept

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<sup>35</sup> Former ruling elite were suspicious of the new groups and "regional leaders" outside the region ruled by the Tibetan government—perhaps a reference to Amdo and Kham—and saw the "newborn ideology" as a means to "exert dominance over a minority" (Tethong 413).

and practice of unity, as well as the character and values of the Tibetan subject, or what I call “refugee-citizen” and its relation to the Dalai Lama and the exile government.

In the story of Tibetan nationalism, religion *is* the arena where political power has been staged and shaped. For example, Gray Tuttle’s study on the Qing dynasty’s efforts to bring Tibet into the “new China” offers a different insight into how modern ideas of nationalism, race, and religion impacted social organization in Asia. Tuttle suggests it was religion that “served as the crucial link between the social organization of the dynastic empire and that of the nation-state” in relations between China and Tibet, not nationalism or racial unity (*Tibetan 3*).<sup>36</sup> The rhetoric of nationalism and racial unity was not successful in preserving the territory of the Qing empire. Instead, it was the Tibetan and Chinese followers of Tibetan Buddhism who worked with politicians in the interest of religion within the conditions of the new state to create an imagined community that linked (some) Chinese and Tibetans. An imagined community was necessary for a number of reasons: Qing knowledge of Tibet was very limited; no Chinese civil official had served as an imperial representative to Tibet, it had always been the job for Manchus or Mongols; Chinese ideology or political systems had never been established in Tibet; and religious and political ties had weakened between the two states by the early twentieth century (8).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Approximately one-half of territories under Qing dynasty (1644-1911) observed Tibetan Buddhism.

<sup>37</sup> Gray Tuttle suggests that Chinese Nationalists were left with no viable connection to the “Tibet problem,” as they could not adopt the patron and priest concept and neither was the rhetoric of racial and national unity effective (*Tibetan 8*).

Beginning in 1937, Tuttle writes, the Nationalist government made great effort to show Tibetans that the Chinese government supported Tibetan Buddhism. The Communists continued this strategy when they took over China in 1949. To form the imagined community, Tuttle suggests, Tibetan Buddhism had to become a world religion (4). For Tibetans, the concept of nation-state was tied to Tibetan identity, commonly described as having formed on being *nang pa* “insider,” or being Buddhist. This view allowed Chinese Buddhists to have a place in Tibet. Tuttle’s analysis seeks to show how the question of Tibet is interwoven with the place of religion in modern China (and Tibet). Thus, even as Buddhist elites, including monasteries, clergy, conservatives, and institutions are partly held responsible for losing Tibet to China (Thondup 192), it is Buddhism that continues to provide a unifying language in the Tibetan struggle for nation and freedom. This does not mean, however, ignoring Buddhism’s potential to restrict representations of identity and expressions of culture within a dominant Buddhist framework. To some extent this is a chasm that the exile government and the Dalai Lama have tried to bridge by emphasizing a secular constitution and system for the future. On the other hand, the 14th Dalai Lama’s international status as an exemplar of peace seems to link international support for Tibet with bringing Tibetan Buddhism onto the world’s stage as a world value so that Buddhism remains central to imaginings of the Tibetan nation-state.<sup>38</sup> This too, one might suggest, is not accidental.

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<sup>38</sup> Very few Dalai Lamas exercised political power of their own. The Qing emperors “fashioned the Dalai Lama into the sacred head of the Ganden Phodrang government,” and thus inadvertently helped to promote “the image of Tibet as a country guided by the incarnations of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara” (Schwieger, *Dalai* 221). This image became such a powerful force in Tibetan politics

A closer look at the two events symbolizing allegiance to the Dalai Lama in 1956 and 1960 since the historic proclamation of independence in 1913 is significant to understanding the Dalai Lama's position in Tibetan society, and to theorizing acts and ideas involved in Tibetan nation-building. While there are events and actors of equal importance in myriad local spaces and times, the dimensions and aspirations of these two events might prepare the way for a critical analysis of the features Tethong alludes to, in particular the prominence of the Dalai Lama as the symbol for the Tibetan struggle, and the agenda for unity. Ultimately, these concerns are related to the anxiety about legitimacy that confronted the government under the Dalai Lama and the attendant negotiations demanded in the inner life of subjects, and the production of the values necessary for the transformation of a diverse society into a modern unified Tibetan "state" in exile.<sup>39</sup>

These events provide context to the evolution of the dominant features of Tibetan nationalism, not just as new features in response to the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950, but also as a result of the existence of many Tibets and Tibetans. Tibetan nationalism produced its own new and "powerful representation of the nation-state" (Duara, *Rescuing History* 9) in the confined spaces of refugee settlements far from the territory of Tibet. That is to say, the Tibetan future nation-

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after two centuries, particularly with charismatic figures such as the 13th and the 14th Dalai Lama, that Peter Schwieger suggests it could not be "controlled by the new Chinese government" (221). The 14th Dalai Lama has held and maintained political control more than any of his predecessors.

<sup>39</sup> Veena Das defines critical events by way of Francois Furet's (1978) definition of the French revolution as an event "par excellence" because it "instituted a new modality of historical action which was not inscribed in the inventory of that situation" (*Critical Events* 5). She explains that although the events she writes about are not as critical as the French Revolution, they brought about new modes of action that impacted various actors and concepts. *Critical Events* redefines the categories of purity, honor, hero, and martyr.

state produced under the conditions of exile is like other nations: a historical “configuration designed to include certain groups and exclude or marginalize others” (15). These events illustrate that although the exile polity was successful in providing a sense of belonging to a diverse and displaced Tibetan peoples and in building the foundations of a cohesive society, it also set in place a way to produce a new identity of minorities. That this took place under conditions of exile and not as a result of freedom from Chinese occupation makes the Tibetan narrative a unique study in thinking about belonging within and outside the frames of nation-states.

### **1. Chushi Gangdruk and the Politics of the Golden Throne**

In 1956, while Tibetans in the Amdo and Kham regions of the Tibetan plateau were organizing an armed movement to fight the Chinese, Central Tibetans were planning an offering which Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang, a well-known trader in Lhasa of Khampa descent, describes as “a special religious ritual involving gifts and prayers” (*Ten-shug Shapten*) for the long life of the Dalai Lama (51). Tibetan government officials decided that a golden throne would make a powerful offering to the Dalai Lama and Andrugtsang was one of three Khampas (people from Kham) chosen to collect contributions towards the golden throne from some districts of Kham.<sup>40</sup> Andrugtsang recalls that the ceremony was significant as a political act in that it

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<sup>40</sup> The founding of the resistance group, *Chushi Gangdruk*, (Four Rivers, Six Ranges) in 1958 drew the interest of Tibetans in Kalimpong, in particular, a group known as *Jen-khen-tsi-sum*, “the three *Jen*, *Kyen* and *Tsi*” (JKTS), for the three men in the group. *Jen*, “older brother,” in Tibetan referred to Gyalo Thondup who was the older brother to the Dalai Lama; *Khen*, was an abbreviation for *Khenjung*, a title held by Lobsang Gyentsen, a monk official from the Tibetan government who had moved to India in 1954; and *Tsi*, was a reference to *tsipon*, the title for the aristocrats heading the Revenue office of the Lhasa government, a position held by Shakabpa. The three men would come to play an important role in getting support from the CIA for the resistance movement.

“expressed the people’s loyalty and confidence in the Dalai Lama’s leadership and confirmed his earthly sovereign powers” (51). He wanted to ensure for Khampa participation in the event so he met Amdowa (people from Amdo) and Khampa leaders in Lhasa and persuaded them to join the effort. When completed, the throne weighed 3,164 *tolas* (one tola is approximately 12 grams) of pure gold. The throne was offered to the Dalai Lama on 4 July 1957 (53).

This event is important for a number of reasons that are symbolic, political, and pragmatic: it united all Tibetan people in a “common purpose and shared values, which helped to identify the common enemy,” according to historian Tsering Shakya (*Dragon* 165); it brought all Khampas together in what Shakya calls a “pan-Khampa identity” (173); and it shifted the existing attitudes of the Lhasa people and government towards the plight of the Khampas who had been steadily pouring into Central Tibet for a year and had not thus far been accepted with open arms.<sup>41</sup> Shakya suggests that religious conviction was the primary trigger for the offering of the golden throne.<sup>42</sup> While that might have been so, the event also provided the perfect opportunity to the Khampas for a “dual purpose of enlisting further support for the resistance movement against the Chinese” (Andrugtsang 51). It was during this time that Andrugtsang and his team galvanized support for the fighters in Kham and

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<sup>41</sup> By early 1959 the Khampa revolt had intensified in Kham and the Communists intensified their campaigns, shifting their efforts into Lhasa. Everything came to a collision when rumors spread in Lhasa on the evening of 9 March 1959 that the Chinese intended to kidnap the Dalai Lama. The collective anxiety and anger spontaneously transformed into a revolt against the Chinese. It was also an expression of “resentment against the Tibetan ruling elite,” who Tibetans believed had let the Dalai Lama down (Shakya, *Dragon* 192). Tsering Shakya indicates that the demonstration revealed the gulf between the Tibetan people and the Tibetan aristocracy (194-5).

<sup>42</sup> Dalai Lama briefly mentions that the Khampa warriors were reacting to the terrible treatment from the Chinese but also that “they regarded themselves as fighting in loyalty to me as Dalai Lama: the Dalai Lama was the core of what they were trying to defend” (*My Land* 160).

formalized a resistance organization. Thus, the event can be seen as setting into process two kinds of collective identities: one, the notion of shared blood, and the other, the notion of blood shed for the nation's freedom.<sup>43</sup> Both these notions, but particularly of blood shed for Tibet, brought disparate groups of Amdowas and Khampas together, and later, Tibetans from Central Tibet to create what Yossi Shain calls "focal points for patriotism and new concepts for membership" (*Kinship* 3). The other important effect was the recognition of the Dalai Lama as the symbol for the nation.

In his discussion on kinship and diasporas in the international system, Yossi Shain explains that concepts of ethnicities, kinship, and connections between people and land predate modern nationalism. Although membership is often established by birth, Shain argues that identities and kinship bonds can shift "according to politics and the freedom of choice" (2). Many ethnonational groups have been shown to shift their "self-perceptions, and consequently their politics and self-image" in response to separate experiences and shifts (5). This view is useful in thinking about how the Chinese occupation of Tibetan areas shaped Tibetan self-perception. Up until the ceremony of the golden throne and the formalization of the resistance movement, the armed struggle had been viewed primarily as a Khampa problem due to the very

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<sup>43</sup> Yossi Shain explains that in the "state-sponsored collective identities" in modern nationalism there are two dynamics at work. One is the notion of shared blood which traditional ethnofocal kinships value, and the other is the notion of "blood shed for the state" (*Kinship* 3). Examining the ways in which "the people" can and do transcend state boundaries, he concludes that identities can shift their "self-perception" in response to a variety of experiences. Yet people can also, he argues, retain a coherent collective identity and reality of a territorial homeland.

different approaches the Chinese had adopted towards the different Tibetan regions.

What changed?

China's military success in defeating Tibetan forces in October 1950 was followed by assurances to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan elite that traditional Tibetan social and religious systems would not be altered in Central Tibet.<sup>44</sup> On 23 May 1951, a Tibetan negotiating team headed by Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, the Tibetan governor-general in 1950, and the Chinese team headed by Li Weihan, the chairman of the National Minorities Commission, signed the 17-Point Agreement.<sup>45</sup> Mao's policy for Tibet meant that from 1951-55, the traditional Tibetan government in Lhasa continued to administer its laws internally in Central Tibet (Goldstein, *History* 3 10). In contrast, the Chinese took a different approach to Amdo and Kham, which it viewed as being legally and politically under the Chinese Central Government.

By 1956, the regions of Amdo and Kham were integrated into the new constitution's administration and into new Tibetan autonomous provinces such as the Ganzi, Ngaba, Jyekundo, Golok, Haibei, Hainan, and Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous regions (Shakya, *Dragon* 485:16). Although the gradualist policy pertained to these Tibetan (minority) areas as well, the ruling Han cadres in Sichuan, like Li Jingquan and Liao Zhigao, were keen to start reforms, and ignoring reservations from minority

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<sup>44</sup> It had taken two weeks for the Southwest Army Corps of the People's Liberation Army to defeat Tibetans. The Dalai Lama was under pressure to take control from the Regent and he became the ruler of Tibet at the age of sixteen.

<sup>45</sup> Ngabo Ngawang was in favor of modernizing Tibet and is viewed as being in favor of signing the Agreement. Mao's dual "carrot and stick" strategy offering "the Dalai Lama very attractive terms to return to the 'motherland'" and, simultaneously threatening "a full-scale military invasion if he did not" were the context under which Tibetans entered negotiations with the Chinese (Goldstein, *History* 3 25) Dalai Lama's life was feared to be in danger and he left for Yatung, near the Indian border.



leaders, they finalized implementing “democratic” reforms in January 1956 (Goldstein, *History* 3 110).<sup>46</sup> The reforms in Tibet included collectivization, redistribution of land, and settling nomads (Shakya, *Dragon* 139). The Chinese also began confiscating all guns from Khampa households and monasteries, a step that revealed their ignorance about the “fundamental” importance of guns to the Tibetan peoples of Kham and to their “ethnic identity” (Goldstein, *History* 3 119). While it is generally accurate that Buddhism had successfully destroyed the militant spirit of Tibetans that had historically made it a “great military nation,” the warrior spirit survived the “Buddhist revolution to a considerable degree” among the Khampas who valued physical prowess as a criteria for leadership and social prestige (Norbu, *Road* 366).<sup>47</sup> This miscalculation by the Chinese provided the perfect fuel for revolt.

The secular and religious elite in Kham was already hostile to talks of impending democratic reforms; some leaders had begun talking about fighting the Chinese in their areas. The responses to the Chinese reforms were not theorized, predicted, or organized. The uprisings are described as “a rash of rebellions” that “broke out and enveloped the entire regions of Kham and Amdo in fire and smoke” (Andrugtsang 47). Gampo Tashi Andrugtsang, who would become the leader of the resistance movement, writes in his memoir that thousands of Khampas fled into the mountains and organized themselves into “compact guerrilla bands” (47).<sup>48</sup> The first uprising against the Chinese took place in Serta Golok and Zongmai, north of Ganzi

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<sup>46</sup> Tsering Shakya writes of democratic reforms beginning in 1955 (*Dragon* 139).

<sup>47</sup> From AD 635 onwards Tibetans were a threat to the Tang dynasty (Norbu, *Road* 368).

<sup>48</sup> Gampo Tashi Andrugtsang was the chief funder of the armed resistance before the CIA got involved.

(Sichuan) on 25 February 1956 (Goldstein, *History* 3 124; Sakya); then Beiyu County, west of Ganzi on 27 February 1956; then Yidun on February 29, followed by a big outbreak in Litang on March 9 (Goldstein 124) where the PLA troops surrounded Litang monastery and eventually bombed it.

The revolts in Kham were very much a reflection of the decentralized operations of political and social life in Kham. They were “discrete revolts” that revealed local resistance against the imposition of Chinese reforms more than coordinated uprisings (124). That the leaders of the revolt were mostly chieftains and the traditional elite fighting for their interests does not discount the fundamental response from Tibetans to the Chinese reforms. Tibetans from all classes and regions saw the reforms as an “attack” on their world view; and they were united in their belief in and support of the religious institutions (Shakya, *Dragon* 143). Shakya argues that despite exploitation and inequality in the traditional Tibetan society, Tibetans had not revolted against their oppressors (143). The spontaneous revolts took the Communist Chinese by surprise.

The resistance movement in Kham and Amdo did not initially affect the Tibetan Government in Lhasa. When the attacks increased in Amdo and Kham, hundreds of Tibetans from these regions fled into central Tibet, and it was no longer possible to ignore that the conflict had arrived in Lhasa.<sup>49</sup> Initially, the stories of the

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<sup>49</sup> Khampa families and fighters began moving their wealth and families to Lhasa soon after the events in Ganzi (Goldstein, *History* 3 277). On 14 May 1957, the Communist Central Committee issued a document in response to these revolts, and provided reasons why reform in Tibet had to be postponed for as long as six years and could be applied only with the consent of Tibetans. However, the document still maintained that Tibet became an inseparable part of China “a long time ago,” but the Central Committee admitted that Tibet had maintained an independent or semi-independent status in its

death of Tibetans and the destruction of monasteries in Amdo and Kham did not garner much sympathy or support from the people of Lhasa or the Tibetan government. Instead, Khampas faced prejudice and derision from the people, and old prejudices against Khampas were sharpened by the strain added by Khampa “refugees” on the already fragile Tibetan economy (Shakya, *Dragon* 142). Besides, Lhasa was dealing with its own anti-Chinese rumblings as well as growing criticism of the Tibetan elite.<sup>50</sup>

As the revolts intensified in Kham, Khampa fighters, particular those from Litang such as the well-known trader Gyadotsang Gelong, were pushed or moved to Lhasa where they sought the support of prominent Khampa traders in Lhasa like the fifty-one-year old Litang trader Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang. Andrugtsang became the

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relation to China. “The fact that it had achieved long-term independence and semi-independence historically distinguishes Tibet from other minority nationality areas in China. First of all, this fact is reflected in Tibetans’ centrifugal tendencies away from China and their distrust of Han Chinese. Not only does this exist widely among the upper classes, but it also has a considerable influence among the masses,” states the document (Goldstein, *History* 3 454). It goes on to explain that historically the tendency for separation has to do with oppression of a minority peoples but in Tibet’s case it is generally related to “the independent or semi-independent status of Tibet that existed for a long period of time in history” (454). Goldstein suggests that Mao’s gradualist policy for Tibet was guided by this knowledge. He adds that this document captures the historical reality that is no longer admitted by present day Chinese leaders: that the question of Tibet is rooted in its long-term independence as well as semi-independence over its long relation with China.

<sup>50</sup> During the Monlam ceremony of 1956, posters telling the Chinese to return to China began appearing on walls in Lhasa. A group called *Mimang Tsongdu* (“People’s Representatives”), similar to a group that had been disbanded in 1952, was responsible for the posters. Shakya explains that the organization represented Tibetans’ “resentment” for the erosion of the Dalai Lama’s authority. They blamed both the ruling Chinese as well as the Tibetan elite in the Lhasa government (*Dragon* 145). The organizers of *Mimang Tsongdu* were “traders and lower-ranking Tibetan officials” (145). Alo Chonzed Tsering Dorje was the main man behind this group. Although the group was able to unite Tibetans towards a common sentiment, it lacked open support from the Dalai Lama and the Kashag for it to mobilize more popular uprisings, according to Shakya (*Dragon* 146). The Chinese in Tibet insisted that the Kashag take action against the leaders of the *Mimang Tsongdu*; the three leaders were detained for several months while the Chinese investigated whether the group was funded by Guomindang or the Americans (147). Tsang died in prison and Alo Chonzed and Bhumthang were finally released on the condition that they would not engage in any political actions. Both men went into exile in India soon after.

unofficial leader of the Litang exiles in Lhasa in 1956, and not too long after, was chosen to be the head of the predominantly Khampa force which took on the name *Chushi Gangdruk* (Four Rivers, Six Ranges). In adopting the ancient name for Kham, the organization nodded to the movement's diverse Khampa composition and initiative.

George Patterson, a missionary from Scotland who arrived in Kham in 1947 and who was a big supporter of the Khampa warriors, writes that in 1956 “the Khambas and Amdowas had approached the Lhasa Government officials with the suggestion that they join them in the revolt, but the Lhasa officials had refused to help, even with guns and ammunition” (*Tragic Destiny* 173). Likewise, Andrugtsang writes of his efforts to educate the “lamas and others” of the true picture in Kham (49). He also contemplated writing a letter to Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, and to the World Buddhist Society and asked the heads of the three Gelug monasteries (Ganden, Sera, Drepung) in Central Tibet if they would affix their seals on the letters. The leading monks and government officials refused (50). Military aid had “seemed out of question” even when letters came pouring from Kham to the Tibetan government in Lhasa asking for military help (50). It was only due to the desperation, enormous hardship, and sacrifices of the Khampa warriors, and the ingenuity of the Khampa trade networks that the people's revolt persisted in Amdo and Kham. This network linking Kalimpong, Lhasa, and Kham brought a variety of political players into contact— Gyalo Thondup, brother to the Dalai Lama, Shakabpa, Finance Minister of the Tibetan Government, and the monk official Khenchung

Lobsang Gyaltzen in Kalimpong, with the Lord Chamberlain Phala Dronyer Chenmo in Lhasa, and the Khampa leaders and representatives—to eventually corral the discrete uprisings into an organized national Tibetan movement of resistance against the Chinese (McGranahan, *Arrested Histories* 94).

The Khampa revolts had begun out of local concerns, the Khampas were not fighting for the Lhasa government, nor for the independence of all Tibetans. But, as Dawa Norbu states, it did lead to a “Tibetan national consciousness” based on the commonalities between all Tibetan-speaking people and centered around a “pan-Tibetan identity symbolized by the Dalai Lama” (*China’s* 338). And it was around the same premise and structure of the three regions of Tibet (*Cholka-Sum*) that the exile administration was to center “the person and institution of the Dalai Lama.” (338). The political configuration of the Tibetan government in exile is therefore not just a continuation of an existing institution but a new political entity with increased dominion. This was possible partly because the identification of a common enemy brought into prominence the shared historical, mythical, and cultural ancestry that led all Tibetans to identify themselves as politically Tibetan. It was equally possible because Chushi Gangdruk’s participation in the offering of the throne to the Dalai Lama brought the Amdo and the Khampa people—people who had until then been part of the cultural community and network but not members of the political community of the Tibetan government in Lhasa—into the nation. The offering of the throne was an event that brought Tibetans to see themselves on the same side against a common enemy. Andrugtsang explains that the resistance army grew as the Chinese

oppression intensified. Tibetans made the decision to put aside their differences and join the fight “as nationalists who could not see their people butchered” (58).

To mark their “transition from an unofficial, unorganized force to a fully functioning army,” the Chushi Gangdruk fighters held an inaugural ceremony on 16 June 1958 in Lhoka near Lhasa (McGranahan, *Arrested Histories* 99). They unfurled their new flag. (Andrugtsang 63). They gave themselves a new name “Volunteer freedom fighters” (VFF) to symbolize the development from local and regional efforts to a pan-Tibetan movement (63-64).<sup>51</sup> Relegated to footnotes in official national narratives, the histories of Chushi Gangdruk are “nationalistic ones,” and, as McGranahan reminds us, they map out a “subaltern” but nevertheless a nationalistic “version of past, present and future” (*Arrested Histories* 23). Three years later, Tibetans offered their pledge again to the Dalai Lama, this time as refugees in Bodh Gaya, India.

## **2. Oath in Bodh Gaya**

On 3 February 1960, the Dalai Lama met with 60 representatives of Tibetan refugees from all three provinces of Tibet while he was on a pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya, India, traditionally identified as the place where Buddha gained enlightenment. At this gathering, the representatives “pledged their continued efforts to fight for Tibet’s freedom” (Avedon 81).<sup>52</sup> The group consisted of spiritual masters, leaders of Chushi Gangdruk, and government employees, and they offered long-life offerings (*ten-shug*) to the Dalai Lama. It was also at this event that the representatives took the great oath

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<sup>51</sup> The movement continued to be known as Chushi Gangdruk.

<sup>52</sup> All translations in this chapter where mentioned are done by Bhuchung D. Sonam.

(*ngagen thumo che*) to remain united (*thunlam dhogtsa chikdrel*) and to build total unity. The oath promised essentially to “abandon disunity amongst different regions of Tibet and schools of Buddhism and forget personal enmity and unite as one and stand together solid like an iron ball” (Gyari web).

Juchen Thupten, a veteran politician in exile politics, writes in his memoir that the “unshakable pure great oath” (*gyurme kyi gyengya thumo che tsang ma*) made in the presence of the Dalai Lama, the “temporal and political leader who is the source of all happiness and benefits,” was voluntarily undertaken by Tibetans “in united spirit” in the early months of 1960 (trans. 5:340-342).<sup>53</sup> A rough translation of the oath follows:

“Your Holiness, our temporal and spiritual leader, has worked tirelessly to bring unlimited happiness to all of us from the three Provinces, including Ngari Korsum, Utsang Ruzhi, Dokham Gangdruk, Amdo and Golok, but we have not been united and we have not fulfilled our service with full heart. Due to such obstacles, our enemy was able to invade Tibet, including its people, wealth and animals, and cause unimaginable sufferings in the heart of every Tibetan. Even though people are still unable to let go of small and temporary personal gains and continue to hold onto orthodox views, your Holiness accepts numerous obstacles in exile in order to bring about a new bright chapter in Tibet’s political and spiritual freedom. The power of your three secret wisdoms, and its brilliance has spread across the entire globe, and this is a great source of faith for followers of Buddhism and for the people of the Land of Snows in particular, whose infinite gratitude to you can never be repaid. We profoundly regret our past mistakes and promise to never engage in any petty regionalism in the future. In accordance with your Holiness’ deep vision, we will remain united like a solid block of iron. There is no better way to bring short-term and long-term benefits for Tibet than if we carry our responsibilities in accordance with your wishes and

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<sup>53</sup> The transcript of the oath taken on “the seventh of the twelfth Tibetan Lunar month of the Earth-Hog year” with the protector deities of Tibet “the Six-Armed Gonpo, Palden Magsor Gyalmo and the faithful protector Damchen Gyatso as witnesses” is provided in Juchen Thupten’s memoir, *Kalon Trisur Dege Juchen Thubten Namgyal Kutse Logyue (The Autobiography of Juchen Thubten Namyal)*.

under your Holiness's genuine/undisputed leadership. This is our common belief and we will never waver from this spontaneous and voluntary decision taken with hearts full of bliss. In the event that anyone, whether high or low, lay person, monk or a nun, breaks even a tiny part of this pledge, they will face the consequences according to the secular and the religious legal systems [*lug nyi trim*]. And as per the local laws, these concerned people will be treated like pus taken out from a vein with a precise incision made with a lancet. Furthermore, the individuals will not only be considered as the enemy of the people but also of Buddhism. If he/she breaks the sacred pledge we pray to the protector deities to deal out grave punishments in accordance with the wrong actions. With this, we, the following people who have signed this mutually agreed oath, promise to uphold the oath as long as it exists" (trans. 5:340-343).

The oath was signed by representatives from the religious Gelug institutions of Drepung, Sera, Ganden, Gyuto, and Gyume; representatives from the Sakya, Kagyu, and Nyingma institutions; representatives from regional communities of U-Tsang, Amdo, Golok, and Chushi Gangruk; and Tibetan government officials (5:342-343).<sup>54</sup> More than half of the representatives taking the oath were affiliated with religious institutions and were more than likely to be familiar with the long tradition of oath-taking as a means of social and political binding in Tibetan society. Michael

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<sup>54</sup> Juchen Thupten lists the following individuals as representing their various organizations, monastic institutions, and government institutions: Lobpon Pema Gyaltzen of Loseling, representative of Drepung; Lobpon Lobsang Dhonyoe, representative of Sera Thekchen Ling; Shartse Lobpon, Lobsang Choephel, representative of Ganden Monastery; Ngawang Lekden, representative of Gyutoe and Gyumey; Palpung Ontul Karma Dechen, representative of Sakya, Kagyu and Nyingma; Khenpo Ngawang Jinpa, representative of Tharpa Choeling in Kalimpong; Jinpa Gyatso, representative of Phelgye Ling Monastery in Bodh Gaya; Khenchung Ngawang Dhondup; Tsepon Namling Paljor Jigme; Rupon Sonam Tashi, representative of Utsang Magkar; Amdo Choedak & Jagoe Namgyal Dorji, representatives of Chushi Gangdruk, Amdo, Golok and Lang; representative Lobsang Dorjee; representative Amdo Gyatong; Pesur Dorjee Norbu, representative of Tsang; representative Tsering Topgyal; representative Wangdu Dorjee; representative Sonam Tenzin; representative Chogye Sherab; representative Tsetan Namgyal; representative Marnang Pema Tsewang; representative Lhawang Tsering; representative Markham Sonam; representative Sonam Tsewang; representative Aphur; representative Jigme Namgyal; Thubten Jungnye; representative Zoepa; Nyandak; Atra; Phurbu; Akhu; Yeshi Tsering" (5: 342-343).



Walter describes a set of oaths as being the glue that held together the religious and internal politics in the courts of the early Tibetan Kings. Tibetans also sealed peace treaties with the Chinese according to Tang historical records on Tibet (Walter 27). Oath-taking ensured fealty from clans, stability among people, as well as the maintenance of power.

The Bodh Gaya oath is a spectacular commitment made by Tibetan refugees to their political and spiritual leader based on gratitude, faith, and duty. The representatives expressed their debt to the Dalai Lama for helping Tibetans through the “unimaginable sufferings” of the loss of homeland and for leading them into a new chapter of political and spiritual freedom. The shared suffering became the basis of a new relationship that transformed all Tibetans into equal subjects. The following features are noteworthy:

1) The representatives of the Tibetan people take full responsibility for all past failings which are obscurely described as regionalism and petty animosities. This not only conceals the historical differences between the regions, absolves Tibetan government officials of their part, but also flattens the varied experiences of Tibetans in the three regions on the Tibetan plateau into one story.

2) The representatives state that the pledge arose spontaneously to undertake a responsibility to work in accordance with the Dalai Lama’s vision. While this can be viewed as a movement by the people to choose, it is also important to consider that there was a sense that this was the only available option. There are no accounts of whether this event was initiated by the people or if individuals were asked to be

present to take the oath by exile leaders. How were these individuals, unknown to each other for the most part, present in Bodh Gaya at the same time, and spontaneously led to offer a pledge? Who were the writers of this oath? Where was it composed?

The religious oath concludes with an invocation to spiritual beings who serve as witnesses to solemnize the contract with the leader. The Tibetan people promised to obey in totality the dictates of a spiritual leader. Any dissent, even breaking a tiny part of the pledge, was to be adjudicated by the religious laws of Buddhism as well as the secular laws of the host country. Individual dissent was also made grounds for exclusion and for being viewed as an enemy of the people of Tibet and of Buddhism. Such individuals, the representatives agreed, were to be taken out like “pus taken out of a vein” (343). Accepting this traditional contract of unwavering loyalty, burden of debt, and renouncement of dissent, the Dalai Lama initiated the new democratic system for Tibet’s future polity and recommended that Tibet’s three provinces be represented by three representatives in the Parliament and one representative from each of the religious schools of Tibetan Buddhism, but not including Bon.<sup>55</sup> This parliament represented for the first time in recent Tibetan history all three regions of Tibet and the four sects of Tibetan Buddhism. In addition, the exile administration symbolized, also for the first time, the acknowledgement of the Dalai Lama as the political leader of the Tibetan people from the regions of Amdo, Kham, and U-Tsang.

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<sup>55</sup> The Dalai Lama gives a fleeting mention of this event in *Freedom in Exile*. He does not mention the oath but states that sixty or more Tibetan leaders made a moving moment and “pledged their lives in the continuing struggle for a free Tibet” (157).

The old Lhasa government, following a political system that had been put in place since the rule of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lozang Gyatso (1617-82), was found to be corrupt and “hopelessly inadequate for the twentieth century” (Dalai Lama, *Freedom* 56). It was also a government that ruled with unchallenged authority.<sup>56</sup> The new exile polity brought to an end the traditional dual system where each lay official had a clerical counterpart as well as altering the role of aristocrats. In addition, it offered no public acknowledgement of traditional leaders outside the areas ruled by the old Tibetan government in Lhasa. These included the privileges and authority that hereditary chiefs and Kings in the areas of Amdo and Kham had held fast to for generations before 1950. Thus, they too had to alter their view of themselves to become equal subjects under a new system. In a way, these revolutionary changes were brought about without a people’s revolution.

In his memoir Juchen Thubten writes that after the oath, the leaders of Chushi Gangdruk met in Kalimpong to discuss the new conceptual boundaries of the regions of Kham and Amdo and to deliberate on whom they would elect to represent their regions in the new exile administration. Their task involved taking into consideration the boundaries of the regions they had ruled or lived in, which had altered in the nineteenth century, and yet again in the twentieth century under Chinese rule. For example, in 1955 the Chinese placed the Kingdom of Nangchen, historically considered as part of Kham, under Tsongon or Qinghai Province along with most of

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<sup>56</sup> Recent scholarship has shown that since 1682, the Dalai Lamas have ruled for very brief periods (Goldstein, *History* 1913 41). In addition to brief rules, they generally put “secular affairs in the hands of their managers, who acted as prime ministers” (41).

Amdo and Golok. The Tibetan leaders in exile had to decide where Nangchen would fall in a future Tibet.

Gungthang Tsultrim, who had been an important figure in the Gungthang Monastery (*Labrang*) in Amdo, had remarked that since in contemporary China the 25 chiefs and their tribes of Nangchen were under Qinghai Province, along with many regions of Amdo and Golok, they should be counted as being part of Amdo. Jago Namgyal Dorjee, an important figure from Dege, in Kham, had countered that if that was so, then Labrang Tashi Khyil, the region that Gungthang Tsultrim came from, and other areas such as Chone, Dzorge, Meu, and Gyalrong, which considered themselves part of Amdo or separate entities, but were under Sichuan or Yunnan in contemporary China, should be categorized under Kham and not as part of Amdo. Similarly, Trochu Dorjee Palsang, who had been the Chief of Gyalrong before 1950, suggested that since Gyalrong traditionally did not consider itself as part of Amdo or Kham, it should be considered as a separate region. Ultimately, it was decided that Amdo would include areas extending to upper and lower Gyalrong, and that the Nangchen 25, and upper and lower Golok would continue to be part of Kham (5:344).<sup>57</sup>

That boundaries and territories were discussed, albeit virtually, without violence by men who came from warrior tribes, is both extraordinary and instructive

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<sup>57</sup> Tongkhor Rinpoche, Gungthang Tsultrim, and Trochu Dorjee Namgyal were elected as representatives from Amdo. Sandu Lobsang Nyendak, Lithang Jangtsa Choezer and Drawupon Rinchen Tsering were elected as representatives from Kham in this first election in exile. All of these men had held prominent positions in their traditional regions in East Tibet which contradicted the hopes of the new democratic polity for a more egalitarian society.

to the character of the stateless nation. Perhaps it was possible because Amdowa and Khampa leaders were familiar with the regions' history of flexible and changing relations with both the ruling Manchus and the Tibetan government under the Dalai Lama. Perhaps they realized their old chiefdoms and kingdoms were already a thing of the past under the Chinese. It is also true that without their approbation, the sovereignty of the Dalai Lama and the exile administration would have been less certain. The stories of the chiefs and Kings who lost their regions and their kingdoms, the first time by force to the Chinese invasion, and the second time, symbolically, to the future Tibet under the Tibetan Government-in-Exile are histories that are crucial chapters in the production of the democratic Tibetan nation in exile. The new configuration of rule by people, and not by traditional kings and chiefs, was made possible by the Dalai Lama. Tibetans acknowledged that this was a great decision, and that if carried through, had the potential to free Tibet.<sup>58</sup> Freedom, after all, was everyone's goal and greatest hope.

The exile government is described as a "reorganized form of the old Tibetan Government" in the report *Tibetans in Exile* compiled by the Information Office of the Dalai Lama. The irony of course is that the pledge to follow the Dalai Lama without any dissent did not depart from tradition. The Dalai Lama was more than ever before the "symbolic representation of Tibetan nationhood" (I i). The event in Bodh Gaya was a commitment made to a leader whose term is for life and who is deemed

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<sup>58</sup> The new arrangements, however, were not received without suspicion. The Dalai Lama writes in his memoir that the changes were so unconventional to Tibetans in general and some people suggested that the Government was "practicing *true* Communism!" (*Freedom* 166).

infallible. In taking this oath, Tibetans were also constituting a national culture whose foremost value was unquestioned loyalty and indebtedness to the Dalai Lama. They were instituting a law of obedience and moral code that regulated their individual religious life as the regulatory feature of the entire Tibetan polity. That is to say, the political struggle for Tibet was also interpretable as a spiritual struggle. With the enactment of one ritual, erstwhile political and social actors, and actors who were not previously political, all became grateful subjects. But, as long-time Tibetan politician Lodi Gyari observes, the people of that generation who took the oath made the vow to the Dalai Lama's personhood and not to the office of the head of state, the people, or the nation of Tibet. A significant feature, then, of the Tibetan polity in exile is that membership in the community is a relationship between an individual and the exile government, but one exemplified foremost by allegiance to the sovereign.<sup>59</sup> For the recently dispossessed Tibetans coming from a variety of political formations in Tibet, membership in a political community took priority, but it was through the Dalai Lama that Tibetans built relations between the individual and the broader community. Thus, the question of sovereignty was not about the nation, nor the people.

The relation between citizenship, subjecthood, and nationality as a legal and political practice varies by states, but as Bridget Anderson points out, subjecthood "designates allegiance, a personal link between a sovereign and a person," while nationality "asserts belonging" to an "imagined community of people" who are

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<sup>59</sup> The Dalai Lama has referred to the oaths in his talk to exile officials. On 9 September 1960 the Dalai Lama tells officials that he does not have faith in the written oaths. "What benefits have these 'written oaths' given? ....I cannot give credit to these attractive documents, empty words and talks. I believe in facts and my thought will remain the same in the future" (*Speeches* 15).

thought to share history, language, religion, ethnicity, culture or a combination of these (*Us* 94). The imagined nation does not have “a sovereign or a state,” while citizenship is a legal status of membership that “designates a legal relationship between an individual and a state” (94). Despite functioning outside the territory of the nation, and therefore unable to provide legal citizenship, the exile government offered a sense of protection and a political and cultural community to Tibetans as members of a refugee community—what I will call “refugee-citizens”—under its charge. In return, it asked Tibetans to unite together in submission to the wishes of the government led by the Dalai Lama. This was a position willingly accepted by Tibetans and therefore the exile government derived its legitimacy from the acceptance of the Tibetan people in exile in contrast to Tibetans in Tibet, who were led by force by the Chinese government.

The ceremony of the golden throne in 1957 helped bring the people of Amdo and Kham into the sphere of Central Tibetan consciousness and lent some acceptance of the armed resistance movement. It also transformed discrete local resistance efforts into a national resistance movement. The oath in Bodh Gaya in 1960 prepared the groundwork for a new polity. It set into motion the future Tibetan nation and the development of Tibetan refugee-citizens in exile always already sworn to obey its leader. What is equally remarkable is that even after the devastation of homeland and the tumult of concatenating losses, Tibetans pledged to be led without questions, to be instructed without doubt into an indeterminate life of exile. To hope, despite the odds, for a future democratic and independent Tibet.

Tibetans in the present view the nation as a cohesive entity in part due to these two events that demanded a sacrifice of particular identities and histories in order to make way for something new. Tibetans today may not refer to or know of the oath made in Bodh Gaya, but they hear the mantra of unity every day and hold it sacred. Likewise, they may read references to the golden throne given to the Dalai Lama in 1956, and not hear any mention about the Chushi Gangdruk's role in the event. One of the reasons for the silence is precisely that that the recentness of the event compromises the myth of the always united nation. It is in these historical contradictions that one finds the gaps where the clarion call for unity is keenest.

Michael Billig uses the term “banal nationalism” to include small habits in which the nation is “flagged” in the lives of its citizenry and where “ideological habits” help Western nations to reproduce themselves (6). The word “banal” is chosen partly for its appearance of harmless normality. Billig's central argument is that nations remind their citizens of nationhood every day in familiar and routine signs and symbols that are not registered as cues. While the flag that flies on the national building is a good example, I think it is useful to keep in mind while reading this chapter that “banalities” such as customs, traditions, rumors, and events, also shape the construction of *us*. Billig suggests that nationalism is not an “intermittent mood,” but that it is an “endemic condition” (6). He explains this more clearly by saying we cannot “step outside the world of nations, nor rid oneself of the assumptions and common-sense habits which come from living within that world” (37). Billig's point is that we should be suspicious of the phenomenon of nations



because of its success in reproducing “hegemonic relations of inequity” (176). His reminder that nationalism is not on the periphery but that it features in the everyday life of citizens is pertinent especially to the ongoing project to furnish the historical consciousness and memory of Tibet.

Unity became the slogan of the Tibetan freedom movement in the mid-1960s. It was the most elevated feature of the Tibet to come along with democracy. Unity and democracy continue to be the foundation of all political conversations. The contradiction that exists today, between the theory of democracy and the practice of democracy, has a great deal to do with the tension between the oath of unity which prioritizes deference and tradition and the practice of democracy which presupposes equality and perhaps an element of ungovernability. Both unity and democracy are understood through a Buddhist lens and both are put to work to bolster Tibet’s sovereignty when dealing with the incommensurability that exists between new understanding of territorial borders and older forms of belonging. The discourse of Tibetan nationalism emphasizes what is counter to nationalism more commonly than it specifies the content of the national (other than the trope of unity).

### **Unity Before Democracy, Democracy for Unity**

The Dalai Lama’s hope of establishing democracy in Tibet was extinguished with the Chinese rule in 1959 (Kashyap 118). Ironically, it was the condition of exile that allowed the Dalai Lama to fulfill the goal of a “modern democracy in the true sense” of the word (118). The Dalai Lama’s initiative to change a system where his institution has provided political leadership for nearly four centuries is extraordinary,

and it has meant that he has borne the task of raising the people's political awareness in a variety of ways, including assuring them that his decision to retire from politics has been in the interest of ensuring the continuity of the Tibetan administration in exile.<sup>60</sup> The Dalai Lama has considered his authority over the democratic movement in Tibetan society and sought to make changes over the years accordingly (40). Trine Brox fittingly describes this as a process. Thus, while democracy was first introduced by fastening it to a Buddhist tradition to make it palatable to Tibetans, Brox explains that the Dalai Lama has attempted to gradually diminish his power as people familiarized themselves with the concepts and practice of democracy.

Consider the many ways he has introduced the merits of democracy to Tibetans. On 9 September 1960, the Dalai Lama advised Tibetan officials of the immediate need for building a stable, organized, and modern Tibetan administration in order to gain recognition from "other countries around the world" (*Speeches* 20). Recognition, he explained, would make "a huge difference for all of us [Tibetans living inside and outside Tibet] for working towards our common spiritual and temporal cause of Tibet" (20). In his statement on the second anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day on 10 March 1961, the Dalai Lama asked Tibetans to prepare for the day "when we can return to our country and build a happier and greater independent Tibet" (DIIR, *Tibet* 2). Thus, in the early years of exile,

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<sup>60</sup> In his address to the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies (now known as the Tibetan Parliament), on 29 May 1991, the Dalai Lama explained that the familiarity of Tibetans with the word "democracy" is one proof of the work of democracy. He explained that having power in one person is not "conducive to the effective working of democracy" and for that reason he added a clause in the 1963 constitution authorizing the assembly to "change the power of the Dalai Lama by a two-third majority" (Kashyap 40). This, the Dalai Lama explains, is "one of the chief attributes to democracy" (40). This facet is explained in statements and speeches on numerous occasions.

democracy and freedom were presented to Tibetans as interdependent and necessary if Tibetans were to fulfill their goal of a modern and distinctly Tibetan nation.

In his address on the fourth anniversary of March 10 in 1963, the Dalai Lama explained that the “future Constitution for Tibet” is consistent with “the teachings of Lord Buddha and with the rich spiritual and temporal heritage of our history and democracy” (10). Likewise, in his memoir, *My Land and My People*, the Dalai Lama speaks of the work in progress on the “new liberal and democratic constitution for Tibet” as one based on the principles of Buddha’s doctrine and on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The constitution was to serve as an interim for the “free country we all long to see” (231).<sup>61</sup> Interim governments usually pledge their allegiance to democracy because democracy is equated with the rule of law and is the norm (Shain, *Between States* 8). But the atavistic formulation of “Tibetan democracy” suggests democracy is not necessarily a movement from tradition to modernity, or from pre-history to modernity, but rather, it is a return to traditional roots. In other words, democracy is an ancient (Tibetan) Buddhist tradition even though the monastic institutions developed over time in Tibet were founded on deeply hierarchical systems that maintained economic and social inequality.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> The Dalai Lama does not offer qualifications of what democracy is but he does refer to it as “liberal democracy” (*rang dbang ldan pa’I dmangs gtso or rang dbang dmangs gtso*); “good” (*yag po*); he provides attributes such as a “high quality democracy” (*dmangs gtso ha cang gi spus dag po zhig*) (Brox 69). Brox discusses how he also speaks of democracy as a system, a procedure, a government and as the responsibility of the people. He has referred to it both as people’s rule (*dmangs gtso*) and majority rule (*mang gtso*).

<sup>62</sup> Gyalo Thondup writes that the Tibetan monasteries were very wealthy and their administrative households called labrang served as “informal banks” providing loans and business. “Thus, the greatest wealth in Tibet lay not, as in Europe, with the aristocracy, but with the labrang of the leading lamas in the country’s major monasteries. The wealth of the richest members of the Tibetan nobility

In his address at the 16th Annual General Body Meeting in Dharamsala on 6 May 1989, the Dalai Lama focused on a different aspect of democracy: the need for common benefits and rights in order to create a just society. He explained that although “democracy as a political term is a recent phenomenon,” the idea of democracy as related to the welfare of people was not new to Buddhism (*Speeches* 254). Therefore, he suggested that democracy was easily “manifested” in the minds of people with some understanding of Buddhist tenets (254).

In his message to the Parliament on 1 June 2006, he explained that the main objective of the democratization of the Tibetan polity was to create “competent” citizens who realized their “own aspirations” by exercising their “powers and responsibilities” (Kashyap 109). The assumption seems to be that the aspiration is one shared by all Tibetans: the resolution of the struggle of Tibet. By the time of this speech, however, the exile government no longer looked to Tibetan independence as a goal, and it had already adopted the Middle Way Policy. The Dalai Lama continued, “Even after the resolution of the Tibetan cause, our experience with democracy would be a great gift for Tibet” (109).

The democratization process has included legislative and social reforms over time that helped to limit the Dalai Lama’s power, first by making the institution of the Dalai Lama subservient to the Tibetan Charter, second, by giving up his power to appoint the Kalon, the cabinet ministers in 1990 and a few years later the Kalon Tripa (Prime Minister). And lastly, by announcing his devolution from his position of

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might be measured in the millions, but the wealth of the richest labrang and monasteries was counted in the billions” (6).

political leadership. The Dalai Lama has described the “one-man rule” as “anachronistic and undesirable” and suggested democracy was the most “representative system” of governance in the early years of exile (Kashyap, *Dalai* 127). He has stated that it would not be good if the Dalai Lama continued to hold the same power that began under the influence of the Mongol chief Gushri Khan. Even as recently as 2011, the Dalai Lama explained the greater benefits of his retirement from politics: first, he pointed out that removing an individual (such as himself) with “a unanimous mandate to lead spiritual affairs” from a political position would help the exile administration to become “progressive and robust;” secondly, it would raise Tibet’s “prestige in the world,” and supporters would “commend the Dalai Lama’s sincerity for the complete democratization of the Tibetan polity;” and lastly, it would “expose the falsehood and lies” of the Chinese government that the only significant aspect of the Tibet question was that of the “Dalai Lama’s personal rights” (133).

These efforts, however, have served to exemplify the Dalai Lama’s exceptional leadership and deepened Tibetans’ sense of gratitude and indebtedness towards him. Trine Brox’s description of democracy as a gift that is largely unopened points to this contradictory reflex, and in fact, she argues that the more Tibetans accept the gift, the more they seek the Dalai Lama as the “ultimate authority,” and so ironically his largesse in giving democracy to the Tibetan people works to cement his position as the “traditional authority” (55). For example, when the Dalai Lama made a provision in the Draft Constitution of 1961 that gave the National Assembly the right to remove the Dalai Lama from office with a two-thirds majority, Tibetans

responded with alarm. Tsomo Tsering, an exile official, explains that they met this initiative with “adamant refusal to accept anything that would erode” his power over the polity (153).

On the whole, the process of democratizing the Tibetan polity has taken into consideration the limitations and the conditions of exile and the affective needs of the exile population. From the very beginning the constitution was drafted so that when Tibet is free it will be available to be implemented if the majority of the people of Tibet seek it. Since the constitution was drafted for a future free country, some adaptations had to be made so that there was a way to experiment or practice democracy in exile. The Dalai Lama explained early on that the future head of the Tibetan government would have to be someone “popularly elected by the people,” and that a step in that direction would be seen as “true and complete democracy” (Kashyap 42). Thus, since 1969 he has been educating Tibetans on democracy, reminding them to take individual responsibility in addition to including steps for recusing himself from the role of head of the government. In that way, the Dalai Lama has been an extraordinary leader.

Since the 1990s the Dalai Lama seems to have deepened his emphasis on the non-violent and peaceful stance of the Tibetan movement and culture. Perhaps the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the Dalai Lama in 1989 bolstered hope that the international community was behind Tibet. The increased focus on the link between Tibet’s freedom and the Buddhist religion suggests that the struggle for political freedom is not inseparable from working for the freedom related to the Buddhist

dharma (Kashyap 42). While elements of this view were present from the very beginning, the choice of the Middle Way Policy adopts the Buddhist way of dealing with conflict over other approaches. While the Dalai Lama has expressed non-violence to be the best option for the Tibetan situation, he also suggests that the struggle's pacifism will contribute to "the development of mental peace and happiness on this earth" (57). In an address to the Tibetan Parliament on 28 July 1994, the Dalai Lama expressed his hope that interest in Tibetan religion and culture would draw people to the struggle for freedom in Tibet. He explained, "When there is sympathy and strong support for the Tibetan cause among the general public, the views of most of the people will also be sympathetic towards us" and will see the "righteousness" of the cause (58).

In his address to the Parliament on 1 February 1995 the Dalai Lama reminded Tibetans of the links between Tibetan culture and Buddhism. He talked about the need for compassion. He reminded Tibetans to be aware that "we the people of Tibet have been ingrained since the times of our distinct ancestors with such fine traits and uniquely precious characteristics" (74). Government officials and subjects are encouraged to nurture and practice such traits. He reminded the Parliament again on 19 March 1997 that the Tibetan issue is not "confined only to political freedom" and that Tibetans have to "preserve a noble Tibetan tradition which has been ingrained in us for thousands of years, and today many impartial people in the world find it praiseworthy" (99). These traditions are not just useful to Tibetans but to the world he

states. The Dalai Lama suggested that if Tibetans have these noble traits they will be admired (99).

### **Understanding Tibetan Democracy**

The history of democracy in the Tibetan exile polity is unlike the story of democracy elsewhere primarily because democracy is yoked to the Dalai Lama and not to any struggle initiated by the people. A majority of Tibetans view the Dalai Lama as the “architect” as well as the “true upholder” of democracy and democratic values (Brox 62). As Trine Brox explains, for some Tibetan individuals, democracy is an enchanted democracy, for some it signifies a transformation from an old inflexible feudal system to a more equal society, and for others it is a model guided by Buddhist principles. On the whole, Tibetans understand democracy as the Dalai Lama’s wish for the Tibetan people to chart their “own political and social destiny” and not rely on “one individual” (Tsomo 152). Thus, democracy’s value is to ensure Tibet’s survival as an “equal of the modern international community” to impact democratization inside Tibet, and to “effectively counter Chinese propaganda” (152).

Democracy is often understood as a value for obtaining something else. This makes the practice of democracy unstable and always subordinate to the desired end. Even simple calls to Tibetans to take responsibility towards the common cause and to alter their political or social future remind them that in doing so they will be “implementing the vision of our leader” (Tsomo 166). A fundamental assumption underlying this version of democracy is that it will democratically allow Tibetans to fulfill the wishes of the Dalai Lama. In such an environment, the ‘mishandling of



democracy,' a fitting phrase used by Brox, is not what it suggests. It refers to an individual who disobeys the exile administration or the assumed, expressed, or interpreted wishes of the Dalai Lama, and this stymies the very basic practice of democracy (as well as the Dalai Lama's expressed hope). This paradox exists because Tibetans believe that their first responsibility is to obey the Dalai Lama's vision.

Brox shows how the democratization process is a disorderly one whose scale, temporality, and descriptions are variable, and made more complex because the "enchanted gift" is received as "imbued with the divinity of the donor" (ix). She points out that the Dalai Lama's speeches on democracy come with authority and legitimacy and shape what democracy becomes. This does not mean Tibetans faithfully represent what the Dalai Lama says, but, Brox explains, that they interpret his views of democracy as they prefer. Brox proposes that Tibetans are striving towards a Tibetan form of democracy that is "unique, that is valuable, and that is suitable for Buddhists and for exiles" (34).

Using the metaphor of a stage rehearsal, Fiona McConnell studies democracy as an "active democracy-in-waiting" for the Tibetan "stateness" that is to come thereby pointing to the ways in which "unconventional polities" behave in international politics (*Rehearsing the State* 4). Her book seeks to answer two core questions: how is the exile government able to "enact state-like functions" without territory and legal recognition and why does it emulate the political organization of a state? McConnell's study reveals the power of the idea and the ideal of the power of the state for the exiled population, as well as the ways in which peripheral peoples

challenge the “sealed boundaries” of the nation-state system (17). She writes that the uniqueness of Tibetan democracy is that it is “instituted from the top down by the Dalai Lama” who is the “playwright” in the rehearsal (97).

Ann Frechette suggests that democracy might be valued by Tibetans in part because of its importance to international relief organizations helping Tibetans. She studies the relation between Tibetans and international aid agencies in Nepal and suggests that this relationship involves monetary transactions but also the exchange of values and norms. For example, the Swiss governmental organizations seek to promote values that will make Tibetans competitive in the global market which includes cleanliness and efficiency, while US intergovernmental organizations value democracy (9). Frechette sees a fundamental conflict between the normative frameworks of the Tibetan government as it was in Tibet and the normative framework of democracy. She suggests that the U.S. intergovernmental organizations helped in the development of Tibetan democracy, such as the new Charter ratified in 1990 (75). She concludes, however, that the roles were mostly symbolic and that the executive power rested with the Dalai Lama and the cabinet he had chosen.

Thomas Kauffman suggests that in order to arrive at “real democracy” Tibetan refugees will need to make a “formal end of the supreme power of the Dalai Lama” as well as make “a more profound break with the past that the refugees are trying to save” (168). He concludes that “there is an ontological incompatibility between Tibetan culture and democracy” (169). Tibetans, he points out, are hesitant to make the “slightest diminution in the Dalai Lama’s power” (168). Kauffmann’s observation of

the Tibetan sphere is that democracy has brought contradictions to the community because of the difficulty in stating “one’s opposition to the Dalai Lama” (169). The Dalai Lama’s decision to give up his political power in 2011 recognizes this conflict. Still, it is evident from the continued references to the “gift of democracy” within Tibetan society that it will be a new generation of Tibetans with fewer religious obligations to the Dalai Lama who will be able to break ties with the principle of an enlightened government under an enlightened leader.

Aspects of the Dalai Lama’s ideas on nation, state, and society, in particular, the spiritual interdependence, are interpreted in greater depth in the speeches and writings made between 1997 and 1999 by Samdhong Rinpoche, scholar and religious leader who served as a member of the drafting committee of the Charter for Tibetans in-Exile and the future Constitution of Tibet. He also held the preeminent position of Prime Minister (Kalon Tripa), now known as Sikyong of the exile administration for two terms from 2001 to 2011. In addition, he was the founder of the *Satya Graha* movement, an undertaking that seems to be suspended for the moment.

### **Freedom As a Spiritual Practice**

Samdhong Rinpoche describes the goal for Tibetan freedom from Chinese occupation as a “spiritual practice” whose basic foundation, motivation, and philosophical ideology are based on Buddha’s teachings. The Tibetan movement, according to him, is founded on three principles: truth, non-violence, and democracy. The movement’s “motivating force” is compassion and the philosophical pulse is that of inter-dependence (*Selected Writings* 326). By the latter he means that Tibetans are

responsible for the loss of their nation, and therefore freedom can only be achieved under the right conditions and causes, also dependent on Tibetans. Samdhong Rinpoche explains that those with power inside Tibet had looked to their self-interest and it was moral failure, and not the might of a foreign power, that led to the loss of Tibetan independence.<sup>63</sup> Ordinary Tibetans and members of the religious order had “failed to follow their moral codes, and both in public and private they were mostly occupied with sales, profits, usury, economic affairs, and other non-spiritual matters” (298). He suggests that Tibetan independence depends on Tibetans embracing the right moral views and taking action. This interdependence presupposes the Tibetan issue as one that is not limited to politics. The Tibetan struggle is presented as a human problem: a struggle between “truth and falsehood, between justice and injustice, between morality and immorality, between right and wrong” (213).

As such, he proposes that Tibet’s freedom is more than an end in itself. It is a means to something greater. He proposes that the Tibetan struggle is not politically motivated, nor is it based on any nation-state theory. It is rather unique.

The people born in the spiritual land of Tibet have a universal responsibility to the whole world, and the fulfilment of that responsibility is deemed a duty which we have inherited simply by the fact of our birth. If we do not live upto this duty, or if we are unable to act in a way that does justice to our heritage, then we are not worthy of being Tibetans (325).

For Samdhong Rinpoche the goal is to create a state that will be a demilitarized zone of peace, a center for environmental protection, and a nation

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<sup>63</sup> See Partha Chatterjee’s analysis of Gandhi’s politics (*Nation* 85-125).

committed to Buddhist economic sense. Free Tibet, in other words, will help free the world from its corrosive ills. It will be a model system based on love and compassion that will help “maintain peace and goodwill throughout the world” (326). Tibet’s uniqueness is seen to come from its deep spirituality and its democratic spirit. Thus, Tibet’s offering to the world is the renunciation of the self and nation in hope of a radical self and Tibet that exists for the world. This, however, is a Tibet that never was. Perhaps the point is that exile presents an opportunity to innovate and aspire to a different form of nation.

Samdhong Rinpoche’s point seems to be that Tibet has “unique inner sciences and cultural traditions preserved and promoted for thousands of years” (325) and that it is best equipped to construct a new organization of society. Given a chance, this new Tibet, a welfare state, guided by the principle of compassion that exists on paper within the Tibetan polity in exile, can be a reality. This new Tibet will replace capitalist self-centeredness with a universal experiment of the “truth of selflessness and theory of dependent origination” (225).

Samdhong Rinpoche uses the poverty of present human life as an argument for Tibetan exceptionalism and as the basis for a revolutionary future Tibet. And it is from the teachings of the Buddha that Samdhong Rinpoche explains the exceptional character of the Tibetan movement and its ability to contribute to the culture of peace in the world and to understanding the revolutionary foundations of democracy, freedom, and equality that differ from existing conceptions of these terms. Samdhong Rinpoche proposes that these are familiar concepts to Tibetans. He insists that social

reform in the Tibetan society was not prompted by the Chinese occupation nor was it adopted from external influences. Rather, it came from the fourteenth Dalai Lama who had an “unmistakable will to democratize Tibet” from a young age and it was only in exile that “he got the freedom and a free hand to implement his vision” (352).

It is unclear if Samdhong Rinpoche is only speaking with the Chinese leadership in mind here but his critique could apply to the Tibetan leadership largely comprised of aristocrats and the Gelug ecclesiastic heads who were hostile to modern change. For Samdhong Rinpoche the uniqueness of Tibetan democracy is that its most ardent advocate is the ruler of the State and that it is one modeled on the equality of all beings. Equality in this model of democracy is accomplished through the everyday practice of cooperation and it is based on understanding the “potential of unlimited development” of every individual (352). He differentiates the practice of cooperation from that of competition, the latter he points out leads to struggle and inequality in politics and in the economy (352).

Thus, Tibetan democracy is an attempt to follow the radical democracy of the old Buddhist tradition: one in which “everyone lives for the other” (353). The defining feature that differentiates Tibetan democracy from other existing democracies is its goal of love and compassion. This “genuine democracy,” one that is free from competition and that advocates genuine rule from the people comes from the Buddha, whose social philosophy and theory of state, according to Samdhong Rinpoche, is “larger” and more “purposeful” than those applied by “modern socialists” (352-353; 275).

## Unenlightened Citizenry, Enlightened Leaders

Samdhong Rinpoche's views about democracy and society are shaped by his experience and education as a Buddhist monk and scholar, and his aspiration is for a moral community in a self-regulating society. His assertion that there is no declaration of human duties, only human rights, misses the point that it was popular attendance to duty and sacrifice made in the interest of the greater good that led to devastating human injustice and violence, thereby necessitating attention to the rights of every human being (regardless of whether these rights ultimately address the needs of the dispossessed and stateless). In addition, the democracy Samdhong Rinpoche describes as "true" is one where there is no "division between the ruler and the ruled" because the will of the ruler is the same as that of the people (Roebert 15). Such a rule of people can of course only be possible when each individual "achieves a culture of self-rule and self-sufficiency" (466). The disadvantage of this backward looking utopic model, however, is that it might not be understood or even desired by lay and ordinary Tibetans. Indeed, Samdhong Rinpoche suggests that "genuine" Tibetan democracy is yet to be achieved precisely because it lacks one of the three requirements of a perfect democracy: an enlightened citizenry who can recognize the right vision of the leader Dalai Lama and the right vision of the ideology of democracy as one laid out by the Buddha (353).<sup>64</sup> The democratization process

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<sup>64</sup> See Samdhong Rinpoche's *Selected Writings and Speeches*. He explains that ideal democracy has three components: enlightened leader; right philosophical ideology, and lastly, enlightened people. He says Tibetans have the first two, but not the third. He says both the "philosophical king" and "common will" is embodied in the person of the Dalai Lama and in the philosophy (right view). He says the people "need to mature to usher in the ideal democracy" (353)

appears to have a confused teleology at the center of the question of the Tibetan nation.

In an interview, Samdhong Rinpoche expressed his impatience that Tibetans are not “getting democracy” (Roebert 128). His exasperation reveals that while there may be no division between the ruler and the ruled, the ruler remains in his distinct form as the ruler. It is not clear how the ruled fits in other than as one who is led or trained through education to follow the moral truths that are only certified by the Buddha’s teachings.<sup>65</sup> Tibetan democracy is in this vision not so much about the present moment or even about the Tibetan struggle, but has more to do with the future and with Buddhism’s ability to correct the ills of the world.<sup>66</sup>

Samdhong Rinpoche’s critique of existing society, or what he calls “modern civilization” in his speeches in the mid-1990s shares concerns expressed by contemporary political theorists of neoliberalism’s monetization of all aspects of life. Samdhong Rinpoche is however critiquing the structure of all politics and government where the self-interest of individuals and parties predominate. He

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<sup>65</sup> This differs from the unique achievement of “Gandhism” in which the peasantry was crucial to revolution in India. Partha Chatterjee states that it was Gandhi’s ideology that opened “up the historical possibility for its appropriation into the evolving political structures of the Indian state” (*Nationalist Thought* 100).

<sup>66</sup> Samdhong Rinpoche’s opinion on modernity and tradition—in relation to society versus individual, duty versus rights, mind versus body—is outlined in a speech on “Modernity and Tradition” given on 10 October 2014. He proposes that the “fundamental difference” between tradition and modernity comes down to the prioritization of duty and rights. He explains that society was more important than the individual in “tradition,” and that the individual was taught to make sacrifices for the interest of the society. In contrast, it is the individual who is more precious than society in “modernity” and thus, the society is “expected to suffer, if necessary, to protect the rights of individual” (web). He sees a parallel behavior of the individual interest over the interests of the collective in the behavior of nations. There is no declaration of Human Duties, Samdhong Rinpoche argues, only rights. The preservation of society depends on not protection of rights but the giving up of rights for the larger interest. Sacrifice or renunciation is a crucial part of the future democratic Tibetan society.



critiques contemporary social and political systems particularly for the construction of the representation of people as a “one-way traffic” where the ideas and rights of the minority are eclipsed by the majority (Roebert 28). He reads the crisis as being in “the human mind” and explains that competitive modern society focuses on the wellbeing of the self and places its highest value on “unceasing accumulation of wealth” (52).

Thus, Samdhong Rinpoche’s critique is also directed at the exploitative appetite and spirit of progress in both capitalist and socialist economies. The more ideal condition proposed by the Buddha is one where politics is secondary to the wellbeing of others. For example, the future Tibet will adopt a “Middle Path Economy,” a system that is free from both Western capitalist and socialist systems. It will be an economy built on understanding impermanence and the “valuelessness” of wealth (*Tibet: A Future* web). It distinguishes need from want and strives for a self-sufficient economy that will encourage trade through the barter system. Likewise, the goal of education will be to guide individuals towards wisdom and compassion, and the model of democracy will adhere to Buddhist principles of equality.<sup>67</sup>

The purpose of society, Samdhong Rinpoche explains, is to achieve the “awakening of human intelligence (“Democracy” web).” This awakening creates a “level of rationality which leads to unanimity – a state of choicelessness” (web). He explains that the partyless Tibetan Parliament in exile is a system that encourages each individual to think for himself. He finds that it is not amenable to “group ideologies” or of majority or minority. He suggests that domination of the “majority

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<sup>67</sup> Samdhong Rinpoche outlines that the State will pay for education but will not dictate the contents of education (*Selected Writings* 340).

over minority is also a kind of imposition of views against the will of the minority, which is not an ideal situation in a democracy” (web). Thus, decentralization of the decision-making processes makes individuals responsible and helps them to think broadly but to act locally. The goal is not politically motivated nor is it based on some nation-state theory according to him. It is, rather, to fulfill a moral responsibility to the world to “protect, maintain and disseminate” its unique traditions of “moral behavior and inner sciences,” such as by adhering to Gandhi’s practice of non-violence or *Satyagraha* (*Selected Writings* 300-304).<sup>68</sup>

What makes the Tibetan movement and its democracy so interesting is that it tries to integrate various contradictions: a nationalism that is simultaneously fighting for national independence and surrendering to the truth of a higher freedom; a nationalism that is based on a critique of the self-centeredness of the nation-state structure; and a democratic movement that has at its core the principles of renunciation and duty to Buddhist truths. The Tibetan nation is asked to fight not for a country but for a moral system and truth that is based on the words of the Buddha. This is the philosophy behind the Middle Way policy, the exile government’s political goal that seeks genuine autonomy and not independence.

Ultimately, Samdhong Rinpoche’s critique of modern democratic societies and Tibet’s recent loss are in essence about people and not institutions of power. In other words, he expresses a disappointment in the masses and the low potential of the masses to rise up to the form of democracy drawn for them by a peerless leader.

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<sup>68</sup> The call seems interestingly, closer to the spiritual fight that Rabindranath Tagore believed was India’s destiny, that is to say, a fight for individuals.

Tibetan democracy's remedy—"selflessness and theory of interdependent origination"—shifts the interest from the self to that of all sentient beings helping individuals to lead a "rational and reasonable life" based on love and compassion for all" (*Selected Writings* 225).<sup>69</sup> Samdhong Rinpoche's focus on "right view" and "false views" however implies a fixed and universal truth or code that depends on an enlightened leader and a homogenous culture. The focus on moral purity delinks subjects from organized political power and from history and suggests a lesser role for inclusion and participation. It is moral life, not political life, that seems to be the focus of this interpretation of Tibetan democracy.

This is not the same as Wendy Brown's definition of democracy where the "whole of the people rule the polity and hence themselves" (178). For Brown, at the very least, democracy "requires that the people authorize their own laws and major political decisions, whether directly or through elected representatives, and also that they share modestly in other, nonlegal powers governing their lives. Anything less means the people do not rule" (178).<sup>70</sup> It is the aspiration that "people, and not something else, order and regulate their common life through ruling themselves together" (202). This means that no rule by part of the people, or any external principle such as power, violence, god(s), or truth ought to determine their shared

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<sup>69</sup> Samdhong Rinpoche determines that the crisis is located in the human mind: it is an inner crisis. For him the inner mind is dominated by unlimited greed and covetousness, an effect of the exploitative tendency of "the accumulative and consumer culture" and by scientific knowledge (*Selected Writings* 222). He suggests that this has even encroached into religious life. The crisis of the time is also "irreligiosity" or the attachment to more than one religion (222).

<sup>70</sup> Wendy Brown determines the essential conditions of a democratic life to be the following: limited gap between concentrated wealth and poverty; consideration of the public good as an aspect of citizenship; and citizens mindful of power, history, justice and representation.

existence. The term “democracy” is nothing but the principle that “the demos rules” and that all may have a political voice.<sup>71</sup> She points out that there is no consistent account of “why people ought to rule, only the negative one that we should not be ruled by others” (203).

The naming of democracy as a “gift” implies to some degree the idea that the leader has no will to dominate and therefore this makes the idea of an equal society more available. But because of the complex relationship between democracy, freedom, and unity this trajectory becomes somewhat unclear. The equation is something like this: democracy and freedom are interchangeable because democracy is necessary for freedom. However, unity is paramount for freedom. Unity equals agreement. Thus, unity comes before democracy: democracy exists to promote unity.<sup>72</sup> Tibetans fear disunity will harm the freedom struggle.

This is most evident in the 1960s-70s when both unity and democracy were being established. The following chapters attempt to demonstrate how Tibetans fear, and respond to, what Trine Brox identifies as factionalism from two sources, communalism and diverse voices (266).

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<sup>71</sup>Wendy Brown explains that so much is attributed to democracy: equality, liberty, rights, tolerance, equal opportunity but she reminds us that these do not belong exclusively to democracy defined as “rule of the people.” These can be claimed by nondemocratic regimes too. (204).

<sup>72</sup> Samdhong Rinpoche determines that the crisis is located in the human mind: it is an inner crisis. For him the inner mind is dominated by unlimited greed and covetousness, an effect of the exploitative tendency of “the accumulative and consumer culture” and by scientific knowledge. He suggests that this has even encroached into religious life. The crisis of the time is also “irreligiosity” or the attachment to more than one religion (*Selected Writings* 222)

## Chapter 2

### Unity: The Establishment of the ‘Right’ Vision

They [Tibetan people] believed the Dalai Lama represented Tibet and the Tibetan way of life, something dearer to them than anything else. They were convinced that if my body perished at the hands of the Chinese, the life of Tibet would also come to an end. (Dalai Lama, *My Land & My People* 195)

In the early months of 1965, the Nechung Choegyal, one of the two state-oracles of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, indicated the possibility of the Dalai Lama’s death. The oracle’s prophecy immediately ignited a panic within the community.<sup>73</sup> When the leaders of the Tibetan polity consulted him on what they could do to protect the Dalai Lama, the oracle instructed Tibetans to offer long-life prayers and ceremonies. He also advised Tibetans to pledge to build unity within the community. The instructions was supported by the *Cholsum Chikdrel Tsokpa* (Cholsum United Party), also known as the Tibetan United Association (TUA), who organized a meeting of Tibetan officials and representatives working in the recently established refugee settlements in India for a discussion on the matter in Dharamsala, India.<sup>74</sup> The TUA, which was the first Tibetan political party formed post 1959 in exile, had fortuitously pushed for unity a year earlier in its manifesto called *Five Aims of the Cholsum United Party (Migyul Gna)*.

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<sup>73</sup> There were hundreds of oracles in Tibet but the most prominent oracle in practice is the Nechung Oracle, who is the human medium for Dorje Drakden, the protector divinity of the Dalai Lama and whose predictions are taken as truth. It has been the tradition of the Tibetan government and the Dalai Lama for hundreds of years to consult with the oracle during the New Year festival. The oracle is also consulted on other occasions (Dalai Lama, *Freedom* 212).

<sup>74</sup> The *Seven Resolutions and Additional documents* states 12 March 1965, the conflict in dates could be due to the use of both Tibetan lunar calendar and Gregorian calendar in the accounts.

The object of the meeting held on 11 February 1965, was to discuss how the community would follow the oracle's suggestions regarding the need to abide by the wishes of the Dalai Lama, organize long-life prayers for the latter, and secure unity among all Tibetans. The goal was to put the idea of unity into practice within the community in addition to formulating it in conceptual terms. During the meeting, participants also identified individuals responsible for putting the Dalai Lama's life in danger and they discussed measures to prevent such individuals from succeeding in their efforts. Those identified as impediments or opponents to unity fell into three main categories: those who held religious and regional allegiances above national goals; who spoke or taught histories that contradicted the exile government's narrative; and who opposed the new policies and plans of the exile government. These categories can be read as efforts to codify the primary loyalty of Tibetans, to decide whether it was possible for Tibetan individuals to be loyal to their regional or religious communities and still adhere to a broader Tibet; to set the boundaries of belonging; and to establish guiding rules of political action, obligation, and legitimacy. These discussions culminated in a document published by the TUA on 12 March 1965 called *Seven Resolutions and Supporting Documents (Doeshoe don tsen dun dhang dhe gyab non chey shugso)*.

It is possible today, given the vantage point of time and distance from the precarity of the early years of exile life to trace the TUA's ideological development of unity as part of the necessary process of building an independence movement in exile, and as reflective of the desire of ordinary Tibetan refugees to gain membership into a

reformed Tibetan nation to come. The documents in question, however, were produced by the aspiring ruling elite in exile and were approved by the Dalai Lama and the exile government.<sup>75</sup> As such, they were accepted as being official and as representative of the dominant consensus. This chapter attempts to trace and analyze the ideological formations by the TUA, in particular the concept of unity that was deemed necessary to the exile government's national project of independence and to gaining the loyalty of Tibetan nationals. Diminished in significance today, the Tibetan United Association (TUA), I argue, led the movement to prioritize Tibetan unity and helped reshape the self-consciousness of Tibetans as new refugee-citizens in exile.

Prasenjit Duara reminds us in the *Global and Regional in China's Nation-Formation* that the process of national integration is rarely peaceful. He explains that the goal of integration in the new nations of Asia three or four decades after World War II was to create a "disciplined body of citizens out of peasants, ethnic and religious minorities and other marginals, capable of sacrificing their lifeworlds" (61-62). He argues that historical education became the main means to "identity formation," in that it taught individuals to love the new national self and to hate the enemy (62). I analyze the documents produced by the TUA, neglected and forgotten today, to suggest these were seminal to preparing a disciplined body of the newly displaced Tibetans from the three regions of Tibet with myriad traditions of religious faith and regional loyalties to be beholden only to one policy— that of the democratic

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<sup>75</sup> The TUA confirms in *Truthful History of the Tibetan United Association* that the Dalai Lama read the documents and gave his approval

politico-religious system furnished by the Dalai Lama. And it is in this context that the particularly valenced concepts of “unity” and “democracy” gained as their preeminent values the fulfillment of the wishes of the Dalai Lama, protest against the Chinese colonization of Tibet, securing the national goal of Tibetan independence, and marking a crossing to a particular kind of modernity. These ideas, in particular, unity, became the dominant framework for thinking about the boundaries of belonging, political obligation, and the values of the Tibetan people. As such, these documents are central to the story of Tibetan nationalism and identity in exile, or to a version thereof. The study of these texts is also helpful in showing relations between what Shain describes elsewhere as “governments and oppositions” in general, as well as in illuminating questions of loyalty and legitimacy that continue to bewilder nation-states around the globe (*Frontiers* 17).

### **The Dalai Lama as The Symbol of the Tibetan Nation**

One of the main factors behind the success of Tibetans as a refugee community is their “cohesion” as an ethnic group and maintenance of a “united profile” internationally (French 192). The united profile of Tibetans is often celebrated as a hallmark of Tibetan culture, and its success is attributed to the Dalai Lama.<sup>76</sup> Lodi Gyari, long-time diplomat and politician, states in an article, “Status and position of the Tibetan Youth Congress,” that the sense of unity that exists today among the Tibetan people is “solely because of the farsighted guidance and

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<sup>76</sup> Gyalo Thondups describes this unity as follows: “If there are differences about how to solve our problems, there is unity that our problems are Tibetan problems” (298). Tibetans are also seen as being united in the desire to preserve Tibetan culture, language, and religion and in recognizing the Dalai Lama as the “revered spiritual leader” (298).



leadership” of His Holiness the great 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama (web).<sup>77</sup> This achievement alone makes His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama the “most benevolent to the Tibetan people among the successive Dalai Lamas” (web). Encomiums of this nature are common in Tibetan society. It is true that the 14th Dalai Lama continues to be the source of hope, guidance, and the symbol for a future Tibet: he has taught both the exile officials and the Tibetan community the merits and the methods to strive towards Buddhist values and to understand modern democracy.<sup>78</sup> However, downplaying or ignoring the vital stimulus provided by the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the role of elite and ordinary Tibetans, such as the events of the two oaths (discussed in Chapter 1) in the creation of the new political dispensation limits the chance to critique or understand it. Such a view also does not take into account the formation of unity as a new tradition of the Tibetan national self negotiating its role both as a modern refugee-citizen and as a religious disciple.

The 1960s was a foundational decade for the formation of a Tibetan nation in exile. This is when the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, which was established in 1959, undertook the concurrent initiatives of rehabilitating the dispossessed Tibetans into temporary settlements, providing work for the able-bodied, and educating the children. One of the first job opportunities created by the Government of India was in road construction; the first group of 3,394 Tibetans left to work in Sikkim in September

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<sup>77</sup> The Dalai Lama has admitted that he is persistent in his task because of the great faith Tibetans have in him. “I have to think of myself as a binding force among my people” he states in a speech to members of the Parliament on 15 November 1969 (*Speeches* 64).

<sup>78</sup> The Dalai Lama’s addresses to exile officials and Tibetan public since 1960 are a combination of educating them on democracy, exhorting them to work hard towards a common goal, and reminding them of the values of Buddhism to achieve both political and broader goals. Listening to his speeches provides a glimpse into Dalai Lama’s own growth and commitment to Tibetans since 1959.

1959 (Phuntso 135).<sup>79</sup> In 1964, about 18,000 to 21,000 Tibetans were working in building roads in cooler places like Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Kalimpong, Darjeeling, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Mussoorie, and Dehra Dun in India.<sup>80</sup>

The living conditions for the road construction workers were extremely difficult. The Dalai Lama describes in his autobiography how he felt after a visit to one of the sites, “I was heartbroken when I saw [the road construction workers]...The air was fetid and thick with mosquitoes” (*Freedom* 158). He further elaborates that the work was dangerous and many Tibetans were injured from working with dynamite (158). The make shift road camps were parlous especially for refugee children, many of whom died from malnourishment. At the Dalai Lama’s behest, the Indian Government organized an exclusive “transit camp” for children (158). As many as 5,000 children were taken to live in these camps, separating them from their parents (Kharat 288). It was these difficult conditions of Tibetan refugees that compelled the Dalai Lama to request the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to help rehabilitate Tibetans into more stable settlements in India.

The first agricultural settlement was established in Bylakuppe in the southern state of Karnataka on 3,000 acres leased to the Tibetans by the state of Karnataka in 1961 (*Tibetans In Exile* 4). A total of 3,217 Tibetans, many of them from the road

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<sup>79</sup> The Indian government sought “to provide a means for economic independence to the refugees” (Kharat 288).

<sup>80</sup> In a report to The World Council of Churches, Geneva, G. Brewster (also known as Pat Brewsters) who was the then Director of the Tibetan Refugee Programme of the National Christian Council of India, writes, there were still about 20,000 Tibetans working on the roads and “living in temporary roadside shelters which are often tents” (“Progress” 21 Feb.).

construction sites in Himachal Pradesh, were resettled in Bylakuppe by the end of 1965 (Phuntso 137).<sup>81</sup>

The exile Tibetan government worked in collaboration with the Government of India and international aid agencies to provide educational facilities to young Tibetans. The Central Tibetan School Administration was established under the Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Indian government in 1960, and the first Tibetan school was established in Mussoorie, then Uttar Pradesh, on 3 March 1960, with fifty students and four Tibetan teachers (Rigzin 266). The Pestalozzi Children's Village in Trogen, Switzerland, was the first international organization to resettle Tibetan children in Switzerland in October 1960. Three years later, the Pestalozzi International Children's Village in Sussex admitted twenty-two Tibetan children, following which another batch of twenty-eight children was sent to England for education. About 200 Tibetan children were adopted by Swiss families. By the early 1970s there were as many as 600 Tibetan children studying or living in the West (Tibet Documentation, 105). Thus, in just five years since the advent of exile, with the help of the Indian government and international aid agencies, Tibetan refugees had acquired land that they had begun clearing for the settlement camps, they had procured access to medical care, and had established schooling opportunity for

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<sup>81</sup> Rajesh Kharat writes in his essay "Gainers of a Stalemate" that 3,000 refugees were settled in Bylakuppe on more than 3,000 acres of land leased for 99 years by Nijalingappa, the then Chief Minister of Mysore in December 1960 (five years difference from Phuntso). In 1963, Switzerland resettled 1,000 Tibetan refugees. The Bylakuppe settlement was to contain six colonies, each with 100 families. The first group of 666 Tibetans came from Simla, Kulu, Chamba and Dalhousie (*Tibetans In* 6). A special officer designated as a Divisional Commissioner was sent to administer the camp along with secretaries, engineers and a small police force. The Dalai Lama sent two representatives to serve as a liaison between the Tibetans and the Indian officials. The first Tibetan representatives were Thubten Nyima and Phala Wangchuk Dorji (5).

children.

The 1960s was also the time that the Dalai Lama began to draft a Constitution for a future Tibet based “on the principles of justice, equality and democracy as laid down by the Buddha” (DIIR, *Tibet* 22). This strategic framing or description of the Constitution allowed for flexible interpretations. On the one hand, the features associated with modern nation-states such as egalitarianism, democracy, freedom, and rights could be highlighted to present the modernity of the Tibetan Constitution so that it could gain recognition from entities such as the United Nations and other established powerful nation-states (as well as educated Tibetans in favor of reform). On the other hand, tracing the genealogy of these features to traditional Buddhist precepts satisfied Tibetans who held Buddhism as a dominant and long-standing source of influence in Tibetan identity.

Prior to the Chinese invasion, like other pre-modern states, the Lhasa-based traditional government under the Dalai Lama (also known as Ganden Phodrang) serving U-Tsang did not have to justify its rule to Tibetans. The Dalai Lama served the dual positions as head of the Lhasa government and the spiritual leader as the incarnation of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (which held meaning for all Buddhists on the Tibetan plateau).<sup>82</sup> Despite the status of the self-evident sovereignty of the Dalai Lama in Tibetan society, the new context and condition of exile raised unfamiliar concerns to the ruler and the ruled alike, and necessitated a more critical analysis of the recent past. One of the reasons given for China’s easy invasion of

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<sup>82</sup> This was a majority Gelugpa institution.

Tibet was “the fact [that] Tibet did not have a strong central government” (41). This was particularly relevant for the Tibetan regions of Kham and Amdo where their nomadic populations had been in “continuous movement” from the seventh century till about the eighteenth century (Blondeau, “How does” 124).<sup>83</sup> Much of these regions were not under the jurisdiction of the Dalai Lama’s government at the time of Chinese invasion in 1950; and this was one of the crucial and contested questions faced by the exile government which claimed to represent all Tibetan regions of Amdo, Kham, and U-Tsang.

Yossi Shain describes the authority to command as the “essence of politics in the nation-state” and the multiple means sought to “engender and preserve loyalty among potential supporters” (*Frontiers* 19). He defines “loyalty” as any “manifestation of support for any claim to power” in the national community, and “loyalty building” as “the struggle over political power” (18). Loyalty is better understood when the many factors that “transcend the boundaries of political domination” are taken into account. To identify supporters or nonsupporters among the “potentially loyal,” Shain explains that “one has to develop a criterion for interpreting behavior as loyal, antiloyal or nonloyal” (19). The Dalai Lama had command over Tibetans’ loyalty, not from the monopoly of the use or access to violence, but from his traditional role as king of a government and spiritual leader of a people whose foremost function was viewed as preserving, propagating, and

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<sup>83</sup> More than half of the 5.7 million Tibetans today live in the eastern Tibetan plateau in western Sichuan, northern Yunnan, southern and western Qinghai and southern Gansu, areas known to Tibetans as Kham and Amdo (Barnett, *Struggle* 7).

protecting Buddhism. Tibetans from Central Tibet didn't need much convincing that loyalty to the Dalai Lama was loyalty to Tibet or that he was the most authentic representative of national interest. But a new political climate did occasion reforms that had to be represented as being in the interest of a better future and in offering a diverse population, that included people from Amdo and Kham, equal membership into the Tibetan polity. At the heart of the agenda for unity, as I see it, sits a lack of confidence in weaving in the histories of Amdo and Kham, and even perhaps in securing political loyalty from all the people in these regions. How were the people from Eastern Tibet, who had previously lived in the hinterlands of the Tibetan imagination as brigands, uncouth, and backward, suddenly woven into the narrative of a great past as equal citizens?

The Chinese reforms and impositions on Kham and Amdo in the early 1950s had galvanized a grassroots armed movement that went against the personal efforts of the peaceful solution that the Dalai Lama's government had been working towards in Lhasa. Reflecting on that period, the Dalai Lama has stated that he felt he was "losing control of [his] people. In the east they were driven into barbarism" (Dalai Lama, *My Land* 137).<sup>84</sup> The Dalai Lama's commitment to a non-violent struggle did not undermine his political authority. On the contrary, (as discussed in Chapter 1) the

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<sup>84</sup> The Dalai Lama reckoned that his dual position— "by which Tibet had been happily ruled for centuries" —was in jeopardy and he had found himself in a position (as the Chinese had hoped) where either his religious or his political authority was going to be undermined. Being the pontiff of Tibetan religion, he opposed violence as a religious and a secular leader and he decided it was more important that Tibetans do "not lose faith in [him] as a religious leader" (*My Land* 138). It must be kept in mind that this decision was also a practical one: while his spiritual influence extended to the regions of Kham and Amdo, he had little political influence over the regions, in particular those with predominantly non-Gelug populations and chiefs.

Chinese invasion of Tibet confirmed his importance and he increasingly became a pan-Tibetan symbol, upholding the core Tibetan values and aspirations. Dawa Norbu explains that the Buddhist culture in Tibet has shaped Tibetan identity, history, and society for 1,000 years and that the “Tibetan sense of legitimacy or rule” is bound to this culture (*China’s Tibet* 349-50). He points out that in 1950 although Tibetans did not have a “plebiscite” or means to exercise self-determination, nor the vocabulary to describe Han rule as “Han hegemony, neocolonialism or neo-imperialism,” they realized they were under non-Tibetan rule (350). This realization led to an awakening of the political self of the Tibetans, and made them see the Dalai Lama as “the rallying point for ethnic-nationalistic mobilization and opposition” (350).

This is illustrated in the response of the Lhasa Government to the PLA’s “liberation” of Tibet in 1950. Norbu points out that the Tibetan leaders’ first concerns were not for “the territorial integrity of Tibet or the natural resources of the country” but for the “sacred person of the Dalai Lama, who symbolized Tibetan culture” (350). Similarly, he refers to the uprising on 10 March 1959 in Lhasa to protect the Dalai Lama, as an example of the symbolic presence of religion and religious-dominated culture in the Tibetan “political cosmos” (350). Norbu believes that Tibetans viewed the Dalai Lama as the “symbol of their religion, culture and sovereignty” and that this sense of cultural sovereignty helped produce a psychological basis to oppose the Han hegemony (350). This shift is also evident in the armed movement that began in Kham.

In his examination of the events on 10 March 1959, historian Tsering Shakya writes that one of the reasons that led people to rise that day was that 1959 was an “obstructive year” (*skag*) for the Dalai Lama and it was held that not only the Dalai Lama but the entire Tibetan nation was to suffer (*Dragon* 191). Hence, when Tibetans heard rumors that the Chinese meant to kidnap the Dalai Lama they turned up outside the Dalai Lama’s summer palace, Norbulingka, to express their anger against the Chinese and also their “resentment against the Tibetan ruling elite” whom they determined had betrayed the Dalai Lama (as discussed in Chapter 1). It also became evident that the only person who had any influence over the Tibetan people was the Dalai Lama. The relationship of Tibetans with the Dalai Lama intensified in exile, partly because he was the only Tibetan figure with the power and recognition to be representative of the Tibetan people and because he established the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, confirming, “wherever I am, accompanied by my government, the Tibetan people recognize us as the government of Tibet” (Thondup 196).

The relationship established between the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people is significant because it not only symbolizes a pan-Tibetan nationalism, but also the unification of the three regions of Tibet under one authority without bloodshed and within the travails of life in exile. This is one of the most significant political achievements in Tibetan history since the breakdown of the Tibetan Empire. Yet, the political unification of formerly fragmented Tibetan regions is rarely celebrated in exile. This is likely because Tibetan national narrative in the early years of exile identified closely with the need of the moment which were to, one, refute the national



narrative of the new-nation state of China whose story of a successful nationalistic revolution was a powerful symbol for new decolonizing nation-states; and two, to bring minorities and erstwhile autonomous communities under a homogenized and new “virtual” boundary by identifying regionalism in Tibet as a weakness that had made the Chinese invasion possible. As such, celebrating this historic “union” would admit to Amdo and some of Kham’s independence from the Lhasa government and understandably be feared to potentially bolster China’s argument regarding its sovereignty over Amdo and Kham.<sup>85</sup> Thus, this history was skirted around or submerged in the early years of exile life, even though it was and remains central to any discussion on Tibet, most particularly the imperative for unity.<sup>86</sup>

Take, for example, the Dalai Lama’s statement to the Tibetan people on the fourteenth anniversary of the 10 March 1959 uprising in Lhasa.<sup>87</sup> Briefing Tibetans on history, he stated:

As such, if we look back at Tibetan history, we will realise that during the time of the Three Great Religious Kings of Tibet the country did not only enjoy immense military strength but was culturally rich. Also, as we have seen, after Langdharma, Tibet disintegrated into many petty principalities and because of Tibetan weakness the country also suffered politically. Even in our times because of the fact that Tibet did not have a strong central government it was easy for the Chinese communists to invade Tibet and the subsequent suffering which has been inflicted upon the Tibetan people is something which can be proved....As such the Tibetans must at all times remember these and remain united, and determined to achieve their rights and freedom (DIIR 41).

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<sup>85</sup> This was a significant concern in the early decades of exile when the exile government was fighting for independence. Today the topic is brushed under the carpet for a different reason because the exile government has adopted the Middle Way Approach which seeks autonomy.

<sup>86</sup> The exile government’s present position for the Middle Way Policy also means avoiding these histories so as to avoid polemics with China

<sup>87</sup> March 10 is celebrated as the Tibetan National Uprising Day by all Tibetans in exile.

The Dalai Lama's comparison of two epochal moments—the death of the Tibetan King Lang Darma in 842 A.D. that supposedly led to a schism in the royal lineage and the beginning of the end of a unified Tibetan kingdom that had once stretched all the way to Dunhuang in China, with the more recent Chinese invasion of Tibet due to a decentralized government with contentious principalities—assumes two things. One, the identification of a persistent problem, and the second, the securing of the Tibetan nation as the same subject over a long period of time. In reality, as mentioned earlier, Amdo and some regions of Kham were not under the Lhasa government in 1950 when China invaded Tibet. Moreover, the reasons for the disintegration of the Tibetan empire were more complex, and included one of the most significant political developments in Tibet after Lang Darma's death: the shift from lay to lama rule or from kings to priests (see Chapter 3). Religion, viewed as a “homogenous force in Tibetan politics” was also a “fragmenting and conflicting force” (Goldstein, *History 1913* 37). Twentieth-century Tibetan history is troubled by the efforts of various religious players to gain prestige and influence.<sup>88</sup> In any case, the Dalai Lama's main message in his address on March 10 was that the goal of freedom demanded that Tibetans keep past failures in view and strive to remain united (DIIR, 41).

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<sup>88</sup> Samten Karmay writes that in the twentieth century alone, lamas were set against each other as pawns of the great powers of Manchus, British India, The Russian Empire, and the Guomintang government (“Coalition”).

In his address on the second anniversary of Tibetan National Uprising, the Dalai Lama explained the appeals he had made to the United Nations Assembly to support the Tibetan cause for self-determination. Addressing Tibetans as “my countrymen,” he asked them “to prepare [themselves] for the day when [they] can return to [their] country and build a happier and greater independent Tibet” (2). Year after year, the Dalai Lama has reminded Tibetans of their common suffering, shared goal of freedom, and their responsibility towards the future. The powerful narrative of “we all suffered in this way” is a kind of “rememoration project” that allows the most private experience of suffering to be calibrated into an equivalence, one that turns history into a “so-called cultural memory” (Spivak, *Aesthetic Education* 281). Or perhaps into a cultural myth. The concept of unity ascribed a goal to this memory to “continue to work towards their cause with one mind, and utmost dedication” (DIIR 43).

Many refugees, Shain writes, are “longing to be led, they look to exile organizations as an oasis of national companionship” to counter the loneliness, homesickness, and the “sense of inferiority” of being in a foreign environment (*Frontiers* 31). Tibetans living across the Tibetan plateau did not know much about each other prior to the Chinese invasion in 1950. The differences between the regions and religions were feared as much as the precarity of exile. This new reality necessitated organizing Tibet into a semblance of place that was governable, which meant creating, in addition to the material of settlement camps in exile, an ideational and psychological shift in how Tibetans think about their past, conduct their lives in

exile, and imagine the future far from their homeland. From the very beginning of his rule in exile, the Dalai Lama urged Tibetans to unite suggesting its value for the following reasons. One, unity as a means to the cause of freedom; two, unity as a mandated policy; and finally, unity against problems of regionalism

## **1 Unity for Freedom**

A few months after the formation of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, the Dalai Lama addressed Tibetan civil officials in Mussoorie and advised them to “bear temporary exhaustion and hardship” as best as they could because they were not in India “for mere survival” but to steel their “nerves for the restoration of the complete independence of Tibet in the future” (*Speeches*. 1). He spoke to the need for taking a broad perspective which included long-term plans. The key suggestions he made in this address were: the need for change to be contemporaneous with the rest of the world; to “foster unity and integrity” among Tibetans which included avoiding hostility in the name of regional “divisions” or monastic institutions; and, the need for education (2). To remain united meant working with dedication towards the cause “with one mind” (43).

## **2. Unity as Policy**

On other occasions, the Dalai Lama has explained unity as a faithful observance of the exile government’s policies. Addressing a large gathering of Tibetans in Mysore on 12 March 1974, he encouraged Tibetans to express their views while discussions and decisions were still underway so they could have a “mutual discussion” (91). However, he explained that once a decision is made, there is “no

place for expressing personal likes and dislikes” other than “following the instruction” (91). The only option then is to “move in one united flow together” in order to succeed in their endeavors (91). The words “unity” and “tolerance” in these examples can be interpreted to serve as both welcome signs of inclusion as well as, paradoxically, grounds for exclusion.<sup>89</sup>

### **3. Unity against regionalism**

A few months after the establishment of the exile government, the Dalai Lama advised the Tibetan exile officials of the re-established exiled government on the most important task of the then moment: fostering “unity and integrity among the Tibetan people” (2). He explained that it was unwise to “create hostility and disjoin [Tibetan] community in the name of regional divisions like U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo, and their sub-localities or through different monastic institutions or military establishments” (2).<sup>90</sup> He reminded them that Tibetans had the responsibility “to serve both the spiritual and secular aspects of our nation in the future” (2). While the Dalai Lama did not explain how to develop unity and integrity in the speech mentioned above, he explained the value of tolerance and developing a broad perspective in dealing with internal conflicts in a speech to Cabinet members and other exile officials on 23 March 1973. He explained, “Being broadminded, tolerant and mindful are the main causes to establish unity and integrity that we all talk about” (75).<sup>91</sup> On

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<sup>89</sup> In *Undoing the Demos* Wendy Brown associates tolerance with western liberalism and points out that it is a civilizational discourse posing as universal but deals with the difference between the civilized and the barbaric.

<sup>90</sup> The Dalai Lama advises Tibetans to build an “iron ball-like unity” which is later echoed in the oath in Bodh Gaya as well as by the TUA.

<sup>91</sup> He was referring to the conflict within the Chushi Gangdruk explained in greater detail in Chapter 1.

the other hand, tolerance does not seem to suggest understanding difference and diversity within the regions because regionalism was identified from early on as the undoing of unity. Even the *Tibetan Review*, the first English journal published by the exile government and known to have some progressive writers, suggested in one editorial that regionalism was the enemy within. “Regionalism,” the editorial published, is “the main disease afflicting the Tibetan society in exile” (Wangyal, “Enemy” 1). Although the editor did not define regionalism, he presented regionalism as the act of “describing oneself as an U-pa, a Khampa or an Amdo rather than as a plain Tibetan” (3).

In 1976, the Dalai Lama warned Tibetans of the chasm in their society, he pointed out that “squabbles and factionalism” among Tibetans diverted attention from the enemy. He stated that Tibetans were seeking and promoting their own interests and forgetting to promote “the interest of the larger masses of one’s own people” (DIIR 49). In his speech on 10 March 1997, he yet again stressed the need for the kind of devotion to the nation that put the interests of the nation before individual interest. Unity continues to coalesce two ideas, to unite against the common enemy and to unite with the larger interest—in the 1960s and 1970s this was identified as freedom—regardless of personal preferences or profit.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> The relationship between Tibetan unity and the path of democracy is closely intertwined. By that I mean that Tibetan unity is presented as the main objective of Tibetan society but this unity is contingent on ensuring equal representation and respect for all regions and religious traditions of Tibet, believed to be possible only through the path of democracy. Freedom was a priority to the recently dispossessed Tibetans and more translatable; freedom was constructed as being dependent on Tibetan unity (Brox 258).

Nationalism in the Tibetan community in exile is an ongoing process, shaped by the continued occupation of Tibet as well as the unattended tensions between the national “self” and its smaller effaced “others” in practicing the Tibet to come. While the national self shapes everyday life in refugee settlements according to a dominant code of what it means to be a Tibetan, it is as, Duara reminds us, the “potential others” that are interesting and important because they reveal “the principle that creates nations” (*Rescuing History* 15). Tibetan constructions of unity harbored suspicion towards “potential others” which in turn seemed to dominate fear towards provincialism.

In a speech to the Cabinet and the Parliament on 20 May 1983, the Dalai Lama referenced the rising “provincialism” in the exile community. He explained, “With no reasons, the people of Kham region have the wrong notion that the people of U-tsang province definitely have prejudiced affection towards U-tsang province, and the people of U-tsang province have the same wrong notion against Kham people” (*Speeches* 198). The Dalai Lama dismissed these as “seriously mistaken” feelings.<sup>93</sup> “You must discard this mentality,” he advised (198). The question was not whether such prejudices existed or not, but that the observance of injury itself was potentially harmful.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Some Khampas felt they were discriminated against by a majority Central-Tibetan-led-exile government and they felt their testimonies were never taken as valid.

<sup>94</sup> The concern was that some people pivoted around regional loyalties, and that they valued minor issues and interests of the organization over the common and greater Tibetan cause. In an address to the Cabinet and Parliament on 20 May 1983, the Dalai Lama speaks on the formation of various organizations and says that while an organization such as Chushi Gangdruk has done important work, they have also kept silent on important national issues while fighting “tooth and nail” with each other

The point I want to make is that from the very beginning, unity was predominantly defined as giving up discrete historical differences and giving up distinctions based on regions and religions.<sup>95</sup> While difference between Tibet's many regions and religious sects have been the cause of strife in Tibetan historical accounts, over-determining internal conflict has had the effect of reducing varied histories to the margins of memory. Thus, the normalization of the Tibetan exile administration representing the three regions of Tibet, Amdo, Kham and U-Tsang, and thus, the reminder that Tibetans had lost their homeland because of the problem of Tibet's "regionalism," or "blunders of the Tibetan people" (Samdhong, *Selected Writings* 296).

What was the experience of unity from those who stood on the periphery of the nation in the early decades of life in exile? What was their view of sovereignty and of the Dalai Lama and how did they perceive their role as new subjects under the Tibetan government? Where is found the alternate narrative that believes that subjects are equally responsible to giving leaders their place? Young children born in exile were taught that the three regions were always part of Tibet. Something as simple as a nostalgic reference to the discrete and varied societies that prevailed in Amdo and Kham prior to 1950, were in danger of being misinterpreted as expressions of "regionalism" (as discussed in the story on the revolt in Ockenden School in Chapter

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on minor issues. While the Dalai Lama does not single out or name an organization, Khampas I interviewed felt it was a reference to them (Dalai Lama, *Speeches* 197).

<sup>95</sup> The task of promoting unity and democracy was taken up by the youth, first with the establishment of a political organization, Tibetan United Association in 1965 and then with the launching of Tibetan Youth Corporation (TYC) in 1970. The main goal of the TYC was to "promote and protect national unity and integrity by giving up all distinctions based on religion, regionalism or status" (Gyari, web).



3 and in the account of the pamphlet distributed after Gunthang Tsultrim's death in Chapter 4). There was very little tolerance for such narratives in the exile community because they were immediately seen to offend or challenge the Dalai Lama's legacy. Such narratives (as the following chapters illustrate) did not necessarily challenge the Dalai Lama's authority, or charisma, or accomplishments. If anything, in addition to their national struggle they sought to be accepted with their histories, by the dominant exile community. Their narratives had the potential to extend the then conversations, even for example, establishing the Dalai Lama as the chosen leader as much as he was the ordained leader of the Tibetan people.

The new nations in East Asia, beginning from the end of the nineteenth century, felt that switching to the model of imperialistic nation-states would guarantee their survival (Duara, *Global and Regional* 24). New ideas of sovereignty promised rights, egalitarianism, and prosperity to its citizens who became the national "Us." The alien other within or outside the national territory began to be viewed by nationals as "objects of disdain, conquest or competition" (24). The oath taken by Tibetan representatives can be read as an establishment of Tibetan unity. It also promotes unity as the fundamental duty that would help foreground Tibetan traditions, and cultivate loyalty and "authentic" Tibetan culture. The oath to follow the wishes of the Dalai Lama to be part of the new nation to come, served simultaneously as grounds for excluding those who showed some reservation, and who would break the oath or dissent from the category of "us." The "other," Homi Bhabha writes, "is never

outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we *think* we speak most intimately and indigenously ‘between ourselves’” (*Nation 4*).

The presentation of Tibet as a unitary and homogenous counterpart, or the impulsion to assert that “the colonized are as much a sovereign nation as the colonizer’s own,” is not a new reality (Dayal 22). But such homogenization is a “gross oversimplification of the social reality” as Samir Dayal illustrates in his discussion on alternative views of Indian nationalism. Indeed, the social reality of geographical Tibet today points to the rich regional diversity despite living in a panopticon Chinese state. In stark contrast, there exists uniformity and homogenization of ideas of what it means to be a Tibetan in exile.

Tibetan success has been presented as being contingent on Tibetan unity since the foundational years in exile. Exile officials interpreted unity as letting go of historical differences and consequently it was understood and interpreted by Tibetans as avoiding difference. Lodi Gyari explains that to promote and protect unity means to give up “distinctions based on religion, regionalism or status” (web). In the early speeches of the Dalai Lama and the common understanding of the exile officials, unity was a configuration whose goal of freedom depended on means that were not always gained through consensus or acceptance of difference; on the contrary, it was presented as though it would transcend the diversity of Tibetan society.

### **Five Aims of the Tibetan United Association**

The first functionary instrumental in aiding the exile government’s politics of unity and homogeneity, was the Tibetan United Association (TUA). The

organization, now largely forgotten, was established by Tibetan refugees in Darjeeling, India.<sup>96</sup> While Gyalo Thondup, older brother to the Dalai Lama, was never officially linked to the TUA, it was widely accepted that he was the founder of the party and provided it weighty recognition. Indeed, from the mid-1960s to the 1970s, the TUA was believed to be synonymous with the exile administration. Thondup's closeness to the Dalai Lama, as his brother, his position as the head of security for the Dalai Lama, and as well as the head of Tibetan Intelligence made him one of the most influential Tibetans in exile.

The assembly of founders of the TUA— Lobsang Yeshe,<sup>97</sup> Tsewang Trinley, Nyima Gyaltzen, Gendun Zoepa, Chakzoe Kalsang Tashi, Chakzoe Lobsang Sangey, Langpa Pasang Gyalpo, Pema Dorjee, Tsering Wangdu— were from the three regions of Tibet and their diverse backgrounds served as evidence of the organization's commitment to unity and to the immateriality of regionalism. One of the tasks that the TUA hoped to undertake was to try and educate and inform the people on Tibetan democracy and how it functioned following the new democratic constitution drafted by the Dalai Lama through the mediums of newspapers, pamphlets, and public meetings. These goals were easily met due to the fact that the TUA was the only political party in the refugee community and it had monopoly over the one Tibetan newspaper in exile, *Bhodme Rangwang* or *Tibetan Freedom*, run by Thondup.

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<sup>96</sup> The TUA was formally organized in 1965. Phenpo Tsedung Lobsang Yeshe, Tehor Tsewang Trinley from Darjeeling, Nyarong Pon Nyima Gyaltzen, Nangra Gendun Zoepa, Bawa Chakzoe Kalsang Tashi, Kirti Chakzoe Lobsang Sangey, Gyantse Langpa Pasang Gyalpo, Labrang Pema Dorjee, Shelkar Tsering Wangdu are named as the founding leaders of the TUA (TUA, *Truthful History* 2005).

<sup>97</sup> He had worked in the Department of Security and had been sent to Darjeeling by the leaders of the department according to a source who also worked in the Department of Security in the early 1960s.

The early members and leaders of the organization had published a manifesto *Five Aims of the Cholsum United Party* in April 1964, and thereafter drafted an organizational charter of seventeen-point rules and regulations. These documents were presented to the Tibetan Parliament, then known as the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies, and the Executive Body (Kashag) and through the latter to the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama found the TUA's aims and rules to be sound and he gave permission to the government to recognize this party. Thereafter, the members of the TUA undertook a robust door-to-door campaign to educate Tibetans about their party's goals and to recruit members to join the organization. By the end of the year, TUA had as many as 1,337 members from the Darjeeling and Kalimpong region including Ghoom, Kharshang, Sukhey, Mirig and Sonada, making voluntary cash contributions to the party (TUA, *Truthful History* 20).<sup>98</sup>

The organization gained conspicuous attention and momentum for its work in Kalimpong and Darjeeling to promote adult and early education. It also printed and distributed religious texts for daily prayers and it controlled what Tibetans read through the *Tibetan Freedom*.<sup>99</sup> These projects ran with the help of the exile government in some form or the other.<sup>100</sup> As early as 1963, founding members of the TUA organized a meeting in Dharamsala to discuss the need for developing the collective strength of the Tibetan people (Thubten 6:59). TUA members believed that

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<sup>98</sup> There were 1159 registered members in the Buxa and surrounding areas (TUA, *Truthful* 22) and there were 394 members in Bomdila alone (27)

<sup>99</sup> Later it was changed to *Bodmed Rangwang* or *Tibetan Freedom*.

<sup>100</sup> The TUA mentions that the schools in Darjeeling were recognized and financially supported by the Department of Education in Dharamsala and the Bureau Office in Delhi. It also mentions that Phuntsok Tashi Takhla, the husband to the Dalai Lama's sister working in the Security Office visited their office every now and then to advise them (TUA, *Truthful History*).

several Tibetan lamas and chiefs had historically focused on using their resources for self-benefit thereby reducing the collective strength of the whole. They feared that some lamas and chiefs in exile were organizing into groups comprised of people from their traditional tribes or regions. At one TUA meeting, certain individuals were accused of using “cymbals, drums, trumpets and bells and wearing different hats and attires,” to evoke and exert their historical influence (trans. 59).<sup>101</sup> In other words, these lamas were using their religious distinctiveness to carve their different spaces of power. Such acts were seen as being detrimental to the unity of Tibetan people.<sup>102</sup> However, conversely, the model of unity itself was viewed as being exclusionary as it was not inclusive of the plurality of people belonging to different regions and religious traditions.

In *Five Aims of the Cholsum United Party*, the TUA referred to itself as a voluntary organization formed to avail the freedoms granted in the Article 5 of the new *Tibetan Constitution for a Future Tibet* as part of the democratization of the Tibetan polity. The chief reason for the TUA’s formation, however, was to fulfill the wishes of the Dalai Lama. The manifesto was distributed to Tibetans in the refugee

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<sup>101</sup> All translations where noted in this chapter are done by Bhuchung D. Sonam.

<sup>102</sup> See Juchen Thupten memoir. Thupten mentions that during the 1963 meeting (there are different versions for the meeting and year, some say it was in 1965) that Lobsang Yeshe pointed his finger at Dudjom Rinpoche, a prominent Nyingma lama accusing him of starting a settlement of his own and saying it was wrong (6:60). Gyari Nyima is said to have followed Yeshe in criticizing Dudjom Rinpoche. Dudjom Rinpoche left on the third day of this meeting saying his son was ill. Thupten heard this version from Zongnang Rinpoche who was at the meeting as a representative of the Parliament. Drawupon Rinchen Tsering who was also at the same meeting remembers that it was sometime in 1964 or 1965 and it was on his return home that Dudjom Rinpoche was arrested in Siliguri (Drawupon).

settlements in India, Nepal, and Bhutan.<sup>103</sup> While the organization claimed that it had been formed to avail the freedoms granted in the Article 5 of the new Tibetan Constitution—in particular the freedom of expression, freedom to assemble without arms, and to form associations and societies—the organization’s five aims were, paradoxically, bound to obeying the wishes of the Dalai Lama as per the conventions of Tibetan Buddhism.

The manifesto’s five goals were to follow the leadership of the Dalai Lama and the new “democratic Tibetan government without hesitation in order to regain independence for Tibet”; to respect and abide by the Constitution put into place by the Dalai Lama; to prioritize unity by “leaving aside differences in religious sects, regional origins” and to work together to “identify their protector, enemies and friends”; to pray for the long-life of the Dalai Lama; and to be willing to “sacrifice their lives if need be” for Tibet (trans. TUA, *Truthful History* 175). The resolution ended with the warning that, “All must make [the] pledge before [His] Holiness the Dalai Lama and the two national protector deities of Tibet to affirm by these aims [sic]. Should anyone go against these aims then each must carry the sins upon herself/himself and also bear consequences accordingly” (trans. 175).

The TUA declared that its aims were to educate Tibetans— the majority of whom were illiterate, and to a great degree, products of a Buddhist society—and to bring them into the arena of politics. A closer look at the manifesto demonstrates that

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<sup>103</sup> The leaders of the TUA also deliberated on the organizational charter and eight members were selected to draft the seventeen-point rules and regulations based on the TUA’s five foundational goals. Some members traveled to Dharamsala to present the documents to the Tibetan Cabinet (Kashag) and Parliament. The Dalai Lama found the aims and regulations to be good and he gave the Cabinet permission to recognize the organization (TUA).

the politicization of the people focused on normalizing the new synecdochical relationship between the Tibetan nation and the Dalai Lama as a primary necessity of Tibetan history and society. The TUA accomplished two narratives in its short manifesto: 1) It established the Dalai Lama as the sole leader working tirelessly to raise awareness for Tibet's political struggle in the international arena, to secure food, clothing and education for all Tibetan refugees, and to prepare the Draft Constitution which would democratize the exile political system. 2) It reminded Tibetans that Communist China had taken away Tibetans' common heritage and that it was carrying out torture, killing, imprisoning Tibetan people and destroying Tibetan culture, religion and way of life.

The recounting of shared losses and the emphasis of its collective affect and effect is a powerful narrative to facilitate the creation of subjects linked by a solidarity constituted by the feeling of a shared rich legacy, a present suffering, and a common future dream.<sup>104</sup> The TUA and exile officials were quite successful in taking the discrete experiences Tibetans had suffered under the Chinese occupation of Tibet and transforming them into a universal loss all Tibetans shared equally whether they had been under the Ganden Phodrang government in Lhasa or outside its administration. In addition, in emphasizing the tireless work of the Dalai Lama to provide the needs of all Tibetan refugees via international agencies—which cannot be denied—the TUA helped remind Tibetans of his leadership and convince them that

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<sup>104</sup> In “What is a nation?” Ernest Renan writes that a nation is a “soul, a spiritual principle” constituted by a rich past and a consent to live together in the future (*Nation* 19). Bauer sees “common experience and suffering of destiny” crucial to the creation of nations (“The Nation” 52).

the government was the protector of the culture and would help enrich Tibetan culture and life.<sup>105</sup>

The TUA focused on the community as the source of strength. It explained that the success of a Tibetan democratic system was contingent on the people's unity and collective strength. It demanded: "Every Tibetan must work in unity—leaving aside differences in religious sects, regional and their origins—with total dedication to remove temporary and long-term suffering of Tibetans" (trans. *Truthful History* 173-74). Unity was a transformative, moral, and collective weapon that would fulfill the goal of Tibet's freedom, harbored by every Tibetan. Tibetans believed theirs was a just movement that would become self-evident over time, but it was contingent on each person pledging loyalty to a single individual, the Dalai Lama, by upholding his wishes in gratitude for all he was doing for Tibetans. The manifesto made unity or compliance to the Dalai Lama's vision a singular value that would be available to discipline and govern Tibetans in exile, both vertically and horizontally. If the Dalai Lama was the symbol of the Tibetan struggle for freedom, he was also perhaps, the reason to struggle for freedom. Unity was imposed as a guarantor of freedom, and it functioned by disciplining personal freedoms.

It is impossible to guess how the Dalai Lama received the manifesto, but one can assume he was aware of the message. Over the following decades, the Dalai Lama has cautioned against the dangers of naming the exile government as the

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<sup>105</sup> Ann Frechette explains that state welfare helped construct the logic of membership and the values that its members presumably share. The experience of a sense of shared access to state welfare can, it is suggested, "promote particular norms and values, not the least of which is the value of community (12)



institution of the Dalai Lama.<sup>106</sup> In an address to 130 Tibetan officials attending an Annual meeting organized by the Cabinet on 21 March 1976, the Dalai Lama explains, “If we act as if everything depended on one single person, then there is a risk of the collapse of the whole structure when that individual dies” (*Speeches* 115).<sup>107</sup>

In *Critical Events*, Veena Das analyzes certain events to show how community institutes itself in the modern world not so much as a “face-to-face sphere of human relations” as usually conceptualized but as an “imagined community demanding allegiance from people who have no concrete relations with each other. It does this by creating images of communion and oneness” (51). For Tibetans, it was the figure of the Dalai Lama that provided the shape of the future Tibet and served as the mediator. Dawa Norbu contends that Tibetans are deeply religious and hence they see the Dalai Lama as the symbol of Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan culture and civilization, in addition to political sovereignty (*Road* 295). However, symbols and histories, (as I argue in Chapter 1), are created and produced; they do not self-arise.

How did the TUA define unity and its need? The TUA described unity as “putting aside differences in religious sects, regional and their origins” (trans. *Truthful History* 174). They suggested it could be achieved if all people bonded like water flowing in a canal to act together to “identify their protectors, enemies and

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<sup>106</sup> The Dalai Lama advises instead that the exile government register under the Indian Registration Act to ensure the longevity of the organization.

<sup>107</sup> The Dalai Lama has made similar reminders to Tibetan officials throughout his career as head of the Tibetan exile government. For example, on 29 May 1991, in his address to the Tibetan Parliament he states that having power in one person is not “conducive to the effective working of democracy” (Kashyap 40)

friends” (174). The metaphor of different regions melding together to become one entity was a message embraced by most Tibetans, the majority of whom were from central Tibet and of Gelug faith. They accepted too that the task of this unified body was to identify friend from enemy to regain the homeland. In teaching Tibetans to, as Duara describes elsewhere, to “love one’s national self and hate one’s enemies,” the TUA was consolidating the ‘boundaries’ of Tibetan identity and nation in exile just as older nations have done (*Global and Regional* 62). The TUA indicated there were already “a few small-minded people” in the exile community acting as “running dogs” for the enemies (trans. *Truthful History* 174).

The TUA’s rhetoric of difference helped to heighten what Duara describes as the “self-consciousness” of the community to shape “the composition of the community” into those who belonged and those who didn’t, those who were privileged and those who were not (*Global and Regional* 112). The friction between the goal of a future democratic Tibet, and the importance of unity in the face of China’s takeover of Tibet, meant that those Tibetan refugees in India and Nepal who dared to exercise democratic rights by voicing difference, ran the risk of being labeled anti-Tibetan. It presented the new Tibetan citizen-refugee two options: that of being patriot or traitor, pro-Dalai Lama or pro-China. Indeed, those who did not comply with the conditions of unity were to be opposed as enemies.

The “hard boundaries” of the national master narrative and the suspicion it would swallow the religious practices, languages, and social formations of certain

groups revealed contesting desires for their inclusion.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, this created categories of minorities that had not previously existed. In 1947, the population of central Tibet was estimated at 3 million and the numbers for Tibetans living in Kham and Amdo was estimated at between 4 and 5 million.<sup>109</sup> In contrast, people from Amdo and Kham made up less than 15% of the total population in exile, and some of them began to feel excluded. A second dimension was religion, non-Gelug religious entities such as the followers of Bon, Nyingma, Kagyu, and Sakya were suddenly also in the minority and under a Gelug-dominated government for the first time in recent history.

For some of these new minorities, unity spelled uniformity and erasure. They interpreted the bonding of the three regions of Tibet to suggest the imposition of a view that privileged Gelug and central Tibetan cultural practices as the constitutive principle of the community. These individuals included lamas, chiefs, and kings from the old nomadic regions and kingdoms of Kham and a smaller number of people from Amdo. They were predominantly non-Gelug, and included followers of the Bon religion.<sup>110</sup> These individuals felt that they were being asked to give up their tribe-based nomadic identities for traditions, values, and ideologies necessary for the greater good of all Tibetans and for a better future Tibet. Simply put, the people and

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<sup>108</sup> Prasenjit Duara explains that ‘discent’ the imposition of a historical narrative that is part dissent and part descent privileges a particular cultural practice as “the constitutive principle of the community and “heightens the self-consciousness of the community in relation to those around it” (*Global and Regional* 111). This hardens the boundaries and privileges difference but within these hard boundaries are soft boundaries that contest and in time can become hard boundaries themselves.

<sup>109</sup> As of 2010 it is estimated that there are 6,411,911 Tibetans in the world.

<sup>110</sup> Bon preceded Buddhism in Tibet, it is also described as the indigenous religion and culture of Tibet before Buddhism came.

regions of Kham and Amdo were needed but not regionalism. Kalzang Norbu, a monk I interviewed, is still embittered by how he and other monks in his monastery were made to feel that the Nyingma lineage they followed, was relatively new and could be discarded like an old shoe. He explained that Gyalo Thondup's idea was to strive for an identity that was solely based on an identity as Tibetans without the regionalism and religious sects. He stated he had worried about losing his religious traditions, language, and customs.

Kalzang Norbu remembered the first time he had heard of the TUA manifesto. He and his friends had interpreted *chikdrel* (unity) as a strategy to remove identities and affiliations to religious sects. He was not willing to give up what sustained his identity in the new experience of exile where loss dominated each day. Besides, he and many like him were not ready yet to give up the strong traditional bonds with their tribe. The fear of a standardization of culture and religion to a Gelug-centric and Lhasa-centric formation were legitimate concerns since the Gelug theocracy had resorted to military force as early as 1643 against other Buddhist schools to spread the Gelug school and establish the Ganden Phodrang government of the Dalai Lama. Even after the establishment of the Ganden Phodrang rule, the new Gelug government under the fifth Dalai Lama targeted areas where Kagyu and Drukpa Kagyu orders had a following (Schwieger, *Dalai* 66).<sup>111</sup> Similarly, in 1792, the eighth Dalai Lama forbade destroyed Kagyu and Nyingma monasteries in Gyeltang from being restored (170).

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<sup>111</sup> See Peter Schwieger for more on the successful Mongol wars fought on behalf of the Ganden Phodrang Government particularly against Kagyupa patrons (*Dalai* 68-70).

The TUA's insistence that all Tibetans had suffered equally did not cohere with the experiences of Amdowas (people from Amdo) and Khampas (people from Kham) who felt that they had *not* experienced a uniform treatment under the Chinese in Tibet. The grassroots arms movement that had developed in Kham (Chushi Gangdruk) against the Chinese was evidence of the draconian policies the Chinese had unleashed there in contrast to the tactic of the courtship of the Ganden Phodrang government in Lhasa. Besides, as mentioned earlier, the Tibetan government in Lhasa was only tenuously linked to most regions in Amdo and Kham in 1950.<sup>112</sup> These individuals had already been through the painful experience of Chinese reforms aimed at changing and reforming their culture and religious beliefs in the mid-1950s.<sup>113</sup> They suspected the definitions of enemy and unity used by the TUA as efforts "to exert dominance over a minority" (Tethong 413). They were also affected by more banal cultural and religious prejudices and beliefs, such as their indisposition to taking an oath before unfamiliar Gelug protector deities.

Adak Marong Chonje was living in Manali in the mid-60s where he recollected he was frequently reminded by Buddhist Tibetans that all Tibetans had come from the same place and practiced the same religion. As a follower of the Bon religion, he disagreed with such rosy pronouncements. "What does it mean to say there is no difference in our schools? It meant to me that my belief did not matter. They were suggesting I could not be different," he stated (Chonje). He was invited to

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<sup>112</sup> Samten Karmay writes that after the Gelug contact with the cult of Shugden, Gelug powers were hostile to Bon and Nyingma, even after 1959 (*Magic* 77).

<sup>113</sup> Mao's article on February 10, 1940 on the *New China News* of Yenan on the occasion of its first anniversary. [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_31.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_31.htm)

belong but not as he was. He did not think it was right to coerce him to give up his faith to follow the majority. He was afraid that not supporting this brand of unity would make him an objector to the Dalai Lama's wishes, to Tibetan freedom, and to democracy. Likewise, Kalzang Norbu mused that while Tibetans inside Tibet suffered greatly under the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Tibetans like him also suffered in exile. He explained he felt the pressure to leave his religious traditions, his loyalty to local Khampa leaders just as the Chinese were forcing Tibetans inside Tibet to abandon their old customs, beliefs, and traditions. He had wondered what to make of the madness in Tibet and the madness in exile. "How do you make sense of that, he asked?" (Norbu, K).

The Cultural Revolution in China was a complex phenomenon and is understood in a variety of ways, but inside Tibet it is interpreted as a deliberate project to destroy Tibetan cultures and to convert Tibetans into new Chinese subjects. Dawa Norbu explains that the Cultural Revolution, starting from May 1966 to January 1969, resulted in the destruction of 90 percent of monasteries, temples, and historical monuments in Tibet (*Road* 276). The "four ancients" of ideas, culture, traditions, and customs that abounded in Tibetan life were seen as obstacles to Tibet's integration into China, and the Cultural Revolution was the opportunity for the "Sinicization of Tibetans" (274). On 10 March 1967, the Dalai Lama described the occupation of Tibet as "one long catalogue of untold miseries and sufferings" and expressed his concern that the "persecution of Buddhism and Tibetan culture" had reached a "new pitch of intensity with the advent of the so-called Cultural Revolution"

(DIIR 21). He explained that the destruction of religious monuments and institutions inside Tibet was a clear evidence “of the depth to which the Chinese rulers have fallen in their efforts to wipe out all traces of Tibetan culture” (21). Kalzang Norbu’s comparison of the two experiences is a violent irony but it reveals the extent of the despair that he had felt at the thought of being asked to give up his religious practices in exile by Tibetan Buddhists.

It is such interpretations, suspicions, and experiences that the concept of unity also, in part, contributes to what McGranahan elsewhere describes as fairly “rigid sociopolitical frameworks for history” (“Social Death” 204). The TUA established a rule of suspicion where criticism of the exile government or the TUA was not tolerated. The binaries of traitor and patriot determined whether individuals would be remembered or if they would be erased from social memory and these categories shaped the values and the practices of being a member of the Tibetan refugee-citizen community. This became clearer when the oracle made his predication and when the TUA published its second document in 1965.

### **Seven Resolutions and Supporting Documents.**

The Dalai Lama describes his responsibility towards Tibet as being the same, in one respect, as that of the Nechung’s, though the two tasks are carried out differently (*Freedom* 212). The Dalai Lama’s task is that of leadership, which is to be executed peacefully, while the Nechung is the wrathful “protector and defender” of Tibet (212). The Dalai Lama has admitted to consulting the oracle because he has found the latter to be correct (212). It was the Nechung oracle that the Dalai Lama,

then only 24, had consulted in March of 1959 on whether to stay in Tibet or leave. The oracle had shouted, “Go! Go! Tonight!” and thus was charted the route to India that was to lead the Dalai Lama to a life in exile (136).

The oracle is believed to be the medium between the “natural and spiritual realms,” and hence more accurately described as “spirit” than ordinary mortal (211). Oracles are known as “protectors” and healers, and they foretell the future and “assist people in their practice of the Dharma” (211). The Nechung oracle acts, at crucial socio-political moments, like an agent of discipline. It curbs behaviors that are not conducive, and reminds the Tibetans of their duties towards the Dalai Lama. The Nechung’s prediction in 1965 of the Dalai Lama’s possible death spurred numerous ideas and activities including, as mentioned earlier, the meeting spearheaded by the TUA in Dharamsala. This event was the first indication of the TUA’s potential in establishing itself as an agent for the government and as the voice for the people. The event is also a good example of the complex fields of the natural and spiritual realms that Tibetan polity exists within and the difficulty in separating ideas that come from Buddhism from ideas that come from secular politics.

In addition to the main resolution published by the TUA, the meeting also produced a second lesser known resolution (appendix six) that stated that the TUA should set up branch offices in Tibetan settlements. Accordingly, branch offices were set up in settlements across India where Tibetans were gradually being settled: Dalhousie, Orissa, and Bumla. In 1968, the TUA moved its headquarters from Darjeeling to Dharamsala, where a room which belonged to the Private Office of the



Dalai Lama was given to the party. By 1969, the organization had branches in Kathmandu and the Khumbu in Nepal, and in the regions of Rajpur, Ola Pari, Mainpat, Mysore, and Bylakuppe in India. In other words, the TUA had a branch office in most places where the government ran settlements.

While the TUA's manifesto of five aims in 1964 had been limited to the organization and its members, the "Seven Resolutions and Supporting Documents" of 1965 cast its net over the entire exile population. It marshaled the oracle's prophecy of the Dalai Lama's death—a devastation that impacted all Tibetans—and the power ascribed to the Tibetan body to prolong his life to a new relationship between the Tibetan subject and its ruler that contradicts what is understood as democracy in the general sense but also deviates from traditional relations. A closer look at the resolution will reveal how pre-existing structures of religious custom were evoked to mobilize this new relationship, but also how its veiled allusions gave optimum scope for various interpretations, rumors, scapegoatism, and resistance to unity.

The first resolution pointed out that lamas, teachers (*khenpos*), monks and nuns were to abide without any "hypocrisy and deceit" to the five-point resolutions to promote the Buddhist doctrine passed on 9 November 1963 in a meeting with the Dalai Lama. Doing so would fulfill the wishes of the Dalai Lama and prevent "dishonor to Buddhism" (trans. *Truthful History* 202). This was a reference to a meeting held between the various leaders of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism in the early 1960s during which they were believed to have pledged to work together under the government-in-exile. While this resolution seemed general enough, non-

Gelugs, such as Norbu, had received it as a warning of Gelug hegemony and the normalization of the Gelug doctrine as the best standard of Tibetan Buddhist practice in exile.

The second resolution stipulated that Tibetans living in India, Nepal, and Bhutan were to “follow the path of democratic politico-religious system” established by the Dalai Lama and that nobody was to act against “even a single ideal/meaning/vision” presented by the Dalai Lama (trans. 203). Everyone was to attempt to lead a “moral life” which meant holding the correct view towards friends, foes, and protectors. Those who acted out of ignorance and broke any of the commands (*ka*) of the Dalai Lama would be guided by leaders so that they would not repeat such behavior (203). The problem with this resolution, as pointed out by those who objected to the TUA’s rising power, was that it was unclear to what extent Tibetans had personal freedom in the new democratic polity if they were bound to pledge never to oppose the Dalai Lama. This was particularly a problem for some Khamapas in the Chushi Gangdruk who were opposed to Gyalo Thondup’s role in the freedom movement. They felt that challenging Thondup constituted a crime under the exile government led by the Dalai Lama.

The third resolution pointed out that there were some Tibetan officials (*lay-jey*) under the influence of Communist Red China and Kuomintang and these people had resorted to using differences in religious sects, provinces, and class as tactics to destroy Tibetan unity. Their offences included creating “rumours in the UN that Tibet was a part of China” (trans. 203). These attempts at creating disunity in the

community were to be opposed strongly, and if any Tibetan overtly or covertly carried out such actions, they were to be considered as the enemy and were to be reported to the exile government, the Indian government, and the local exile government offices. This was suspected to be a reference to aristocrats and leaders who had fallen afoul of Thondup and were being named in the exile community as traitors for keeping ties with the enemy. These included Lhawang Topgye Surkhang who had held the position of Cabinet Minister in the Ganden Phodrang government in Lhasa before 1959, Jigmie Dorje Yuthok, who had held a Cabinet position in Tibet, Gonthang Tsultrim who had served as a representative from the Amdo region in the new Tibetan parliament in exile, and Topgyal Pandatsang, a renowned Khampa trader and politician.

The remaining resolutions signified specific offenders. For example, the fourth resolution advised that following the wishes of the Dalai Lama, the Department of Home was creating a list of people working as road laborers and contract laborers scattered all around India so they could be settled in various Tibetan settlements. But there were some among those groups who had started making their independent lists without consulting exile government officials and these people were “taking schools, factories and settlements as excuses to go their separate ways” (trans. 204). Such actions destroyed the exile government’s plans and damaged internal unity and most of all, it violated the religious bond (*samaya*). All “high” and “low” individuals attempting such projects were to be stopped (trans. 204). This was a reference to groups of Tibetans led by lamas or old nomadic chiefs from the regions

of Kham who had clashed with exile officials on the road construction sites in Manali and Kullu in the state of Himachal Pradesh, India, and who had organized themselves to work as independent contractors. This might also be a reference to the Ockenden School in Dharwar, South India, where a Bonpo teacher had been put in charge of teaching in a Tibetan school (discussed in Chapter 3).

The fifth resolution was a reminder to Tibetans that it was due to the Dalai Lama's blessings all Tibetans received food and clothing in exile. It stated that there were cunning and deceptive people who sought relief assistance directly without consulting official representatives. Their actions were deemed harmful to the exile community as well as to the unity of the Tibetan people and were to be stopped. All future relief assistance was to be received through the channels of the exile government (205). At the heart of this resolution is the question of authority and sovereignty. While it does not explain why seeking aid directly is harmful, it is important to consider the significance of the relationships the exile government was building with a multitude of international aid groups, including inter-governmental organizations. These relations provided the exile government means of authority over its refugee-citizenry and established its sovereign position as representative of the Tibetan people. This authority is challenged when Tibetan individuals or groups build their own relationships; it could indicate that international officers supported emergent leaders, for example (Frechette 17). This resolution referred to individuals such as Chokling Rinpoche and Namkha Dorjee with their respective groups, who had complained of discrimination by exile officials in receiving relief assistance

marked for refugees and had consequently contacted the international aid agencies directly for aid.

The sixth resolution named three individuals. It stated that Pomzurs (“Pom” refers to Wangmo Pandatsang, wife of Yamphel Pandatsang and “Zur” refers to Surkhang) and Trochu Dorji Pasang had been issued documents to travel abroad (205). The resolution stated that “no application” be “submitted for such document and if submitted it should be blocked (*kag-gog zhu-gyu*) in the future (trans. TUA, *Truthful History* 205). The resolution did not provide any further explanations or details but the Tibetan public at that time would have already been acquainted with the stories of the individuals singled out.<sup>114</sup>

The last resolution pointed out that various offices in Dharamsala and settlements needed leaders and that it was crucial to elect people who had the “correct view towards the protector, friends and foes” (trans. 205-6). And that once elected, people were to recognize their leaders and abide by the rules instead of giving wrong definitions for democracy and freedom. The document stipulated that offices of the TUA were going to be gradually set up in each settlement and that the TUA would abide by the resolution. If the duty of the “Tibetan subject” was to “obey” each wish

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<sup>114</sup> Yamphel Pandatsang (sometimes called Yarphe), the eldest of three brothers, served as the governor of an important border region in Tibet and was the Trade Agent for all of Tibet prior to the Chinese invasion (McGranahan, *Social Death* 200). Once powerful and close to the family of the Dalai Lama, the brothers, especially Topgyal Pandatsang was viewed as working with the Chinese. Yamphel had lived in Kalimpong after escaping from Tibet in 1959 and was accused of being a traitor and of making disparaging remarks against the Dalai Lama on a trip to Beijing and Tibet. His wife Wangmo Pandatsang had returned from Tibet to live in Darjeeling. The people of Darjeeling had reported on her to the Indian intelligence bureau largely because of their perception of Yamphel Pandatsang as a Chinese spy. Surkhang had held the position of Cabinet Minister in the Ganden Phodrang Government of Tibet before the Chinese invasion and served in the Cabinet when the exile government was formed).

of the Dalai Lama, the duty of the “leaders” in the settlements was to observe, correct, and report aberrant behavior. The representatives would meet annually to “report on the success or failure of the practice of the seven-point resolution” (trans. 206).

Each of the resolutions discussed above is concerned with establishing the authority of the Dalai Lama’s government and the consequences of challenging its authority. Although the TUA represented itself as an independent modern organization, it was accepted by the community and by government representatives as the official voice. For example, Juchen Thupten writes in his memoir *The Autobiography of Juchen (Kalon Trisur Dege Juchen Thubten Namgyal Kutse Logyu)*, that the offices of the newly formed settlement camps in Bylakuppe in South India received instruction documents from the TUA as though these were official documents (*yikcha*). Thupten writes that the settlement officer in Bylakuppe complied with the TUA’s instructions to hold monthly meetings for 600 people in 1965 (6:129). The individuals would be divided into ten groups of 60 people each. Each group would be asked to complete a form with eight questions and the leader of each of the ten groups would sign after all members of the group had filled the forms. Individuals had to respond “Yes” or “No” to the following questions: if an individual was engaging in regionalism, if an individual was practicing sectarianism, whether the individual opposed Yuthok, Surkhang, and Trochu Pon, if an individual was accepting relief assistance from anyone outside the government funds, if any individual was harboring desire to start separate settlements and if an individual

opposed people who did so.<sup>115</sup> Thubten explains that the right answer was to state “No” to practicing regionalism and sectarianism, “Yes” to opposing Yuthok, Surkhang and Trochu Pon who were criticized in a series of articles in the *Tibet Freedom* as working with the Guomindang and betraying the Tibetan government, and “Yes” to opposing individuals who were setting up their own settlements.<sup>116</sup> (Thubten suggests that this last point was a reference to the heads of the Kagyu, Nyingma and Sakya lineages— Gyalwa Karmapa, Dudjom Rinpoche and Sakya Daktri Rinpoche— who had established their own monasteries and settlements, Karmapa in Rumtek, and Dudjom Rinpoche in Orissa). The settlement officer would send the forms to the local TUA office every six months. These documents were used by the TUA to propagate “serious activities to remove one by one the important personalities (both lay and religious) in the community” (*Juchen* 6:130). Thus, the TUA was functioning almost like a government and institutionalizing a battle against regionalism and sectarianism.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Lhawang Topgye Surkhang had held the position of Cabinet Minister in the Ganden Phodrang Government of Tibet before the Chinese invasion and served in the Cabinet when the exile government was formed. Jigmie Dorje Yuthok, likewise, held a Cabinet position in Tibet.

<sup>116</sup> Jigmie Dorje Yuthok, son of Yuthok stated in an article in the *Tibetan Political Review* on 30 July 2016 that Kalon Surkhang, Yuthok, and Pangdatsang were targeted by Gyalo Thondup because he had disagreed with them on certain policies leading up to the Chinese invasion in 1950. The three had been Cabinet members of the Tibetan government. Jigmie Dorje indicates Thondup did not agree with their decree to expel all Chinese nationals from Tibet because Thondup’s wife was Chinese. He indicates there were other reasons as well. *Juchen* writes that Surkhang and Yuthok allegedly started a Cabinet Office in Taiwan and that they should have been stripped of their political responsibilities but not removed from the community. *Juchen* Thupten thinks they moved to Taiwan unwillingly and that they were forced to go. He asks, how was it possible for them to have appointed themselves as Cabinet Ministers because it was the Dalai Lama who traditionally gave that position? (*Juchen* 6:131).

<sup>117</sup> *Juchen* Thupten writes that at the end of 1965 the TUA sent out a notice to all Tibetans about a big conference to be held in Dharamsala to discuss the contents of the constitution of the future Tibet, [*Ma’ong bhoe kyi tsa trim rinpoche’ drudhon*]. The twelve leaders of the camps in the Mysore and Bylakuppe settlements met to discuss the call to the meeting and raised the point that the TUA had no authority to call a conference of such manner. An appeal letter intimating so was written to the

Institutionalization is not just accepting certain ideas and activities as the normative and taking them as lawful (Meyer et al. 13). It is also building relationships that “organize action” and “locate action in expanding cultural theories and ideologies, on the other” (37). Michel Foucault’s definition of “governmentality” in 1978 drew the association between the ideas of government and mentality, which Joe Painter explains as the “relationship between practices of government and knowledge of the objects of government” (Painter, “Governmentality”141). Painter is looking at regional economic strategies but he finds the argument to be just as stimulating in realms of community and learning. He explains that for Foucault it is the commonplace areas of life that “the exercise of power is most significant, in part because it is most hidden. The operation of power/knowledge is most successful where it is embodied in routine” (153). The Tibetan subject produced in exile was governable because of the routinization of certain practices where government (in the form of the Dalai Lama) was already part of the everyday spiritual commitment. From the private altars at home, to public spaces, the photographic presence of the Dalai Lama presides in the fused role of spiritual guru and political leader. For the Buddhist, the guru takes precedence over temporal positions and so Tibetans are always already in a position of obeisance to the Dalai Lama and to the exile government, by its nearness to him.

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Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies (ATPD), now known as the Parliament and signed by some of the leaders. The ATPD decided it was not the TUA’s mandate to organize a conference on the constitution of the future Tibet. Drawupon Rinchen Tsering also mentioned this in his interview.



The TUA was taking the concept of unity further in institutionalizing it in their distribution of aid and education. They supported the Tibetan Government-in-Exile's effort to promote the idea of a "unified and distinct" community by publishing books on the unity of Tibetan exiles. They also sponsored events such as the Dalai Lama's birthday on July 6th which was celebrated as a public holiday, Tibetan National Uprising Day on March 10<sup>th</sup> and the Tibetan New Year (Frechette 27). And they led the way for social ostracizing by naming opponents to unity. As I discuss in Chapter 5, it became difficult for opponents of the TUA to separate the wishes of the TUA from that of the exile government. According to the individuals who opposed the TUA, it was as though all social agency and social agents were subsumed within the TUA's agenda. Opposing the TUA suddenly meant disregarding the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government (Yujay).

### **Citizenship: A Community of Value**

In *Citizenship and Its Discontents*, Niraja Gopal Dayal discusses the routinely thwarted "citizenly aspirations" as well as the many ways in which citizenship is theorized, understood, experienced, and claimed in India. Dayal proposes that what appears as a consensual concept is in actuality full of ambivalences and doubts, which often emerge in "morally loaded binaries" (3). Charged and "normativized binaries" such as the good and bad, thin and thick citizenship, active and and passive citizenships are some of the ways in which citizenship expresses and establishes normative preferences and desired virtues (3). Writing on the borders between citizen and migrant and the formal and normative status of citizenship, and immigration,

Bridget Anderson also makes a compelling case that modern states don't present themselves as peoples bound by legal status alone but as "a community of value" of people who share "common ideals and (exemplary) patterns of behavior expressed through ethnicity, religion, culture, or language—that is, its members have shared values" (Anderson, *Us* 2). It is through the community of value that states also claim legitimacy. Citizenship and immigration is ultimately about "status in the sense of worth and honor, that is, membership of the community of value" (4). This community of value is described by Jayal as being inhabited by good citizens or as Anderson describes, those who "possess and display civic virtues" over the ones who don't (*Citizenship* 3). For Anderson, this "community of value" manifests values but is also valued and is seen to need protection, usually from outsiders (*Us* 3). Anderson explains that for the good citizen, who are law-abiding and "hard-working members of stable and respectable families," culture is "extrinsic rather than constitutive, a way of life, not power and rule" (3). What both critics also point out is that membership of a community is permeable and is often associated with the greater good.<sup>118</sup>

In the case of exiled Tibetans, the gift of citizenship, or the shift from subject-position as *nangpa* to refugee-citizen, came with the loss of their homeland. Citizenship included a history of ideas and arguments about what it meant to be a Tibetan, and how the legality of status, rights, and identity was to be understood and

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<sup>118</sup> Individuals can go in and out of the community of value as accepted members, marginal members and sometimes as a threat – good, non-good and failed citizens (Anderson, *Us* 6).

contested.<sup>119</sup> The TUA played a definite role in defining the new Tibetan political citizen and in reassuring the ordinary Tibetan that democracy did not alter a familiar world order. It reiterated the familiar Buddhist rituals as a reference point of the political Tibetan identity and suggested that all Tibetans were always linked to the Dalai Lama under the laws of *samaya*, or religious bond. The solemnizing of personal religious devotion into political responsibility meant that religious duty would always supersede political desires. The criterion for membership provided by the TUA sought the development of a faithfulness among Tibetans and expected them to follow the moral and political vision of the Dalai Lama; keep the struggle for independence and the greater good of a reformed Tibet as a priority; adhere only to the sanctioned definition of democracy and freedom; and to condemn attempts to challenge the national mission of obedience to the Dalai Lama and his vision of unity as acts of “national disunity,” to borrow Shain’s words (*Frontiers* 20). This meant that Tibetan refugees seeking to belong as refugee-citizens in the territory-less state of the exile government accepted that a sense of collective purpose and obligation would induct them into the new Tibetan citizenry, not rights.

The TUA’s manifesto in 1964 and the resolutions in 1965 indicate that the organization was the product of the democratization of the Tibetan polity but its terms were not recognizably democratic in any conventional sense. The goals of the TUA can be interpreted as this party’s attempt to translate democracy into a new religious

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<sup>119</sup> This is a continuing process and more complex now as new generations of Tibetans adopt citizenship of nation-states they are born in besides retaining their status as citizens at-large of the exile government.

contract between the reformed Tibetan subject and the Dalai Lama in which there is no commensurate sense of “the people” as being crucial other than in a subordinate role. The contradiction made democracy less about participation in a society or community and more about fulfilling a religious duty or obligation. It was a process of the sacralization or Buddhicization<sup>120</sup> of democracy and political life and society. The terms “democracy” and “unity” were not clearly defined by the exile government or the TUA but the import of these concepts into the Tibetan dream of freedom has never been ambiguous. These two initiatives distinguished the new reformed Tibetan polity from the supposedly corrupt and ineffective traditional Lhasa government in Tibet.

The TUA’s political education did not drive home the message that people too were responsible for generating ideas. There is little to suggest that sovereignty lay in people or that individuals had a relationship or sense of responsibility towards each other. Political education for the Tibetans did not mean “opening up the mind, awakening the mind, and introducing it to the world” (Fanon 138). On the contrary, all the right ideas—moral, political, ideological— came down to the public from the leader. Similarly, relations between Tibetan citizens were not created face to face but mediated through the Dalai Lama. Perhaps founding members of the TUA, vanguards of democracy and change in exile, felt that the only way Tibetans would learn or adopt democracy was if it was introduced by the Dalai Lama.

Loyalty to the Dalai Lama remains the cornerstone of Tibetan polity and

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<sup>120</sup> Dawa Norbu uses the term “Buddhicization” of history as mentioned in the Introduction to this Dissertation.

Tibetan-nes to the present day. The rhetoric of the Tibetans loyalty to the Dalai Lama is difficult to contest because deference to the Dalai Lama's wishes and decisions does provide meaning to many Tibetans and is the backbone of their religious beliefs. Besides, loyalty towards the Dalai Lama, one of the most widely accepted sentiments and values, is held sacred by Tibetans and considered a unique character of Tibetan democracy.

The TUA's campaign of unity ultimately led to the creation of policies which were implemented in Tibetan settlements where Tibetans from different regions and sects came to live together. Over time, it also brought religious leaders from the Gelug, Kagyud, Nyingma, Sakya (and Bon much later) to build on the common practices rather than their differences. In addition, the initiatives for providing education, settlement, jobs, and daily resources were necessary and did transform life for Tibetan refugees. However, they also effected, in practice, subtle displacements because political actors such as exile officials and TUA members played a significant role in controlling the social and cultural sphere of individual life in the settlements in the same way as "the state colonizes the life-world of the community" (Das, *Critical* 16). Thus, the discourse of solidarity, fundamental rights, or general will was limited to the vision of the exile government, curtailing the rise of thinking Tibetan refugee-citizens.

As unity became a dominant discourse, its hegemonic tendencies got normalized, leading to validation of certain social identities at the expense of others. In the name of political unity other political groups were prevented from organizing

or expressing alternate views.<sup>121</sup> The friction between the goal of a future democracy and the importance of unity meant that exercising democracy by defending dissent or difference ran the risk of mishandling the gift of democracy. It also prepared such Tibetans to be derogated “as linked to alien interests” and therefore “nationally disloyal” (Shain, *Frontiers* 20). Chapters 3, 4, and 5 will explore that in greater detail.

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<sup>121</sup> See statement from the Tibetan Cabinet on the 80th birth anniversary of the Dalai Lama on July 6, 2015: “The Kashag would like to urge all Tibetans to engage in acts that are consistent with the wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and at the same time endeavor ceaselessly in preserving, promoting and acting upon traditional Tibetan values” (Central Tibetan Administration, web)

## Chapter 3

### Against the Grain of History: Mutiny at the Ockenden School

#### Introduction

On 28 April 1966, students at Ockenden school in Dharwar, India, refused to participate in their afternoon duties in protest against their teachers, Malcolm Dexter and Sangye Tenzin for teaching them the “wrong” Tibetan history. Next, they refused to attend their classes.<sup>122</sup> Finally, on 28 April, 30 students, all boys, left the boarding school en masse for their homes after the ringleaders were threatened with expulsion from the school. The event came to light for Tibetans on 2 June 1966 when the *Tibetan Freedom (Bhomed Ranwang)*, the first Tibetan newspaper in exile established by Gyalo Thondup in 1962, published the first of several testimonials by students complaining about Malcom Dexter and Sangye Tenzin.<sup>123</sup> The students also mailed a letter to one of the founders of the school, Joyce Pearce in Surrey, England, listing their grievances. The students felt that in privileging alternative historical narratives such as those related to Bon, Tibet’s pre-Buddhist religious beliefs and practices, over the dominant Buddhist history, the teachers were aiming to challenge the Tibetan government and creating disharmony among Tibetans.

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<sup>122</sup> In a letter written on 3 May 1966 and sent to Joyce Pearce by Per Kvaerne, who was also teaching at that time, he writes that the boys refused to work in the garden as per their routine and then made accusations which were “unjustified and apparently fabricated” (Woodard 28-29). Kvaerne, who is a scholar of Tibetan and Bon studies, also writes that the students didn’t attend class the following morning and were rude to the staff.

<sup>123</sup> The newspaper was given over to the exile government after a few years making it the first Tibetan government published and managed newspaper. The paper became a significant source of information as well as “an important weapon in the war of words with China” (Samphel 176).

The Ockenden school was among the first schools for Tibetan refugees established by the Ockenden Venture in Surrey in 1965. It aimed to provide young Tibetans a sound Western education while still grounding them in Tibetan cultural traditions. The organization had hoped that the students, upon graduation, would be of value to the Tibetan community as translators and liaison officers. Ockenden Venture had installed two instructors, Malcolm Dexter, an English headmaster and Sangye Tenzin, a scholar fresh from studying and teaching at the School of Oriental Studies (SOAS) in London to educate 30 boys.<sup>124</sup> Both Dexter and Sangye Tenzin had received training in the emerging scholarship of Bon that had been long relegated to the margins in Tibet. Two additional teachers, Gyaltzen Choden, a Tibetan instructor, and Kelsang Liushar, a steward, had been placed by the Council for Tibetan Education which was the outfit established to prepare the curricula in Tibetan schools according to the guidelines of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile.

While certain elements within the accounts of the revolt lend themselves to an East versus the West, or modernity versus traditional interpretation, for example, the hope of the Western donors to shape modern Tibetans schooled in the Western curriculum, I analyze the diverse responses and accounts of the narratives to suggest, first, that the response by exile officials reveals not so much their commitment to historical accuracy as to history's role in securing the "mystique of the nation," or its claim to what Prasenjit Duara calls an "evolving, monistic subjecthood" (*Rescuing History* 16). In placing a critique of national history alongside the study of

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<sup>124</sup> David Snellgrove reminds Joyce Pearce in a letter that Sangye Tenzin's appointment at the school had been approved by the Dalai Lama.



nationalism, I hope to show the “repressive connections between history and nation” (4). Or perhaps more pertinently in the Tibetan case, the repressive connection between the subject of history that is, religion, to the nation.

Next, I argue that the incident brings into view the historical perception of the Tibetan nation as one that is fused to the linear history of Buddhism (Norbu, D; Schwieger). The event illustrates that the subject of history, or what is held to be at the center of the narratives of Tibetan historical writings and tradition, is the truth of Buddhism.<sup>125</sup> Buddhism, moreover, signals modernity and agency. It is within the religious framework that new terms and concepts such as democracy, unity, and nation came to be deployed in the early years of exile.

Treating this event as a story within a story about national history and cultural memory, I examine the borders between national histories and the heterogeneous nature of communities. History, as a narrative of events and as the causes and effects of historical change, came to the fore more forcefully in exile when Tibetans found themselves developing a new attitude towards the nation under conditions of a disorderly present and an uncertain future. The Ockenden revolt took place at the crucial moment when exile officials, cultural institutions of society, and community members were beginning the work of creating, preserving, and fixing a stable narrative about their history. But this construction of an official historical narrative, as

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<sup>125</sup> In his analysis of the relationship between the nation-state and nationalism on one hand and the linear, “evolutionary history” on the other in early twentieth-century China, Prasenjit Duara suggests that national history secures “the nation as a subject of History” (*Rescuing History* 5). This means that national histories transform views of the past as well as the meaning of the nation and the world particularly by establishing “which peoples and cultures belonged to the time of History and who and what had to be eliminated” (5).

it has been elsewhere, was a “social and political process” that attempted to legitimize particular events or versions of events as being true (McGranahan, *Arrested Histories* 3). The questions raised by the students allow insights into the sense of history, and the place of history in Tibetan tradition, and its relation to modern nationalism and identity. Yet it is also important to bear in mind that while there were groups and individuals who resisted the totalizing Tibetan narratives, the pain expressed by the students illustrates the tremendous power of national mythology, and the pressure on political discourses to be congruent with dominant national myths at that particular moment of time in the life of Tibetan exiles. This dialectic must be kept in mind when studying the role of dissent and deference in Tibetan society. My focus is not on the content of Tibetan historiography but rather in how the revolt illustrates some of the ways in which hegemonic narratives of history and culture became deeply sedimented into Tibetan social relations.

Thus, embedded within the story of the revolt sits the other possible view of history as a discourse enabled by “historical players” such as historians, religious leaders, and community members who use their resources to “occlude, repress, appropriate and, sometimes negotiate with other modes of depicting the past and, thus, the present and the future” (Duara, *Rescuing History* 5). By this, I suggest the possible presence of the behind-the-scenes role of exile state functionaries in supporting or using the student mutiny in order to repress instruction in histories of Tibet’s religious and regional diversity. Far from an exercise of insurgent power, much less an expression of democracy, what may be referred to as the Ockenden

incident might be studied as an example of the ideological straightjacketing of Tibetan history by exile government authorities and community members in the struggle to oppose Chinese occupation of Tibet, and to establish its authority over the exile population. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the education of young Tibetans.

### **Educating Children in Exile to be Tibetan at Heart**

In the early years of exile, the Tibetan Government-in-Exile attempted to balance the tasks of attending to the immediate material needs of refugees and perpetuating Tibetan “culture and tradition through the preservation of [their] learning, religion and way of life” at the same time (*Tibetans In Exile* 319). Monasteries had been the dominant centers of cultural and religious learning in Tibet before 1950 and the estimated twenty percent of men who chose to be monks received some form of education. Formal schools, as we know them in the present, were probably not accessible to common people. In 1912, the progressive leader, the thirteenth Dalai Lama (1879-1933), sent four young boys to be educated in Rugby, England. He started a school in Gyantse in Central Tibet under the guidance of Mr. Frank Ludlow, a Briton, and thirty boys, all sons of aristocrats were enrolled in it. The school lasted only a few years, as discussed in Chapter 1. Even the support of the Dalai Lama proved insufficient to counter the pressure from conservative officials in the Tibetan government and monastic leaders who felt that new innovations and ideas would

dilute Tibetan dedication to religious life (Tsarong 63).<sup>126</sup> Thereafter, the only way for Tibetans to obtain a “modern” education was to study abroad. For many aristocrats in Central Tibet, this was primarily the schools in the Darjeeling area in India.

In contrast to pre-1959 Tibet, Tibetan refugees were able to get access to education within a few years of arriving in India at the initiative of the fourteenth Dalai Lama and with the help of the Government of India and many international aid agencies such as the Swiss Aid to Tibetans, Save the Children Fund, Norwegian Refugee Council, Deutsche Tibethilfe, and Catholic Relief Services. The first Tibetan school opened in 1960 in Mussoorie with 50 young Tibetans between the ages of 13 and 35, and four Tibetan teachers (Rigzin 267). The exile government insisted on establishing separate Tibetan schools instead of sending Tibetan children to the Indian schools even though Tibetans had no experience or resources, “both human and material,” to run these institutions (267). The Council for Tibetan Education was set up under the Education Department of the Government of India and it opened two residential schools in Simla (now Shimla) and Darjeeling in 1961 and 1962 respectively. The Council supervised the schools by sending Tibetan principals and teachers (Tibet Documentation 85). Soon after, a publication section was established and an “ad hoc body” was formed consisting of Dudjom Rinpoche, Zemey Rinpoche,

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<sup>126</sup> Peter Schwieger states that from the eighteenth century right up to the end of the nineteenth century (corresponding to Qing rule), none of the Dalai Lamas had any political power of his own. But the Qing wanted social and political stability, and they “fashioned the Dalai Lama into the sacred head of the Ganden Phodrang government, and thus inadvertently helped promote the image of Tibet as a country guided by the incarnations of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara” (*Dalai* 221). After two centuries, the Dalai Lama had become “such a strong force in Tibetan politics that it could no longer be controlled by the new Chinese government” (221).

and Ngor Thartse Rinpoche (87). The first set of textbooks for grades 1 through 5 was published in 1963 and the books were revised in 1967 (87). The syllabi were updated from time to time.<sup>127</sup>

The urgency for education responded to the helplessness and handicap faced by the exile community due to the lack of knowledge and language. Addressing exile officials on 9 October 1964, the Dalai Lama stressed the importance of sending children to Tibetan-run schools and admitted that he had great expectations from them. He stated, “We do expect them to free our people from the suffering, benefit them and support the survival of the Tibetan identity. We will be highly discouraged if even a single Tibetan child shatters our expectation” (*Speeches* 52).

Tibetans born in India came after the destruction of a past recalled by their parents. They were entering life in exile in a kind of permanent present in which their only link to the community of the past was through the elders.<sup>128</sup> Tibetans feared that the Chinese were using the strategy of “divide and rule” to oppress the people inside Tibet into submission and were raising young Tibetans as “Chinese Communists, not as Tibetan Buddhists” (Dalai Lama, *My Land* 226). Without Buddhism, the Dalai Lama feared the “well-spring” of Tibetan culture would dry up (Dalai Lama,

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<sup>127</sup> In 1985 a renewed effort was made to Tibetanize the education system and the Educational Development and Research Center (EDRC), was established at the Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV) in Dharamsala, India. The medium of instruction was changed from English to Tibetan and the EDRC designed all textbooks in Tibetan language at the primary level. It also integrated Tibetan culture, history, geography, and arts into the curriculum (Pema, “What Tibetans Expect” 292).

<sup>128</sup> Eric Hobsbawm uses the term “permanent past” in *The Age of Extremes* to describe the estrangement individuals felt from the public past of the times they lived in at the end of the 20th century.

*Freedom* 167).<sup>129</sup> Consequently, the younger generation raised in exile became “important people, a nucleus of the peaceful religious life,” which Tibetans wished to recover (Dalai Lama *My Land* 226).<sup>130</sup>

In his address at an Education Conference in Dharamsala on 5 May 1994, the Dalai Lama pointed out the importance of the Tibetan language in the education of Tibetan children “to make them perfect Tibetans” (Shiromany 317). Obtaining a modern education without “Tibetan characteristics” would result, he said, in temporary benefits and in producing a “white crow” (317). Tibetans, he explained, could not change their composition of “Tibetan flesh and blood” (317). Questions such as “Who am I? From where have I come from and from where did my parents come from?” could be better answered with a Tibetan education (317).

The Dalai Lama casts Tibetan national identity as being different from other nations because its value systems were based on Buddhist tenets of love and kindness. Buddhism was a shared value that made collective existence possible; the exile government wanted to ensure that all Tibetan youth, not just those in the monastic systems, had a “thorough grounding in the Tibetan religion, learning and traditions” (*Tibetans In Exile* 326).<sup>131</sup> It wanted Buddhist tradition to be part of the formal academic knowledge but also as part of their everyday experiences so that children

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<sup>129</sup> The Dalai Lama writes there had been “hardly anyone in the whole of Tibet who was not a faithful Buddhist” (*My Land* 17).

<sup>130</sup> Tibetan culture or Buddhist culture is equated with particular characteristics. In the Prologue to Samdhong Rinpoche’s political movement of *Satyagraha*, Tibet is defined as “a land where people are naturally gentle, slow to anger, and mostly compassionate, and where religion and moral culture abound” (*Selected Writings* 297).

<sup>131</sup> Veena Das explains the common anthropology definition of culture as a system of shared meaning (90).

“while inculcating whatever is good of other cultures, will always remain Tibetans at heart” (326).<sup>132</sup> This project was made easier because Tibetans already shared a religious culture which “uniquely characterized the Tibetan culture” in everyday rituals as well as in the realms of food, dress, marriage, institutions, and personal names. These “pan-Tibetan characteristics” were drawn from Tibetan Buddhism and Bonpo residue and they gave “high degrees of social unity and cultural homogeneity” (Norbu, *China’s Tibet* 382).

Education was a distinctive service of the exile government and it helped to shape the meaning of Tibetan culture. Culture served as a symbol of resistance, difference, and distance from Chinese oppressors. It gave a sense of destiny and hope to Tibetans.<sup>133</sup> But culture, when set in place by the state, is also prone to establishing a “system of discriminations and evaluations through which a series of exclusions can be legislated from above” (Das, *Critical Events* 90). In this way, the state can become the “primary giver of values” (90). The various initiatives of the exile administration sought to keep the basic policy to preserve Tibetan culture as a truth whose function was to remind Tibetans that they were “a people and that Tibet is our country” (*Tibetans In Exile* 331).

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<sup>132</sup> Tibetan education also means teaching values that make Tibetans special. The Dalai Lama has on several occasions referred to the exceptional Tibetan spirit. “The good behavior of the Tibetan people is our special wealth or precious heritage” (Shiromany 327). This heritage is derived from Buddhist philosophy (Kashyap 99). The Dalai Lama also stated that the Tibetan issue is not just confined to political freedom but to preserve Tibetan traditions. The “noble traditions” are valuable, he reminds Tibetans, not just for the community but for human society.

<sup>133</sup> Culture, as Lisa Lowe explains, is also a “mediation of history, the site through which the past returns and is remembered, however fragmented imperfect, or disavowed” (2). It is in culture that individuals and collectivities “struggle and remember and, in that difficult remembering, imagine and practice both subject and community differently” (*Immigrant* 2-3).

Education helps to produce ideas of citizenship, and to “stimulate the growth of citizens in the making” (Marshall 89). Aside from receiving a standardized education, schools are where the young developed ideas of patriotism, duty, history, and tradition.<sup>134</sup> The generation of Tibetans born and raised as Tibetan refugees grew up honoring new public holidays that commemorated Tibetan cultural and historical events such as the Tibetan Uprising Day (10 March), the Dalai Lama’s birthday (6 July), Tibetan Democracy Day (2 September) in addition to the public Indian holidays (Roemer 134).<sup>135</sup>

The classroom and the refugee settlements were sites where banal notions that construct the nationalist moral order, the ideological habits, and what Billig calls in his text on nationalism, the “invented permanencies” were practiced (Billig 28).<sup>136</sup> These included symbols and habits that became part of everyday life, such as having the photograph of the Dalai Lama in personal shrines at home as well as in all public events, and rituals such as singing the Tibetan national anthem before the Tibetan flag (both created in the twentieth century, came to stand as symbols of a “nation” that had always existed).<sup>137</sup> History, as taught in the classroom, confirmed these traditions.

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<sup>134</sup> For T.H. Marshall the education of children influences citizenship and “the right to education is a genuine social right of citizenship, because the aim of education during childhood is to shape the future adult” (89).

<sup>135</sup> Tibet Uprising Day commemorates the uprising by ordinary Tibetans on 10 March 1959 in Lhasa; Democracy Day celebrates the establishment of the Tibetan Parliament in exile on 2 September 1960.

<sup>136</sup> Michael Billig uses the term “invented permanencies” in the same vein as Hobsbawm does “invented traditions” (28).

<sup>137</sup> The Tibetan flag was designed by the thirteenth Dalai Lama and produced in 1916 to be adopted by the new Tibetan military establishments created by the Tibetan government (Tsarong, 51). The flag attempts the narrative of continuity to the old Tibetan empire of the seventh century. It was believed that the great regiments of the military Tibetan empire carried their own flags and the modern national flag took the snow-lions and other features from those old military flags as well as from Buddhism.<sup>137</sup>



The textbooks on history were not necessarily a faithful description of past events nor were the categories consistent. The 1966 school text for “Buddhist Philosophy and Dialectics,” contains no Tibetan history, and while the textbook for grade 7 contains a chapter on Bon religion, it is absent in the textbook for grade 6.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, the 1971 Supplementary textbook for grade 5 called “History and Religious History” devotes a quarter of its focus on history. The 1977 textbook “History and Religious History” for grade 6 focuses on the imperial Tibetan kings but contains no mention of Bon, as does the 1981 textbook, “Religion and Religious History,” for grade 7 and the 2004 textbook for grade 8, “History and Religious History.”

The task of history was to establish Tibet as an independent nation and challenge the powerful narrative of Chinese history that insisted on Tibet as an integral part of the Chinese nation-state. Thus, history and the nation were intertwined in the same project. A perusal of the textbooks leaves an overall impression of its focus on Buddhist religion to the exclusion of Bon, Tibetan Muslims, or other religious minorities outside of the dominant four sects of Buddhism.

At the center of the stories of recent Tibetan suffering was the Dalai Lama as a parent figure and the savior.<sup>139</sup> The textbooks on Tibetan history, written and produced by the Department of Education of the CTA, pronounced clearly “the definition of the *dra* (the enemy), *nyen* (Tibetan people) and *gon* (the savior in the

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The flag attested to “the fact that Tibet is one of the most ancient nations in the world” (*International Campaign for Tibet* web).

<sup>138</sup> The 1966 text book also has chapters on technical Buddhist philosophy such as Substantial Phenomena, Distinguisher phenomena, Realization of Existence, and Realization of non-existence, among others.

<sup>139</sup> Thomas Kauffman’s point that the Dalai Lama is the “central figure of this new community of refugees” and the “genesis of the community” is an important consideration (25).

figure of the Dalai Lama)” (Norbu, T “Rebels” 391). The uniformity of this narrative cemented a worldview and ideology that served to provide a sense of continuity and shared history but also to very efficiently isolate and even police those who did not know or follow it. Thus, narratives, symbols, and rituals provided Tibetan refugees a sense of a unified society with a deep and wonderful past and also instilled a feeling of indebtedness and loyalty towards the leader for making life in exile bearable. And because the nation’s history was also the individual’s story, the national sentiment of the time nourished a “national valuation,” so that *Tibetan* was a signifier not just about nationality and identity but it was also a term of pride and praise, as discussed in Chapter 2.<sup>140</sup> It is possible the behavior of the Ockenden students and the two instructors were responding to this signification.

The Chinese occupation of Tibet played a pivotal role in raising a consciousness of past events, not only to understand the present but also to gain control over a Tibetan future.<sup>141</sup> The Dalai Lama writes that during the few years of his rule in Tibet, “our legal status as a nation, which had never worried us before, suddenly became tremendously important to us. At this point, therefore, I want to give a factual history of our position in the world” (*My Land* 69). This factual history, however, was from the perspective of the dominant Central Tibetan Gelugpa

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<sup>140</sup> National consciousness becomes knowledge of nation and “of my own kind,” according to Bauer (“The Nation” 62-63). He writes that the idea of the nation gets bound up with notions of the self so that the structures of feelings of other ideas and time gets transferred to the idea of the nation

<sup>141</sup> Narratives about the past shape historical consciousness which in turn become the basis of collective identity. The reconstruction of the past leans on historical writings, those that show a “consciousness of history” and those that “reveal forms of historical writing” (Thapar, *The Past* 3). Historical consciousness is described as beginning when a society “shows consciousness of both past and future and does so by starting to record the past” (4).

government. Exile, meanwhile, was a new conceptual and historical composition that put Tibetans with diverse histories and cultural practices, coming from different Tibetan provinces, in close geographical proximity to one another. Instead of integrating the various cultures and histories with their interconnections, what was aimed for was a more exclusive uniform national culture.<sup>142</sup>

### **Textual Sources of the New National Identity**

Memories of the past and the homeland are significant to diasporic communities; memory yields to a form of confirmation or certification of the existence of a self both as an individual and a collective (Langenbacher, “Collective” 22). In the context of the Tibetan society in exile, collective memory—a term not without ambiguity—is ideational in that it has helped establish and sustain a political culture in addition to specific beliefs, values, and traditions that provide a sense of identity and meaning to a people in displacement for over six decades.<sup>143</sup> The autobiographies and biographies of elite Tibetan figures published by the exile government led to the building of a collective memory and were among the few

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<sup>142</sup> Romila Thapar proposes that a distinction has “to be maintained between how the past is understood and represented, and a perception of the past as specifically historical” (49). The two are related. Thapar explains that a distinction can be made between “the past” (understood even in its abstract form), and the representation of this past which she points out is “what is intended by the writing of history” (49).<sup>142</sup> Historicity gains prominence when the past is used to “legitimize the present” and when “causation” is important to the structure of that history. This narrative can be challenged when there is a historical change.

<sup>143</sup> Political culture here is defined in the vein of Lucien Pye (218) as a subset of a broader field of culture that takes the historical aspect – so it’s the intersection of the public and private. “A political culture is the product of both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the members of that system” so it’s rooted equally in private experiences and public events (Langenbacher, “Collective” 26). I use ‘collective memory’ instead of the term ‘historical consciousness’ following Eric Langenbacher’s argument that though the two concepts are dynamically related, ‘collective memory’ captures the intensity of the emotional aspect exercised on political and cultural life (26). Eric Langenbacher distinguishes between history (think layer of interpretation), memory (emotionalized) and myth (extreme layer of interpretation). He suggests that highly emotionized myths can be ideational influences but it’s less so in modern societies (“Collective” 28).

available sources influencing the definition of who Tibetans were, where they came from, and why.<sup>144</sup> These texts can be read as pursuing two goals: to counter Chinese narratives, and to present Tibetan voices. This means that the work of memory or historical narrative also carried a burden to cultivate patriotic loyalty, international legitimacy, and recognition or what Shain calls, the “collective missions, and perhaps more critically, a moral standpoint to enhance a policy” (Shain, “Collective Memory” 218).

The Dalai Lama’s autobiography *My Land and My People* published in 1962, just a few years into exile, indicates that the only thing he could do for the Tibetans left behind in Tibet was “to see that they are not forgotten” (22). He comments that “no people have suffered more since the Second World War” than the Tibetans (228). It was the relentless suffering that compelled him to bring the Tibetan case before the United Nations. The very fact that the Dalai Lama mentions the Second World War as a measure of suffering is an act hearkening to a larger collective memory that exists to remind the international community of their promise never to allow traumas to be repeated. Collective memory has had an influence on international affairs; the League of Nations and the United Nations were founded as responses to “historical upheavals,” and to prevent traumas from being repeated (Langenbacher, “Collective” 19). Similarly, numerous UN resolutions, laws (such as criminalizing Holocaust and Armenian genocide) and UN Resolutions on Tibet, 1723 (XVI) passed on 20

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<sup>144</sup> The function of political culture is to give a sense of communal identity for a group and so the collective memory— defined as “intersubjectivity shared interpretations of a poignant common past with a high degree of affect”—influences the definition of “who” the group is by answering “where” it came from and “why” (Langenbacher, “Collective” 26).

December 1961, and Resolution 2079 (XX) passed on 18 December 1965, are, in part, a function of memories.<sup>145</sup> For communities in exile who depend on international recognition, such resolutions herald an advancement in their cause, whether it actually happens or not.

The literature of Tibetan exile in the 1960s faced the constraint of inserting the story of a people on the losing side. The first and the more crucial task of Tibetan biographies was to “set the record straight” on certain historical events and provide a historical narrative that would link the past and the present to counter Chinese claims to sovereignty over Tibet (Dalai Lama, *Freedom* xiii).<sup>146</sup> This meant that in addition to the limitations posed by the framing of the “Tibet Question” within discourses of nation and sovereignty originating in the West, as outlined in the Introduction to this dissertation, Tibetans had to respond to the more sensitive territorial problems of Chinese government arguments that the “former government of Tibet” had never ruled Amdo and Kham (Blondeau, “How does” 125).<sup>147</sup> The new Tibetan administration in exile was sensitive to the diverse regional histories, the vastly different approaches taken by the people in dealing with the Chinese—for example, the grassroots armed movement, Chushi Gangdruk— but also to the different structures of social and religious loyalties that shaped the three Tibetan regions. Yet

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<sup>145</sup> Progressive laws do not only bring good results because they can also legitimize “reactionary laws” and even though laws are well-intentioned they are still forms of censorship (Langenbacher, “Collective” 20). The UN resolutions focus on human rights, and up to now the UN has not taken any steps towards considering the question of Tibet’s status under international law.

<sup>146</sup> Gyalo Thondup writes in the Preface to his autobiography *The Noodle Maker of Kalimpong* that his book contained “a true history of Tibet” of a particular period of time (xxvii)

<sup>147</sup> Ann-Marie Blondeau is citing Yedor 2006 (125). While Amdo and Kham were an integral part of the “ethnic and political mosaic” and somewhat “controllable in theory” under the Tibetan administration in Lhasa, these regions were also very different in “topography, dialects, and ways of life, and each was jealous of its identity” (Blondeau, “How does” 124).

they had to contend with what that would mean to the political imperative of that moment to develop a narrative around which all Tibetans could come together for the national future.

In their capacities as official versions of history, the texts helped Tibetans identify the recent traumas, to capture the remembered past, and to bring history to life to influence the cultural consciousness and political culture of the present. What is remembered of course also indicates that something is forgotten.<sup>148</sup> This was not an issue for the young who had no prior memory or experience of Tibet and for the Tibetans left behind in Tibet in “a gigantic prison camp” (Dalai Lama, *My Land* 228). What’s intriguing about these writings is that the narratives often begin from the remembrance of pleasures related to the individual, and then are transferred to the idea of the nation. In other words, the sense of the nation in these narratives is not alien, but rather, bound up with the idea of the self.<sup>149</sup>

Among the earlier texts published is *Four Rivers, Six Ranges*, the autobiography of Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang, the leader of the Chushi Gangdruk, the armed resistance movement that began in Kham. The Preface states that the goal of Andrugtsang’s autobiography is to “set the record straight and to present, for the first time, an account of actual events, as narrated by one of the greatest Khampa leaders.” The books written on the Khampa resistance following the 1959 exodus of Tibetans

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<sup>148</sup> For Ernest Renan forgetting is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation. Violence takes place at the origin of all political formations and “Unity is always effected by means of brutality” (“What is a Nation” 11). The essence of a nation “is that individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things” (11). For Renan, the modern nation is a historical construction brought by many convergent facts.

<sup>149</sup> Bauer discusses how a slight to the nation becomes a possible personal slight (“The Nation” 63.)

into exile, were written by “non-Tibetans” who had no direct involvement with the resistance movement and so had no “factual picture” of the struggle of Tibetans, and of Khampas, in particular (Preface).<sup>150</sup> Andrugtsang’s autobiography, published by the exile government, however, privileges unitary cultural and historical features of Tibetan history and traditions over the diverse forms of polity Khampas in the Chushi Gangdruk belonged to, as well as the contentious relations some of them had with the Lhasa government that shaped Khampa politics and history, as well as the Chushi Gangdruk. Consequently, the Tibetan nation is presented as going back to antiquity as a unified, unique, and independent unit.

The second goal of the books published in the first decade of exile was to present Tibetan narratives and voices in the service of the construction of collective memory for Tibetans in exile. Representations of Tibetan people and culture were understandably crucial to Tibetan self-knowledge as well as to the project to tell the Tibetan version of the story to a larger audience to gain sympathy for the Tibetan cause.<sup>151</sup> They were also expected to counter Western Orientalization of Tibet in the period of inter-imperialist rivalry and the Cold War era, as well as Chinese

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<sup>150</sup> Gompo Andrugtsang’s book was published by the Information and Publicity Office of the Dalai Lama, and it was an important source for Tibetans to learn about Chushi Gangdruk.

<sup>151</sup> Memories of Tibetan society that do not cohere to a peaceful and happy land rarely are applied to discussions of the past. In his memoir, *Tibet: The Road Ahead* Dawa Norbu explains the dynamic of the small community of Sakya where he was born. He explains that there were rival groups even in his small village and that “Tibetans sadly lack the virtue of forgiveness, and those who were able to forgive and forget were considered weak” (64). The Tibetan law was believed to have been written in the seventh century and other than a few changes in the seventeenth century, not much was done to update it to complement the lives of the people. He explains, “The Tibetans were so deeply entrenched in these values that they were unwilling to exchange them for anything better, and clung to the old at all costs. This is the heart of our national tragedy” (70). Norbu was among the few to write more critically on pre-1950 Tibetan society.

Orientalization of Tibet since the twentieth century.<sup>152</sup> In these texts, culture and identity served to remind Tibetans of Tibet's greatness to show Tibetan people who they were and to distinguish them from the Chinese. This resulted in representations of Tibetan people as a cohesive homogenous subject with exceptional moral sensibilities and Buddhist values that, ironically, are not unlike Western representation of Tibetans. For example, Andrugtsang declares Tibetans are "a simple, peaceful people, contented with their lot, engrossed in religious ritual and taking delight in traditional forms of recreation, all they asked for was to be let alone in their isolated valleys and hilly plateaus" (31). Likewise, writing on the people of his village Taktser in Amdo, the Dalai Lama writes that although the people were "mostly tall and strong, and hardy and brave by nature," these qualities were "tempered to gentleness by their faith. Humility and charity, temperance, kindness, affection and consideration for all other beings: these were the virtues encouraged by their beliefs" (*My Land* 18).

In addition, the work of Tibetan regeneration was shaped by an exilic consciousness wherein, on the one hand, Tibetans were defined by terms compounded largely from the deep and long history of Buddhism, and on the other hand, by the feeling of being "permanently at risk" to borrow a term from Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin, (4) because the majority of Tibetans were under Chinese colonial rule. The Tibetan exile effort, as discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, was directed to

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<sup>152</sup> Dominant Chinese narratives—embedded in the discourse of "progress" and "liberation"—consign Tibetan history and rich written heritage going back to the seventh century into a position of subalternity within a hegemonic Sinocentric worldview.



bringing diverse groups of Tibetan people together to create a homogeneous people whose identity was “simultaneously cultural and political” in a unique stateless nation-state polity (Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin 4).<sup>153</sup> The exile government’s claims for legitimation and identity demanded a rhetoric of unity. This rhetoric framed culture and identity as immanent and not the product of political struggle and power. So too was the case with history.

Not surprisingly, the autobiographies published by the exile government provided little important information as sources of history.<sup>154</sup> Historian Tsering Shakya attributes this problem largely to the reluctance of the writers to engage with controversy and confrontation (*Dragon* xxxiii). In other words, details that compromised the national narrative were “glanced” over in the drive to tell the truth of the nation. Thus, even though oral accounts collected by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in the 1970s contained more valuable information, such as the interviews with important political figures such as Phala Thupten Woden, Liushar Thupten Tharpa, Barshi Ngawang, and Kundeling among others, they were not published into books because the exile government “felt that some of these accounts compromised the official versions of history” (xxxiii).

The dominant narrative of Tibetan history attempted for the contested land what Prasenjit Duara describes elsewhere as the “false unity of the self-same, national

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<sup>153</sup> Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin use the term “permanently at risk” to explain the diasporic consciousness as one composed of “contingency and genealogy” (4). They propose that diaspora’s egocentrism offers an “alternate ‘ground’ to that of the territorial state for the intricate and always contentious linkage between cultural identity and political organization” (10). They explain that this alternate ground might help states avoid insistence on purity or permanence (10).

<sup>154</sup> Historian Tsering Shakya refers to this in the introduction to his seminal text *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*.

subject evolving through time” (Duara, *Rescuing History* 4). In *My Land and My People*, for instance, the Dalai Lama begins the story of the “single” Tibetan nation with the first King Nyatri Tsenpo in “no less than 2,000 years ago, in the Wood Tiger Year corresponding to “127 BC” (69).<sup>155</sup> The Dalai Lama locates “the next most significant event” in Tibetan history during the reign of the twenty-eighth king when Buddhism came to Tibet. Prior to this new religion, it was Bon that flourished during the reign of the first twenty-seven kings. The thirty-third king Songtsen Gampo gets special mention for establishing Buddhism deeply in Tibet and for sending his minister Thonmi Sambhota to India to create a Tibetan script (70). The great Tibetan empire is brought to an end by Tibet’s forty-first king, Lang Darma. The Dalai Lama explains that Lang Darma’s death led to the disintegration of the Tibetan empire into many tiny kingdoms. Lang Darma’s death in 901 AD is marked as leading to the end of the royal lineage, a unified Tibetan kingdom, and the decline of Buddhism.<sup>156</sup>

Tibet emerged out of its long oblivion when Quibilai Khan (1215-94) installed Sakya Phagpa Lodro Gyestse (1235-80) as the first of the “priest-kings” of all three provinces of Tibet in 1253 A.D.<sup>157</sup> This marked an important transition from the rule

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<sup>155</sup> According to the Old Tibetan Chronicles, the first King of the Yarlung dynasty, the rulers of the Tibetan Empire came down from the sky. Christopher Beckwith points out that this reveals the “sacral” as well as the autochthonous character of the dynasty (13). He also points out that The Old Tibetan Chronicles states that Songtsen Gampo’s father Namri Lonsan conquered the region of Tsan-Bod, which is more or less the south-central region of Tibet, known as U-Tsang. Thus, the Tibetans of Namri did not have the “ethnonym, Bod,” (Tibet) but obtained it through conquest (8). In other words, Bod referred only to a part of Tibet as the early Kings of Yarlung (southerners) conquered Central Tibet first and then the rest of the Tibetan plateau.

<sup>156</sup> It was between the tenth and thirteenth centuries when the decentralized clan structures were also responsible for raising Buddhism in Tibet.

<sup>157</sup> After years of seeking political influence over Tibet, Mongol rulers took Tibetan areas in 1249 and in 1260 named Sakya Phagpa as the head of Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism to administer Tibet “as vassals of the Mongols” (Schwieger, *Dalai* 9).<sup>157</sup> Tibet became a special region of the Yuan

of laymen to the rule of lamas, or from the rule of kings to that of priests. In 1578 Altan Khan (1508-82) and Sonam Gyatso (1543-1588), an incarnate Gelug lama from Drepung monastery in Central Tibet met somewhere on the shores of Lake Kokonor and their meeting altered the religious and political map of Tibet yet again.<sup>158</sup> Altan Khan gave the title of the “Dalai Lama” to Sonam Gyatso.

The shift from the rule of kings to lamas indicated a transformation in the trend in culture from violence to non-violence. Dawa Norbu points out the “structural contradiction” in the lamaist polity where lamas had the mandate to rule because of Buddhism but with little power to “enforce their rule” through the use of force (*China’s Tibet* 135). This does not mean the disappearance of violence in the Tibetan society. Far from it, it means that the self-interest of sectarian groups became a source of strife and national disunity (Karmay, “Religion” 24). It also means that there was the solidification of an apolitical state dependent on external powers for military support. This structure is, to some extent, one of the defining features of the Tibetan polity since the first “priest-king” in 1253. A good example is the Khoshud ruler, Gushri Khan’s (1582-1685) relationship with the fifth Dalai Lama.

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empire from 1268-1270, ruled jointly by the emperor and the Sakyapa sect. The Sakya lama’s rule marked sectarian victory and “consummation” of the Buddhist revolution that established all “legitimacy and mandate to rule to come from Buddhism” (Norbu, *China’s* 135). This established the political “pre-eminence of lamas in both state and society” (369). Tibet became a “religion-centric culture unified by Mahayana Buddhism” (Schwieger, *Dalai* 8). The religious, political and social significance of lamas resulted in the *truklu* concept, which became the eminent position in Tibetan societies (9).<sup>157</sup> This was a rule of Buddhist rulers who owed their success to their spiritual influence over military-strong foreign powers.

<sup>158</sup> See Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp’s essay “The Dalai Lamas and the Origins of Reincarnate Lamas” for more on the institution of the Dalai Lama, its relation to Altan Khan, and the establishment of Gelugpa domination in Central Tibet, Amdo, and parts of Kham (also Schaeffer et al.).

Gushri Khan's successful defeat of the Tsang rulers in Central Tibet "enabled the Gelukpa to establish Lhasa as the religious and political center of Tibet once and for all" (Schwieger, *Dalai* 48).<sup>159</sup> Likewise, his campaigns in eastern Tibet in 1639 and 1640 helped alter the political landscape in Kham by significantly strengthening Gelug institutions there (127). Gushri donated sovereign rights over the thirteen *trikors* (provinces) to the Dalai Lama and recognized him as the supreme religious head.<sup>160</sup> The establishment of the *chosi zungdrel* (union of religion and politics) whose goal was to subordinate the secular sphere to the religious sphere was observed by the Ganden Phodrang government; this came with benefits.

One of the most obvious benefits was the conversions of monasteries in Lhasa from their other traditions to the Gelug sect (60). Central Tibetan history after the mid-seventeenth century was conspicuously of the Gelugpa tradition. Gelugpa tradition expanded in the regions of Amdo and Kham in the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries and many monks from these areas went to Central Tibet to study in the Gelugpa learning centers which strengthened the position of the Ganden Phodrang. The Gelug monasteries in Amdo served as administrative centers for the Tibetan government and had influence where it did not rule in areas of Kham such as Batang, Litang, and Kardze who were more under the Qing than the Lhasa government in the eighteenth century. Thus, Gushri Khan's establishment of the

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<sup>159</sup> Like the Sakyapa and Drigungpa conflict in the thirteenth century where both relied on different Mongol tribes to help them, the rivalry between the Gelugs and Kagyus in the seventeenth century meant that both parties depended on different Mongol tribes.

<sup>160</sup> It was in 1637 that Gushri Khan subdued the whole of Kham. A year later, he defeated the Tsang rulers and placed the Dalai Lama to rule over Central Tibet, but not before installing a governor (*desi*) nominated by the Mongols in Tibet.

union of religion and politics was an important development for the following reasons: first, it demonstrated the tradition of the Dalai Lama as a new construction of power in Tibet that extended influence over Tibetan territories it did not rule as well as within Buddhist states in Inner Asia. Second, it established the institution of the Dalai Lama as a sacred ruler of Tibet and the center of a Buddhist government as one that combined “religious authority of the most sacred kind with the military power of a foreign ruler” (219). Violence was not absent for maintaining such authority.<sup>161</sup> The form of Tibetan government known as the Ganden Phodrang was founded under the fifth Dalai Lama (72). It is this government that the Tibetan Government-in-Exile claims as its origin.

### **Right and Wrong History**

The revolt by Tibetan students on 28 April 1966 against their headmaster Malcolm Dexter and their teacher Sangye Tenzin at the Ockenden School came as a surprise to the teachers. The testimonials by students and by the other instructors Gyaltzen Choden and Kelsang Liushar allege that Dexter and Sangye Tenzin were arming the young students with knowledge that could create strife among Tibetans and hurt their national sentiments.<sup>162</sup> In this chapter, I analyze representations of the revolt found in three sources: 1) the Tibetan newspaper *Bhomed Rangwang* or *Tibetan Freedom*; 2) letters and testimonials exchanged between Joyce Pearce in

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<sup>161</sup> The dominant view of Tibet and Tibetan history, the work of both Tibetan and non-Tibetan writers in the present time, is romantic and evokes a magical timelessness “where lamas fly like birds, where everyone is religious and everyone is happy” (Norbu, *Red Star* 9). Norbu suggests that while there is some truth to such views it leans and exaggerates “one aspect of Tibet at the exclusion of other, disturbing elements” (9).

<sup>162</sup> The *Tibetan Freedom* spelled his name in Tibetan as Gyaltzen Chonden.

Surrey and the headmaster of the school Malcom Dexter in the archives of the Surrey History Center in Surrey, UK; 3) letters sent by the Dalai Lama and his officials to Joyce Pearce in the archives of the Surrey History Center in Surrey, UK; and 4) additional letters written by third party observers—friends of Dexter—and other volunteer teachers who attempted to make sense of the incident. Most of the above materials are also available in one elaborate report, “A report on the Mutiny at the Ockenden School Dharwar Mysore,” prepared by Peter Woodward who was sent as an impartial investigator from the Ockenden Venture.

The *Tibetan Freedom* ran Choden’s report on 2 June 1966, under the title “A Report by Gyaltsen Choden, a Tibetan language teacher at Ockenden School” (2). In his report, written in the first person, Choden describes his impressions of the relationship between “Mr. Dexter and Sangye Tenzin” and the students, and the formers’ misconduct as teachers. He accused the two teachers of the following: disparaging Buddhism, monks, and lamas; saying that the Tibetan government did not exist; criticizing the Tibetan government officials; “stating that eastern Tibet was not a part of Tibet,” and “breaking the bond between His Holiness and the Tibetan people” (trans. Sonam 2).<sup>163</sup> Choden explained that he began paying close attention to Dexter and Sangye due to the above misdeeds. He observed,

Strangely, when foreigners and Indian dignitaries were invited for dinner, they used Chinese terms for food and utensils.... I felt that these two were engaged in destroying achievements in Tibetan religion

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<sup>163</sup> Diana Macle hose writes in a letter to Joyce Pearce on 24 Nov. 1965, that Malcolm and Sangye Tenzin need a holiday. She explains, “They literally have the boys from dawn till night and neither of them ever take a break” (24 Nov. 1965)

and politics using His Holiness's name and goodwill that donors and sponsors have for Tibet" (trans. 2; Woodard 83-85).<sup>164</sup>

Just as the narratives of the self were bound to the nation, the actions of individuals were interpreted in relation to their service or disservice to the nation. Something as common as referring to chopsticks as chopsticks became an act of disloyalty. Choden also commented on Dexter and Sangye Tenzin's inconsistent teaching pedagogy explaining, "While I maintained discipline through guidance and advice, Dexter and Sangye would sometimes play with students and at times make them work. This placed me in a strange situation" (trans. 2). He remarked that "there was no respect between the students and teachers" (trans. 2). Curiously, Choden also criticized the two teachers in the subsequent paragraph for beating the students and calling them "wild Tibetans" and "pigs" (trans. 2) and advising him to do the same for maintaining discipline. Choden believed that the teachers were beating the students "because the students did not agree to engage in studying Bon religion" (2). Choden revealed that he wrote to the Department of Education about the two teachers saying, "If they [Sangye Tenzin and Dexter] stay in school, then we would leave the school, and if they leave then we would continue to uphold the school's aims. We submitted a letter to the school authority for which we have had no response of any kind..." (trans. 2 June).

On 6 June 1966, Kelsang's testimony was published under the title "The Reason Why Kelsang left Ockenden." He stated that the move to Dharwar signaled several changes: there were attempts to turn the students away from "the sacred

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<sup>164</sup> All translations noted in this chapter from the Tibetan are made by Bhuchung D. Sonam.

religion of our ancestors;” dissension “was created” among students from different regions, and Bonpo students were praised “without shame or restraint” (Woodard 84). On 7 June 1966, the *Tibetan Freedom* published testimonies by five students on their reasons for leaving the school, and on June 8, it published three additional testimonials. Yidam, who was fourteen, gave his reason for revolting:

Because there was an intention to do away with Buddhism and convert us to Bon. We were told that our school needed to be like a prison. We were taught music/songs and if we fail to memorize immediately, we were beaten. Though Sangye Tenzin had many classes, he did not provide any explanation. He told us that King Lang Darma was beneficial to Tibet and that Darma was not a bad person (trans. 7 June)<sup>165</sup>

Similarly, an eighteen-year-old boy, Tendar, stated that the two teachers had indicated that Buddhist lamas and scholars considered their own ideology and views as sound and considered alternate ideas as foolish and baseless. Additional testimonies from students named Ugyen, Tsering Dorjee, Penpa, Jamdak, Kalsang Wangdu, and Jho Tsering were printed on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> June, accusing the teachers of favoring students who were of the Bon faith for speaking ill of the Tibetan government and for indicating there was more than one language spoken in Tibet.

The testimonials from the students published in the *Tibetan Freedom* (these were also expressed in their letter to Joyce Pearce) accused the teachers of the following assertions:

### **1. Amdo and Kham’s independence from the Tibetan Government in Tibet**

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<sup>165</sup> Lang Darma was the forty-first King of Tibet (901 A.D.). He is most commonly depicted as having destroyed Buddhism in Tibet during his reign.



The students indicated that Dexter and Tenzin taught them that Amdo and Kham were independent and had not been part of the Tibetan government in Tibet. This was expressed in different ways. One student explained, “Sangye said that his birthplace and the Gyalrong area were fully independent since they did not pay any tax to the Ganden Phodrang Government” (trans. Tendar 7 June). Another testified that, “Dexter said that Amdo was not a part of Tibet and that it was independent on its own. This was false because Tibet has three provinces and Amdo was one of them” (trans. Jho Tsering 8 June).

The issue of Kham and Amdo was of critical concern to the exile government. A few months before the Ockenden student revolt, the Dalai Lama had presented his annual 10th March speech to commemorate the occasion of the Tibetan National Uprising Day<sup>166</sup> in which he reminded his audience that since 1949, Tibetans had been:

reduced to the status of a subject race under the shackles of an alien conqueror bent on wiping every vestige of our national and cultural heritage. In flagrant violation of the truth the Chinese have tried to cover up their inhuman and brutal treatment of the Tibetan people under the names of ‘liberation’ and ‘progress’ (DIIR 17).

He explained that the “Chinese Communists” camouflaged their “imperial policies behind empty slogans and impressive facades” (18). One example of their “propaganda machinery” was their publicizing of the inauguration of Tibet as an Autonomous Region. The Dalai Lama pointed out, “This charade cannot, however,

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<sup>166</sup> On 10 March 1959, Tibetans in Lhasa revolted against Chinese rule and against Tibetan officials by storming the gates of the Potala. This day is commemorated each year as a public holiday and is known as the Tibetan Uprising Day.

hide the fact that the so-called Autonomous Region of Tibet comprises only a part of Tibet and that other regions are carved into separate parts following the old imperial policy of ‘divide and rule’” (18). The Dalai Lama was referring to the contention over the question of Tibet’s territory in addition to questions over its sovereignty regarding the regions of Kham and Amdo as explained earlier in chapter 1 and in greater detail in Chapter 2. The political standoff between the Chinese government and the Tibetan Government-in-Exile over Amdo and Kham placed Tibetans from Kham and Amdo in a painful conundrum. To admit that they had not been under the Ganden Phodrang government at the time of the Chinese invasion meant inadvertently supporting Chinese claims and exposing themselves to the danger of being defined as the “other.” To remain silent meant a disavowal of their regional histories.

## **2. Representing Lang Darma as a decent person**

The students complained that the teachers idealized Lang Darma, who persecuted Buddhism in Tibet (Yidam; Penpa). They suspected that the teachers wanted to promote Bon in the school and convert the younger boys to Bon (Wangdu “Statement”; Ugyen; Kalsang Wangdu). Of all Tibetan historical figures, no one is more maligned than the ninth-century monarch Lang Darma (842-901 A.D.), be it in popular culture or canonical texts.<sup>167</sup> The Tibetan Empire as we call it today developed between the seventh and the beginning of the ninth century, A.D. and it was the only period, according to Tibetologist, Peter Schwieger, that Tibet as

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<sup>167</sup> The name Lang Darma (*glang* means ox) is a nickname, and Samten Karmay points out that the nickname is not “attested” in earlier sources where he’s called King Dharma (*Khri Dar-ma*), Emperor and Divine Son (“King” 15).

constituted now—ethnically, culturally, and linguistically— was unified under a single Tibetan ruler (*Dalai 7*). It was during this period that Buddhism was developed as a court religion and so were the Tibetan script, literature, and law, what is generally accepted as Tibetan culture (7). The empire developed from a decentralized clan society into a kingdom powerful enough that it competed with Tang Dynasty China over the Silk Road, and made serious penetrations into Tang China’s western boundaries in the seventh century.<sup>168</sup> The disintegration of the Tibetan Empire and Buddhism is attributed to Lang Darma in most historical texts after the eleventh century. It is these texts, written by Buddhist clerics, that Tibetans in exile referred to.

Tsepon Shakabpa’s *Tibet: A Political History* (1984) was the first political history of Tibet written in a somewhat modern-styled format of history and translated into English. He states that Lang Darma was put on the throne by “pro-Bon ministers,” and that they designed laws to “destroy the teaching of Buddhism in Tibet” (51).<sup>169</sup> They sealed up Buddhist temples, ordered Buddhist monks to either marry, take up arms, become huntsmen or convert to Bon. Failure to choose one resulted in their death. “Darma was given the name of Lang (Bullock) Darma by the people because they did not like the way he treated them and the religion (52). The Dalai Lama writes that Lang Darma “came to the throne, and his reign was marked by his undoing of

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<sup>168</sup> Tang’s involvement with Tibet during this period is mostly recorded through the accounts of the marriage of the Princess Wenchen to Songtsen Gampo (he also took a Nepalese consort) and Princess Wenchen’s departure to Tibet on 2 March 641. Contact between the two empires was rich and lively with cultural exchanges and mutual respect. See Beckwith’s “Tibetan Empire in Central Asia” for more (24).

<sup>169</sup> Bon is referred to as the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, and was revived in Tibet in the tenth and eleventh centuries contemporaneous to Buddhism. Viewed by some as being an “unorthodox form” of Buddhism; and as a “vast and amorphous body of popular beliefs” (Kvaerne, “Bon Religion” 10).

everything his predecessors had done” (*My Land* 71). The same view is held in Geshe Lhundup Sopa’s popular Tibetan language text, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*. Chapter Six of Sopa’s text points out that Lang Darma managed to destroy the “teaching of the Vinaya” in Central Tibet in his brief reign (129).

Samten Karmay, a Tibetan scholar of Bon, suggests that the historiographical record regarding Lang Darma has never been questioned (“King”15). He argues that the pre-eleventh century sources might offer a different and closer view of the rule of Lang Darma than sources written after or during the eleventh century, and that a “radical revision of its history” might be called for (29). He points out that there is no evidence in later Tibetan sources that the king was a follower of the Bon religion and proposes that the conflict that led to the “persecution of Buddhism” during the reign of Lang Darma could be related to political power between the ecclesiastical leaders and the secular authority, and not “the struggle between two religious establishments” (28). His work situates Lang Darma’s brief reign within tensions in the court between the Buddhist clergy and the imperial government that peaked during the reign of King Ralpacan, who was Lang Darma’s predecessor.<sup>170</sup> He reflects that it is possible to read Lang Darma’s “persecution of Buddhism” as actions directed not against the religion but towards “its institutions which were a powerful independent body enjoying special privileges” (23). Karmay points out that later Buddhist sources

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<sup>170</sup> Samten Karmay points out that a Buddhist monk, Ranka Palgyi Yontan, had succeeded in obtaining a ministerial position under King Ralpacan. The growing influence of the Buddhist clergy during King Ralpacan’s reign led to discontentment among lay officials who were from aristocratic families and who even considered “eliminating the King and restoring the secular state” (“King” 21). Lang Darma became King of Tibet following the assassination of King Ralpacan and the murder of an important monk minister, and he supported the anti-clerical campaign that was already underway.

neglect the Tibetan military administration of the territories under Lang Darma's reign and focus instead on depicting the King in a "degrading manner" (24). Yet another interpretation is that the alleged persecution of Buddhism "took the form of a reduction or withdrawal of sponsorship," and that Buddhism did not die in Central Tibet but that there was more intensive Buddhist education taking place further from the center in the Amdo region of the Tibetan plateau (Schaeffer et al., *Sources of Tibetan* 167).

Lang Darma's association with Bon meant that Bon became synonymous with the decline of the Tibetan empire and Buddhism. Tibetan attitudes towards Bon had not yet shifted and the student revolt is illustrative of the dominant opinion and attitude towards Bon history and figures.

### **3. Suggesting Thonmi Sambhota was not the inventor of the Tibetan script**

The students alleged that Dexter and Tenzin taught them that Thonmi Sambhota was "not the inventor" of the Tibetan script and that an earlier script had existed, as proved by scholars in France and Britain (trans. Tendar 7 June). Such information contradicted what the students knew to be true. In *My Land and My People*, for example, the Dalai Lama identifies the advent of Buddhism in the reign of the twenty-eighth king Lhathori Nyentsen and the decision of the thirty-third king, Songtsen Gampo to send his minister Thumi Sambhota to study in India to draft the Tibetan alphabet as among the most significant events in Tibet (70).

Writer, Bon scholar and Buddhist master Namkhai Norbu reflects that Tibetan historical accounts narrate the invention of the Tibetan script by Thonmi Sambhota as

having brought “light” to the “dark” land of Tibet, and accordingly, nothing is known about the period before the establishment of the Tibetan empire, for example, the Zhang-Zhung supremacy in the first century. Norbu attributes this lapse to the dominant belief that the Tibetan script did not exist before the third century. He argues that a Tibetan script did exist before the third century and is “attested by authentic historical records of the second century: Bon-po historical documents” (“Tibetan” 39). Norbu suggests Bonpo manuscripts be studied thoroughly to know more about the first and second centuries of indigenous Tibetan history (39). But doing so would entail shifting existing views and narratives of Tibet.

The responses from the students were a form of defense and resistance to such shifts away from what they held as truths of the Tibetan nation. The notion that Amdo and Kham were autonomous prior to 1950 undermined the sovereignty of the Dalai Lama and his government in addition to endangering the national goal of Tibetan independence from the Chinese rule. Likewise, suggesting Sambhota was not the first Tibetan to invent the Tibetan script challenged the unity of the Tibetan culture and identity based on shared language and traditions. Finally, recasting Lang Darma as a “good” person undercut a fundamental plot and periodization of Tibetan history that was formulated on the rise and fall of Buddhism and an always united Tibet.

### **The Politics of Tibetan Historiography**

In *The Past Before Us*, Romila Thapar suggests the importance of identifying *what* each culture considers as “its historic traditions and why it does so,” over arguing whether a particular society had a historical sense based on our

predeterminations of what is historical (4). Her point is that historic traditions are deliberate outcomes of the intellectual and social “assumptions” of a society and incorporate a “teleological view” even if they seem to be a record of events (5). These events themselves are consciously selected to create a tradition that may only be partially factual in the end. Therefore, she stresses the importance of asking what purpose is served in preserving particular traditions.<sup>171</sup>

Tibetan historiography is perceived to begin in earnest in the tenth century with the past being organized “according to two basic schemes, one in which Buddhist history claimed primacy in determining the divisions of time,” and the other in which political history (imperial history and local institutional history) claimed prominence (Cuevas 69). The most common form of periodization used by Tibetan authors divides Tibetan history into four periods: the period of prehistory before the emergence of Buddhism and imperial rule; the period of the Buddhist *tsenpos* or kings from the seventh through mid-ninth century; the time of “darkness” registered as the persecution of Buddhism and the collapse of Buddhist imperial authority commonly attributed to Lang Darma, the “evil emperor”; and the time of Buddhist revival in Tibet beginning in late tenth century (69).<sup>172</sup> Even a cursory glance at this

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<sup>171</sup> Romila Thapar studies the literature linked to the *itihasa-purana* tradition of early Indian texts in *The Past Before Us* to understand the historical consciousness in those texts. She describes these texts as central to the tradition of the ruling clans, *ksatriyas* (57).

<sup>172</sup> Since 1950, the schemes of the periodization of Tibet’s past include interpretations of Tibetan society as understood in a Communist historical framework in Tibet (Cuevas writes that the transformation of “pre-Communist Tibet from a slave society to a feudal one” is emphasized here). Cuevas approaches Tibetan history by using indigenous terms for the divisions of time over European identifications of periods into ancient, medieval and modern. Cuevas recommends a periodization of central Tibet into four epochs (56): 1) 610 (Songtsen Gampo’s birth), 2) 910 (fragmentation of the empire), 3) 1249 (Sakya Pandita’s rise to viceroy of Tibet by the Mongol court), and 1705 (the start of foreign rule in Lhasa) (Cuevas 56).

periodization reveals the centrality of Buddhism. In addition, what is not expressed is that writings on and periodizations of Tibetan history, refer predominantly to Central Tibet.<sup>173</sup>

In his analysis of the Tibetan view of history, Peter Schwieger asks two questions: What was it that brought Tibetan culture to a standstill, and how was history “reconstructed” (“History” 81)? He suggests that the historiographical literature in Tibet from the eleventh century through the twentieth century largely presents history from the “selective perspective of the Buddhist religion” (80). He explains that the roots of a Buddhist-oriented culture was present in the seventh to ninth centuries in the courts of the early Tibetan Kings but that there were also other practices—Tantric practices that were later known as Nyingmapa and Bonpo—that flourished towards the end of the period of the kings. In the eleventh century the focus shifted from earlier practices to monastic and academic traditions. This mode reached its zenith in the fourteenth century also described as the Tibetan Renaissance by Schwieger.

Unlike the European Renaissance, this was not a rebirth of political power, nor a “liberation from traditional and religious fetters” but an increased “canonization of beliefs and views” (Schwieger, *Dalai* 8). Schwieger describes this process as the

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<sup>173</sup> The periodization of Tibetan history in Buddhist terms extends back to the old Tibetan chronicles that were unearthed from Dunhuang (Cuevas 53). A different perspective of Tibetan historiography is provided by Namkhai Norbu who divides Tibetan history into three epochs: 1) the history of Zhang-Zhung supremacy in the first century before the establishment of the Tibetan empire; 2) the separate histories of Zhang-Zhung and Tibet in the second century; and 3) the history of Tibetan confederacy in the third century” (39). He points out that the third epoch is written about in all Tibetan historical writings while there is very little mentioned of the latter part of the second epoch and even less of the first. He attributes this lapse to the dominant belief that the Tibetan script did not exist before the third century.



“clericalization” and “sacralization” of Tibetan culture (68). He provides two reasons for the fixing of the canon: one was traditions that only survived as “apocryphal accounts,” and the other was the drying up of living sources of tradition resulting from Islam’s entry into northern India. Fixing the canon as the “truth” meant that the “Buddhist clergy had finally cemented a monocentric culture in place” (“History” 67).

<sup>174</sup> The clergy were writing not “history as such” but “history for and about the institution to which they were bound in each case” (84).<sup>175</sup> Karmay shares a similar view on the matter. He writes that the “singleminded devotion” to religion meant that all branches of learning were tied to Buddhism, according to Karmay (“Religion” 25). This is evident even in the achievements of imperial Tibet becoming subsumed under religious interpretations.

In *The Clear Mirror* by Sonam Gyeltsen (1312-75), the first ruler of the Tibetan empire Songtsen Gampo is acclaimed as a Buddhist divinity, an emanation of Avalokitesvara (the embodiment of compassion), thus successfully combining history with legend. In retroactively turning Gampo and other warrior kings of the past into *dharmarajas*, kings whose chief purpose was the preservation of Buddhism, the meaning of deeds, as well as the function of history, undergo a shift. The focus on

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<sup>174</sup> It is for these reasons that Peter Schwieger arrives at the proposal that history functions in Tibetan culture to provide a “solid basis for, and defining, sociocultural interrelationships in a monocentric culture” (“History” 81).

<sup>175</sup> Elliot Sperling argues that the biography of the Pholhanas, *Pholhana Sonam Togyal The Man of Power [Mi-dbang rtogs-brjod, the Biography of Mibang]*, written during Topgyal’s lifetime and at his command can be read as the era of the Pholhanas and as a possible period of Tibetan modernity in eighteenth century Tibetan historical writing. What emerges for Sperling in this genre is the literary construct of a “great man” that departs from a holy man or saint but a “dominant political and military leader” (“Rise” 147). It did not subvert or end the traditional biographical writing which dealt with accomplishments of spiritual masters but it hinted to a modernity (Sperling’s use of the term “modern” has to do with an awareness of global trends). This text also provides a sense of the trade and economy taking place in the Manchu-Mongol world of which Tibet was a part.

Buddhist narratives meant that secular events were reduced to becoming “mere derivative and a by-product of the main theme (religion)” (Norbu, N “Tibetan” 38). It also meant that those who strayed from the recognized canon lost their influence. Such was the case with Bonpos, who produced their own canon “in response to the canonization of the Buddhist canon,” and were marginalized socially (Schwieger, “History” 83).

Despite the existence of many origin stories for the name *Bod*, (Tibet) Tibetans accepted national history as a truth rather than a narrative produced for the nation.<sup>176</sup> A big part of this history was the belief that Bon was a “continuation of the pre-Buddhist beliefs,” whose priests opposed Buddhism when it was introduced in Tibet (Blondeau, “When did Tibetan” 185). For the above and other reasons, Bonpos were ignored, discriminated against, and denigrated by Buddhists. Samten Karmay writes that the history of Bon monasteries is one “of either sectarian persecution or wanton destruction by a foreign invader” (*A Survey* “Introduction” web). Subjected to many different forms of “religio-political persecution” under the Gelugpa government, the Bon religion and its monastic traditions survived in part because its institutions were not politically ambitious and they held no position of significance that is recorded (web).<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Some scholars believe *Bod* originates from the name *Pugyal* before the emergence of Bon, others believe it comes from Bon. Yet others translate *Bod* as “fled,” signifying the group of individuals who came to Tibet with the Indian leader Rupati after the war with the Pandavas of the Mahabharata ((Shakabpa 1).

<sup>177</sup> Samten Karmay explains that after the death of Lang Darma and the disintegration of the Tibetan empire there was a period of unrest. In the beginning of the eleventh century A.D. Tibet began to rise and there were many small Buddhist movements as well as Bon religious movements establishing themselves. The Bon that developed in the eleventh century with other Buddhist movements “began to

Linking Tibetan history to Buddhist history meant a change in culture and the diminishment of indigenous narratives.<sup>178</sup> Dawa Norbu explains that if the earlier Bon kings of Tibet traced their origin to the sky, the later Buddhist rulers found their mecca in India. Tibetan history began to be bound to Buddhist history and to Buddhist India of the past instead of imperial China and Inner Asia (Schwieger, *Dalai* 8). Likewise, while the earlier Kings found glory in power and force, the later rulers represented themselves as the “manifestation of compassion” (Norbu, *Road* 377). The fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lozang Gyatso (1617-82) claimed the Avalokitesvara identity for himself thereby linking him to a “meaningful narrative” enabling legitimation and power in both secular and spiritual realms (Schwieger, “History” 90). Such a narrative is very different from focusing on the fact that the title of *Dalai* was given by a “Mongol Khan and that the 4th Dalai Lama was born into a Mongol family” (Dawa, *China’s Tibet* 69).<sup>179</sup> This also obscures the fact that the concept of Lama rulers was a Tibeto-Mongol invention in recent memory, not in the time of the Buddha, and not even during the glorious days of the Tibetan empire.<sup>180</sup> Given all the

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recast its doctrines with indic notions” of karma and rebirth but also continued with earlier tenets of cosmology and rituals (Karmay, *Arrow* 3 42-43). Karmay describes Bon and Tibetan Buddhism as being like “two sides of the same coin.” He points out that Bon is also seen as blending Hinduism and Nyingma (41).

<sup>178</sup> Namkhai Norbu proposes that older Tibetan historians neglected the Bonpo manuscripts because their intention was to elevate Buddhism and so they attempted to trace “the origin of all Tibetan cultural aspects” to Buddhism, thus, causing the older and indigenous Bon tradition to decline.

<sup>179</sup> Dawa Norbu points out that the High Lamas were in some sense the moral, if not political partners of the “barbarian empire-building in Yuan and Qing China” (*China’s* 70)

<sup>180</sup> The difficulty in evaluating ancient Tibetan history due to the scarcity of data is compounded by the Buddhicization of ancient Tibetan history. Dawa Norbu explains that the contemporary view of Tibetan kings and the myths of *Choegyal*, a “history of religion,” come from a “lamaist hagiography” of this shift (*Road* 363) where the predominant concern was the progress of religion. These narratives were not a record of what individuals did or how they related to each other or to their environment but, “what they did for or against” religion, and in the process established an “invidious contrast between

above mentioned factors, “a clear and authentic history of the origin of Tibet and the Tibetans has been difficult to assess” (Norbu, N “Tibetan” 38).

The Ockenden school revolt captures a critical moment in the formation of a hegemonic historiographical narrative for the exile government. The goal of an independent Tibet was seen as contingent on forging a cohesive and continuous national subject. Tibetans, especially the younger generation who were being affected, deeply needed to have a sense of belonging, stability, and community, both emotionally and psychologically.<sup>181</sup> Thus, alternative histories or memories that challenged a dominant narrative of Tibetan history were held in suspicion. Meanwhile, western scholars in Europe had begun to study and write about Bon as a more “distinctive indigenous conception” compared to Buddhist culture, that is to say, a Tibetan conception “without indic origin” (535). This point of view was not known to ordinary Tibetans, or when made known, as alleged in Ockenden, was not received favorably by exile officials and community members.

### **Letters from the Field**

On 1 May 1966 Malcolm Dexter, the headmaster of Ockenden School, narrated the story about the student revolt in a letter to Joyce Pearce. He explained he was writing the “most difficult and most important” letter. On April 30, he and Sangye had returned from the bazaar to find a “revolt” on their “hands” (1). The

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the pro- and anti-Buddhist forces” (364). This meant that while Songtsen Gampo was lauded, Lang Dharma was slandered (364).

<sup>181</sup> A volunteer staff member at the school, Umadevi, wrote to Joyce Pearce on 19 May 1966 that students were hurt not because they were unwilling to study Bon but because they were in “tragic times” and it was important to strengthen Tibetan unity and not undermine it (1). She describes the situation as being similar to the feelings if a group of “Protestant students were constantly preached Roman Catholic tenets (1)” (Umadevi Letter, 19 May; Woodard 40-41)

students had refused to do their daily hour's work and two days later, the students had left. Dexter explained that only five or six boys were involved, but they had managed to incite the other boys to join them. He suggested that "They themselves, fantastic as it may seem, were following the instructions of the Tibetan teacher, sent from Dharamsala, and from Kelsang Liushar, the school steward, both of whom had the idea to take over the running of the school and to remove Sangye and me" (1). Dexter wrote about the complex "religious and political implications involved" and explained that it boiled down to Sangye being Bonpo. Sangye, he wrote, "never makes an issue of this, indeed, on the contrary, does everything to conform to Gelugpa practice" (2).<sup>182</sup>

Dexter stated he would ask Dr. David. L. Snellgrove, a professor of Tibetan at the School of Oriental and African Studies University of London (SOAS) in England, to fill in the essential details regarding the "religious strife which has bedeviled life and politics in Tibet for centuries and still continues to do so here in India" (2). Snellgrove was among the very few scholars at that time studying Bon and the relations between Bon and Buddhism. This new scholarship on Bon was not so easily accessible in the realm of exile in the 1960s. Per Kvaerne ("The Study" 9-10) suggests that Western scholars up until the 1960s viewed Bon either as a form of folk religion preceding Buddhism in Tibet, as a religion that developed alongside

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<sup>182</sup> In another letter to Joyce Pearce on 10 May 1966, Dexter refutes the allegations against Sangye Tenzin enforcing Bon education by pointing out that "the reverse is true". He explains that the students spent half an hour "completely and orthodoxy Gelugpa, with prayers to His Holiness and to the Buddha" (Letter to Pearce; Woodard 16). Similarly, Mark Tennant writes to Joyce Pearce on 9 June 1966 stating that he thought the boys' letters were "fabricated as he knows Sangye was careful not to give Bonpo teachings in school.

Buddhism in Tibet, or as a term for popular Tibetan beliefs including divination, concepts of the soul, and local deities. These representations were challenged by new scholars such as David Snellgrove who saw Bon as a form of Buddhism that was “heterodox and eclectic rather than ‘heretical’” (11).<sup>183</sup>

Dexter explained to Pearce that “We always make a point of preaching tolerance in the school and of making no difference between the religious sects and the various provinces and this is greatly resented in some quarters” ([1 May] 2). He asked: “Do we go on? Or do we, abandon the project and cut our losses?” (3)<sup>184</sup> Pearce’s response to Dexter in a letter dated 4 May 1966 indicated that she had received letters from Dexter, Diana Maclehose (who also worked at the school), as well as a letter signed by the students.<sup>185</sup> She asked Dexter not to “take it out” on the students for writing to her (2). She explained it was important for children to know they would get a “fair hearing” but also to know that, “in the ultimate, we stand together” (2). She suspected that the most important matter was religion. She asked, “Is it not likely that, as you have explained to me, the Bompos [sic] are of a different sect from the Dalai Lama that they may feel Sangye has a different approach in the

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<sup>183</sup> David Snellgrove was one of the first Western scholars to study with Bonpo scholars such as Sangye Tenzin in the 1960s, (Karmay and Nagano, 10)

<sup>184</sup> Malcom Dexter sends a letter addressed to the Dalai Lama on 1 May 1966, in which he describes the “distressing incident” (Letter; Woodard 8-10). He says his ideals to “establish an academic institution which is worthy in every respect of the highest ideals of both Tibetan and Western culture” was shattered (9). He suggests the incident was spurred by Kelsang Liushar, and “sided” by Gyaltzen Chodron. He adds that he had only intended to expel the ring-leaders from school and had not expected 30 students to leave.

<sup>185</sup> Diana Maclehose’s letter to Pearce, addressed on 4 May 1966 also indicates that the revolt would have been impossible without Kelsang and the Tibetan teacher’s encouragement. She indicates that about twelve of the older boys had been showing signs of discontent and reluctance to be disciplined. She mentions that Malcolm and Sangye had shown great restraint in the face of the violent students ([4 May]; Woodard 30-31).

matter of religious instruction?" (2). She also asked if Mr. Phala (who was the Head of the Dalai Lama's Secretariat in the Tibetan Government in Lhasa) would have an answer if a teacher of a different sect would help settle the situation (Sangye was the only Bonpo among the Tibetan instructors).<sup>186</sup>

Pearce's question regarding hiring a teacher of the Gelug sect appears directed to the concerns expressed to her in a handwritten letter signed by students on the reasons why they were leaving the school. Of the thirteen points they listed for their discontentment, the most important ones are those concerned with Dexter and Sangye's opinions on religion, regional politics, and national unity.<sup>187</sup> The students suspected that the two teachers aimed to make the school into a "great center for Bonpos" (Letter to Pearce; Woodard 2-3).<sup>188</sup> They pointed out that Dexter had a houseful of Bonpo books and allowed two Bonpo lamas to stay in the school (Woodard 2-3).

In her letter to Tenzin N. Takla, the Assistant Director of the Council for Tibetan Education, dated 13 May 1966, Joyce Pearce suggested that it might have been the tension of the move from the cooler mountain climate of Mussoorie to the scorching heat of South India that made the boys unhappy. She pointed out that it was

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<sup>186</sup> Joyce Pearce mentions that "we" were sponsoring Phala's nephew to study in England. "We" is a possible reference to Ockenden.

<sup>187</sup> The students wrote to Joyce Pearce that they were not okay with the religion taught in the school. They explained that "Because we only follow the religion of Lord Buddha, but our teachers Mr. Dexter and Sangye Tenzin are always talking in the religion which came to Tibet before the present one, and neglecting our holy doctrines by all means" (Letter nd). The letter is also typed and included in Peter Woodard's report (Woodard 1-3)

<sup>188</sup> Malcom Dexter denied the accusations against him. He accused the two Tibetan teachers, Kelsang Liushar and Gyaltsen Chodon, sent by the Tibetan government, for teaching and abetting the boys to revolt. He clarifies in his letter to Pearce that Tenzin was not propagating Bonpo doctrines. He argues that the reverse was true. ([10 May]; Woodard 16)

strange for them to raise the question of religious instruction so suddenly when they had spent eighteen months in Mussoorie and had ample opportunities to raise the issue to visiting dignitaries including His Holiness (Woodard 11).<sup>189</sup> Similarly, Per Kvaerne, who was a teacher at the school and who witnessed the revolt, wrote to Pearce that it was unlikely that “discontent with working in the garden” could have “induced such a number of boys to defy their teachers” (Letter [3 May]; Woodard 29).<sup>190</sup> He suspected Kelsang Liushar’s hand behind the students’ revolt

These views, however, were not shared by Tibetan exile officials. In a letter to Pearce, dated 25 May 1966, Takla explained that Dexter’s accusations against Kelsang Liushar and Gyaltzen Chodon were discounted by the students who declared they had decided freely to leave the school. Takla agreed that the Tibetan teachers “might tend to be conservative,” but they had served the Dalai Lama with untainted devotion for many years and they had been appointed to this position by the Dalai Lama (2; Woodard 69). Takla further stated that the Dalai Lama and the Council had carefully examined the reports made by the students and concluded that there had been “an almost calculated attempt to sow dissension amongst the Tibetans and to alienate the boys from their national and cultural identity” (3; Woodard 69). This decision had been based on the allegations that the two teachers caused dissent among Tibetans and alienated students by undermining Tibetan religion and culture in two ways:

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<sup>189</sup> Joyce Pearce suggests the heat as being a factor for the problems in a letter to the Dalai Lama on 11 May 1966.

<sup>190</sup> In a letter on 3 May 1966 Diana Macle hose writes to Pearce suggesting that the boys might have been led to revolt by Kelsang and that the older boys who were most vocal had come from the Tibetan Homes Foundation or the school in Mussoorie.



- 1) Dexter and Tenzin called the staff working in the Dalai Lama's office "ignorant"; they stated there were Tibetans resisting the Dalai Lama's authority; they taught that Amdo was not part of Tibet; and they favored Bonpo students.
- 2) They told students that Tibetan history was written by Buddhist scholars; that Gelugpa lamas were a disgrace; and that Buddhism was an alien religion "brought over from India and the true religion of Tibet was Bon" (3-4; Woodard 69).

Takla indicated that although many of the above reasons appeared trivial, they were activated from "a series of attempts to strike discord among the Tibetans and to disrupt the national pride and cultural values of the Tibetans by ridiculing sentiments which are deeply cherished by Tibetans" (3-4; 70). As such, he added, the boys were "wounded" and their "loyalty to their culture and nation" made them resent Dexter and Sangye Tenzin (3-4; 70). Takla expressed his disappointment in the situation explaining he had regarded the students as "promising future leaders of the community and the nation" (3; 70). He offered two suggestions for the way forward: 1) Ockenden could let go of Dexter and Tenzin; and 2) Ockenden could agree to run the school "under the direction of His Holiness or jointly with the Tibetan Schools Society" (4; 70). He explained that it was the Dalai Lama's wish that this be so as the alternative, "under the present trend," only "appears to foster dissension and disruption within the community" (4; 70). It is unclear, both from the articles in the *Tibetan Freedom* as well as the letters, how the community would have even known

of the event in the school for it to disrupt the community given that the school was far from Tibetan settlements. Most interestingly, the Tibetan committee members had not spoken to the accused teachers but had arrived at their decision based on the letters from the students and the testimonies from Gyaltsen and Liushar.<sup>191</sup>

The Ockenden Venture decided to send Peter Woodard to investigate the incident. Woodard's exhaustive 89-page report, "A report on the Mutiny at the Ockenden School Dharward Mysore," contains copies of letters exchanged between different parties involved in the Ockenden School, transcripts of Woodard's interviews with 30 students and teachers, and minutes of his meetings with the Dalai Lama and Tibetan government officials.<sup>192</sup> Woodard professes to being impartial and dealing without "fear or favour" (1).

Woodard's meeting with the Dalai Lama, Tenzin N. Takla, and T.C. Tara on 1 June 1966 at Swarg Ashram in Dharamsala did not go well judging by the meeting

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<sup>191</sup> Joyce Pearce received a letter signed from the Dalai Lama voicing his distress and similar concerns regarding the events. Referring to T.N. Takla's letter, the Dalai Lama reminded Pearce that he had stressed from the very beginning the importance of "persons assuming responsibilities in the proposed venture. This has now become very clear, but unfortunately the results have been so disturbing" (Woodard 14). The Dalai Lama's displeasure led to a flurry of letters between Pearce and various international partners working with the school as well as Snellgrove to whom Pearce had turned to get a better idea of Tibetan history and religious politics.

<sup>192</sup> The students reiterate their reasons for leaving in interviews compiled in Woodard's report: one student says the teachers "contradicted our religion and culture and I think we were right to do this" (Woodard 54). One student says, "I didn't leave the school because they were unkind to me but because they were insulting our religion and culture and this made us very sad. They used to joke and laugh about the Dalai Lama" (54). Gyaltsen Choden expresses his disappointment in Dexter and Sangye Tenzin and in a report explains that the reason for the revolt was the "malicious act of undermining them and belittling their religion, and Government and Tibetan officers" (Woodard 81). He explains, "I thought for more than a thousand years there had been no rivalry between religions in Tibet except that the Bon religion was declining and those who embraced it had no rivalry against Buddhism." He said the two men were reawakening the rivalry. "It seemed that a drop of black ink had been thrown over an ocean of milk and if this sort of rift was to be planted in this school and if it is not wiped off, this might create much misunderstanding between the Tibetans and their benefactors" (Woodard 82).

minutes. This was largely due to the fact that Woodward refused to accept the Council's decision that Dexter and Sangye Tenzin had deliberately sowed dissension. Instead he blamed the Tibetan side for the revolt and insinuated it was a plot hatched by the Tibetan teachers under instructions from Gyalo Thondup, the Dalai Lama's brother.<sup>193</sup> Consequently, he asked, "I feel I know the picture very clearly. You accuse our side of spreading dissension and I accuse your side of spreading dissension, so where do we go from here?" (Woodard 65). Both parties stood behind the teachers they had hired.<sup>194</sup> Woodard suggested the school retain Dexter and Sangye Tenzin with closer input from the Council, while the Council suggested the school continue its work without the two accused teachers. Woodard pointed out that it was important to make the right decision because there was to be a big appeal in Europe for Tibetans in the near future, and so "everybody" was "watching" how this incident would be handled. Takla responded that it was equally important to Tibetans as it was a "matter of principle," and that "there seems to be a lot of thought by Sangye Tenzin and Mr. Dexter which clearly seems to be undermining the Tibetan authorities and religion" (66).

In a follow-up letter to Pearce about the meeting, the private secretary to the Dalai Lama, T.C. Tara, expressed his disappointment with the "unhappy incident," as well as with the "allegation made by Mr. Woodward that Mr. Gyalo Thondup was behind the whole 'intrigue'" ([5 June]). He included a copy of the minutes of the

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<sup>193</sup> Peter Woodard stated that Ockenden School had been promised significant funding and that Gyalo Thondup was upset because he had hoped to start a school (Woodard 62-64)

<sup>194</sup> Peter Woodard felt Ockenden had to be loyal to Dexter and Sangye Tenzin because they hired the teachers in faith and trust. The Dalai Lama responded that he had "also appointed Kelsang and Gyaltzen Chodron" (Woodard 66)

meeting between the Dalai Lama and Woodard. The Tibetans felt that the best solution to the problem was to shut the school down due to Woodard's unwillingness to let go of Dexter and Sangye Tenzin. Takla also sent a letter to Peter Woodard dated 8 June 1966, with a detailed report of their meeting held at the Tibetan Bureau office in New Delhi on 6 June 1966. He indicated that Woodard's baseless accusations against Thondup were more egregious than the charges against Dexter and Sangye Tenzin. On their front, Takla pointed out that the seriousness of the charge was justified by the seriousness of the situation. It was important that nothing impair Tibetan unity (2). He added that while the teachers might interpret their teachings as "jokes," the boys' sentiments were hurt and "the damage was serious" (2).

The event was followed closely by aid organizations helping Tibetans, as indicated by Woodard. On 3 June 1966, British, Norwegian, and Swiss organizations wrote to the Dalai Lama asking if there was a way to prevent the school from closing. They believed the school could fulfill its function to train "a Tibetan intellectual elite which can educate Tibetans in the context of the twentieth century" (Wiederkehr et al., Letter [3 June]; Woodard 79-80). To that end, they suggested setting up a Board of governors that included the Dalai Lama and representatives from Ockenden to oversee future problems. None of them supported Woodard's accusation against Thondup. Pearce was direct with Woodard in a letter dated 17 June 1966 of her concern that he was accusing Thondup without any proof. She expressed the same concern in a letter to Dr. G. Woodcock, of the Tibetan Refugee Aid Society in Canada. She wrote that the Ockenden school could only stay open if it was to be run

by the exile government. She wondered if the conflict was the outcome of trying to bring a Western education system in line with the Tibetan culture. She explained

Perhaps we are suffering the sort of experience that the more advanced thinkers of the middle ages faced when they offended the prejudices and taboos of the Church. A school which seeks to bring Tibetan education into line with Western requirements would obviously have to move forward very carefully indeed, if it is to succeed and at the same time preserve the essential and fundamentally important elements of the Tibetan faith” (Letter [21 June])

Pearce’s assessment is insightful; she recognized that teaching new history came up against traditional authority. In a confidential letter to Pearce, a member of the Norwegian Refugee Council suggested that Woodard, as an outsider, had acted terribly in accusing Thondup based on hearsay. He suggested the school stay closed because it would be hard to stay open after all the damning articles printed in the *Tibetan Freedom*. Taking the example of the Norwegian King, who was a refugee in UK, as a symbol of unity for Norwegians during the war, this member of the Norwegian Refugee Council suggested, “The Dalai Lama must stand as the symbol for unity towards the outer world, and minority groups, though they must be permitted to exist, must refrain from any action which may destroy this symbol or reduce its importance. Then it becomes even more important that we Europeans under no circumstances whatsoever may take an ‘anti-Dalai Lama’ – position” (Boe [11 July] 2). He pledged his continued support for the efforts of the Dalai Lama “even if we have to agree that some of the ‘old guard’ at Dharamsala are still living in their old days in Tibet’ (2).

Such letters exchanged between the International Aid Agencies and between the Tibetan Government officials offer a glimpse into the delicate balance of authority that the Tibetan officials were attempting to maintain over the various humanitarian projects underway. While the exile government did not want to alienate its western aid partners on whom it relied so heavily, it was also trying to fulfill multiple objectives: provide a modern and yet traditional education; build a cohesive society of Tibetans from diverse backgrounds; and obtain recognition as the legitimate representative of the Tibetan people in exile. The construction of a collective past and history, however, meant first negotiating with personal memories that had very different and conflicting narratives.

Snellgrove's response to Pearce dated 26 May 1966 provides a context to the study of different approaches to history. Snellgrove explained that Dexter was using recent works by scholars such as "Petech of Rome, Stein of Paris, the writings of Hugh Richardson" and Snellgrove's own work.<sup>195</sup>

Our interpretation of Tibetan history, based as it is on the critical evaluation of different sources, differs inevitably in some respects from the traditional kind of history to which the Tibetans in their enclosed civilization were accustomed. In no way does this suggest that their belief in Buddhism is being undermined, but it does mean that new ideas, such as for example the military might of Tibet in the pre-Buddhist period, are suddenly presented to them. They are liable to find such ideas anti-traditional and so react against them (Woodard 41).

Snellgrove suggested that everyone (here he means the Western aid agencies and educators) had agreed to give Tibetans an education that would equip them for

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<sup>195</sup> Luciano Petech (1914-2010) taught at the University of Rome; Alfred Stein (1911-1999); and Hugh Richardson (1905-2000).

the twentieth century, fearlessly but tactfully. He stated it was not possible to “discuss with any Tibetans in India what sort of history one is going to teach them, because they know nothing but their own traditional kind” (41). He felt there would be difficulty dealing with Tibetans from different religious orders and that it was hard to avoid conflicts with traditional attitudes. Such situations were not unique to Tibetans. He pointed to the disputes in “Indian circles in the last century in choosing between Indian traditional ‘history’ and history as we understand it, based on modern methods of research” (42). Snellgrove believed that the Dalai Lama was keen that Tibetans have “the kind of education which suits them for the modern world,” (42). The letter suggests that the Dalai Lama might be misled by his advisers.

In a separate letter dated 29 May 1966, Snellgrove speaks to the rivalries and jealousies within the Tibetan community especially with regard to the religious and political beliefs. He reminded Pearce that in 1961, a total of 21 guest scholars had been invited as part of a larger program sponsored by the universities of Seattle, London, Paris, Rome, Munich, Copenhagen, Leiden and Tokyo. Of those, seventeen were Gelug, three were Sakya, one was Nyingma and three were Bonpo, one of whom was Tenzin. From all of those scholars, only Tenzin, had offered to teach young Tibetans on his return (Woodard 43-44).<sup>196</sup> Snellgrove’s observation of the dominance of Gelugs was limited to murmurings within the non-Gelug minority and

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<sup>196</sup> David Snellgrove writes to Pearce of his weariness with “Tibetan rivalries and jealousies” (Letter [29 May]). He points out that all the individuals, adults and children, at Sedlescombe were Gelugpa and all the Tibetans who had been around London were also Gelugpa. “All the Tibetans in Switzerland (about 270 of them) are Ge-lug-pa. The Ge-lug-pas and especially those personally sponsored by the Dalai Lama’s Bureau have a vastly numerical superiority, and there is a protest when one Bonpo offers to serve as a teacher in your school. The Dalai Lama accepts him, but every effort has since been made, it seems, to get him out” ([29 May]).

non-Tibetan observers in the 1960s. Bon followers, who were a minority in exile, did not fit into a Buddhist group nor did they fall into collectives that were built around geographical regions. As the marginal of the margins, they sought each other out (Karmay, *Arrow* “The Exiled” 534).

Pat Brewster, who worked with Wiederkehr on several rehabilitation projects in his capacity as consultant to the Tibetan Industrial Rehabilitation Society (TIRS) in India, wrote in his letter to Wiederkehr on 2 June 1966 that he had spoken with the students as well as with administrators in Dharamsala and he got the idea that the “Tibetans feel that Malcolm and the Tibetan teacher he got from London were giving teaching contrary to their religious and national feeling. I’m afraid this cannot be patched up” (1). Furthermore, Brewster explained that it was hard to get “absolute truth from either side” (3). Brewster was convinced it was “religion and politics” that had come into the matter and he thought it had been a silly idea to “get a Bhompa lama to be the chief teacher in a school of this nature” (3).<sup>197</sup> Brewster’s analysis that “religion and politics” were at the heart of the problem suggests that Sangye’s Bon background was a problem in a school “of this nature.” It is unclear if the phrase “of this nature” refers to the status of the school as one that did not operate directly under the exile government or if it refers to the school’s British links and its aim of providing a modern education.

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<sup>197</sup> Pat Brewster writes in the same letter that Malcom Dexter, the headmaster of the school in question, suspected “a plot from Dharamsala (probably Thondup) to break the school, because as you know some of the Tibetan leaders, especially Thondup, wanted a school of their own.” But Brewster explains in his letter that a plot like that would not have been possible had the boys been happy (Letter to Wiederkehr 3).



The student revolt got a great deal of attention in the Tibetan community primarily because the testimonials were published in the *Tibetan Freedom* from 1 June 1966 through 8 June 1966. The timing of the publications coincides with Woodard's private meeting with the Dalai Lama. It is possible it was a preemptive stance. *Tibetan Freedom* did not present Dexter or Sangye Tenzin's side of the story, nor did it analyze the contents of untruths that Tenzin was alleged to have taught. Instead, the articles brought home the point that the two men had concocted historical lies, undermined the Dalai Lama, and hurt national sentiments. In other words, that the teachers' work had been to deliberately impair the work of unity. A volunteer teacher at Ockenden wrote to Pearce fearful for Malcom's and more specifically, for Sangye Tenzin's lives. He alerted her that it would "not be the first assassination directed from Dharamsala" (Letter to Pearce [30 June]). He mentioned that *Tibetan Freedom* had stated in an editorial on 25 May 1966 that the two teachers were "running dogs of the Chinese."

In her ethnographic account on Chushi Gangdruk, the grassroots resistance movement that began in Kham, Carole McGranahan asks, "How is it that certain pasts are converted to histories while others are not?" (*Arrested Histories* 3). She proposes many possible reasons for the absence of the account of the militia's long and important struggle for Tibet in exile narratives. One compelling and overlooked reason she gives is that the resistance army challenged the "Tibetan social and political stasis quo" not only with China but also within the "power structures and cultural hierarchies" of the Tibetan community (2). McGranahan focuses on the ways

in which Chushi Gangdruk veterans are excluded from national narratives and how they came to the realization that they would have to bury their past if they wanted to belong. The alternative, to call attention to the resistance war, awakened not only “a suppressed past, but also an alternative vision of a community” that would be interpreted as challenging the status quo and the Dalai Lama (4-5).

To belong is also to compromise and live with contradictions, in particular, for minorities. McGranahan explains that for Tibetans this compromise also involves Tibetans’ “relationship to the Dalai Lama” (4). The exile government’s task was not just to bring Tibetan education “into line” with Western requirements, but, as the incident demonstrates, it was to determine the essential elements of Tibetan culture and the pasts that could take their place within Tibetan history. Unity was a state project that foregrounded undermining the position of the Dalai Lama and the exile government as the most serious crime. The tension in the story is not so much between “Western education” and traditional “Tibetan” education as it is (as in the case with Chushi Gangdruk as analyzed by McGranahan) about controlling narratives about Tibet. It relates to culture that challenged the political status quo with China as well as the cultural and social power structures within the Tibetan community (2).<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> The event is a heuristic to study the “double life” of culture (Das, *Critical Events* 91). The delicate balance that alludes to both for minorities and for the Dalai Lama as the symbol of Tibetan culture is culture’s potential to “give radical recognition to the humanity of its subjects as well as its potential to keep the individual within such tightly defined bounds that the capacity to experiment with selfhood—which is also a mark of humanity—is jeopardized” (91). Veena Das defines culture as a system of shared meanings which “defines the individual’s collective life, as well as a system for the formulation of judgments which are used to exclude alterities, and which thus keep the individual strictly within the bounds defined by society” (92).

The Ockenden event was followed closely by western aid volunteers, such as Brewster, who were already struggling to stay in line with the exile government. Several of them offered post-mortems of the Ockenden school affair. A volunteer working with the new settlement in Clementown discussed his fears to Pearce in a letter dated 23 July 1966. He suggested there was an “underground turbulence pervading the whole Tibetan political set up” and gestured to other crises in places such as Mainpat, Rajpur, Dalhousie and “of course, to all the small independent groups all within the last year, and all as a result of the same influences at work that caused the tragedy at Dharwar.” Similarly, another individual sent a confidential letter to Joyce Pearce dated 20 August 1966 from Mainpat on the pitfalls of rehabilitation projects. He described two approaches to the “rehabilitation problem” (Hardy 1). Using the analogy of brewing, he explained that one approach used fermentation in that they added ingredients to the “working material” (Tibetan) and so ended up with a chemically changed product. He considered the better approach to be the distillation process in which one works with Tibetans and their nature to produce the finished product (2). He suggested understanding Tibetans by learning about conditions in Tibet. He concluded that while Tibetans were wisely ruled, it was a feudal state and he thought democracy was not possible immediately after feudalism, especially if the same people who were “lords in Tibet” were running the government in exile (2). He suggested that the Dalai Lama was for the people and that his task to bring democratic rule was hard with the continuing rule of the “lords” (3).

He suggested that Ockenden was “tarred with the same brush with labels the Khambas and the few splinter groups ...reactionaries ...against Dharamsala...against the Indian Government. If only they knew how pro Dharamsala: if Dharamsala means His Holiness, the religion, and the freedom of the people: we are” (3). The volunteer points to the difficulty of foreigners working in the game of rehabilitation because there was “too much dissension at the fountainhead for the water to ever be clear” (3). The surreptitious tone of the letter makes it difficult to ascertain whether the Khampas and the “lords” are the same people. The letter does reveal the element of the “game” in the effort to rehabilitate Tibetan refugees. The naming of the settlements of Mainpat, Rajpur, and Dalhousie points to the locations where certain groups are hinted as having been targeted for not following the rehabilitation proposed by the exile government. It is possible that these are references to the members of the TWA discussed in Chapters 2, 4 and 5.

Gelugs had been the dominant ruling party in the Tibetan Government under the Dalai Lamas—all monk officials were picked from the three Gelugpa monasteries—yet few Tibetans critiqued the government, perhaps because of the Gelug majority in Central Tibet. The new Tibetan Constitution drawn in exile in 1963 was supposed to end Gelug hegemony, but since experienced administrators were mostly from the old Tibetan system and almost all Gelug, it was not viewed as a deliberate tactic. Rivalries between religious sects and political groups and feelings of discrimination of non-Gelugs and minorities, as indicated by Snellgrove’s letter mentioned earlier in the chapter, existed but were perhaps not the foremost concern of

Tibetan refugees struggling to survive. The closure of the Ockenden school and the dismissal of its allegedly anti-national teachers was seen as necessary by exile officials and accepted as a warning by individuals who held hopes independent of the official national goals. It was not until a decade after the “Ockenden revolt” that sectarian strife, Gelug dominance, and a discussion on the relations between religious groups appeared in the public forum.

### **Who Will Sacrifice for Sectarian Harmony?**

In 1975, Zemey Rinpoche, a disciple of Trijang Rinpoche (who was the Dalai Lama’s teacher and who had introduced the latter to the fierce deity Dolgyal) published a book titled *The Yellow Book* calling for Gelug lamas to purge their practices of influences from other sects. This is when the controversy of the Dolgyal practice first emerged within the Tibetan exile community.<sup>199</sup> The sectarian tone of the book caused concern within the community, particularly among those who followed Padmasambhava (presented as the enemy of Dolgyal).<sup>200</sup> The book was also seen as an attack on the Dalai Lama and his leadership of the Gelug institution. In early 1976, the Nechung oracle, in what seems to be a predictable pattern, forecasted yet again the possibility of the Dalai Lama “passing away to another Buddhafield” (Dalai Lama, *Speeches* 113). It is possible the Dalai Lama was

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<sup>199</sup> The Dogyal controversy is an old one but it emerged in the Tibetan exile community in 1975 with Zemey Rinpoche’s book suggesting that Gelug lamas who mixed Nyingma teachings with their own were killed by the deity. Such ideology goes back to the late seventeenth century and to questions of the ruling Gelug order whether it was the purist of all Buddhist sects. The Dalai Lama’s refusal of the long-life offering made by the exile government was viewed as an indication of his displeasure with the contents of the book.

<sup>200</sup> The Dalai Lama personally renounced propitiating the fierce spirit known as Dolgyal (Shugden) followed within the Gelugpa community. He felt it threatened sectarian conflict.

referencing the *The Yellow Book* when he bemoaned the improper use of Dharma in his address to 130 members of the exile government on 21 March 1976. He explained that he had made many “appeals for the unity of the four schools” and yet “some people seem to be creating disunity and partiality in the name of religion” (*Speeches* 117). He felt that such actions were “intentionally belittling [his] appeal” (117).<sup>201</sup> A few months later, the *Tibetan Review*’s September issue sought on educating Tibetans on the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The issue contained articles on the Nyingma tradition by Jamyang Khentse Rinpoche (“The Diversity and Unity of Four Sects”), an interview on the Sakya tradition with Tempe Gyaltzen Dhongthok, an interview with the Nyingma master Dilgo Khentse Rinpoche, and an article on Bonpos (“Who are the Bonpos?”) by Per Kvaerne. This issue is important because it attempted to present perspectives of the other schools of Buddhism and also directly address the continued Gelug dominance in the Tibetan political arena.

In the Editorial, “Towards Sectarian Harmony and National Unity,” Dawa Norbu wrote that although there were philosophical differences among the major sects of Tibetan Buddhism, it had become a “political necessity to eschew sectarian differences for the sake of national unity” (*Tibetan Review* 3). He suggested that the four different approaches offered diversity and that Tibetan Buddhism would be “immeasurably poorer” without this diversity. He mentioned that the part played by “progressive” lamas to “conceal philosophical differences among the four sects is

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<sup>201</sup> The Dalai Lama’s admissions of disappointment in the community and his view that disobedience to his “appeal” are purposeful attempts to “deprecate” his wishes has the effect of mobilizing individuals to discipline each other and to confine definitions of unity to conformity.

neither possible nor desirable. Modern plural society, which seems to be the Dalai Lama's future vision of Tibet, makes it possible to have unity within diversity" (3). Since a sectarian problem in the community contained explosive characters, Norbu suggested that Tibetans adopt a "healthy attitude towards all sectarian matters," and that each sect continue its separate tradition without seeking to dominate others (3).

Norbu argued that past political struggles in Tibet after the death of Lang Darma were of sectarian nature or were "waged in the name of sects" (4). He saw the establishment of the Gelug Ganden Phodrang government as part of the struggle for dominance, and felt "patterns of the past" continued to be reflected in exile polity despite its democratic interventions and intentions. As an example, he pointed out that only Gelug abbots were paid salaries by the exile government (4). He wrote the dominant sect "must not only accept an equal status with others but also must make some sacrifices to achieve national unity and inter-sectarian harmony. It has to give up its claim to the monopoly of Buddhist truth (which applies to others as well) and also its claim to political power on the strength of the number of its followers" (4). He pointed out that Bonpos were not represented either in the "Council of Religious Affairs or in the Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies which other sects enjoy" (4).<sup>202</sup> He pushed for Tibetans to follow the Constitution more closely by disassociating Gelug from politics and to stop giving the two tutors of the Dalai Lama a higher status than the heads of other sects. In May 1977, Samten Karmay published an article, "Religion: A Major Cause of Tibetan Disunity" in the *Tibetan Review*, in

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<sup>202</sup> Bon representation in the Parliament was finally approved in 1977.

which he identified disunity as one of the reasons for the disintegration of the Tibetan nation. He gave examples of the “religious selfishness” of religious leaders and sects relying on different Mongol tribes to undermine each other. He advised Tibetans to reflect on the political and social strifes caused by religion, and urged them to read history instead of relying “upon the sporadic babbling of the superstitious and obsolete Nechung Oracle” (25).

Karmay’s article offended Tibetans, some of whom took to voicing their consternation in the “Letters” section of the *Tibetan Review*. Loden Khashitsang wrote of his dismay that Karmay had imputed “to that most pure of all things—religion—the evils of the dirty politics” (24). He called Karmay’s article unacceptable because it raised “his finger” against the Dalai Lama. He warned that “Mr. Karmay is becoming a danger to ... Tibetans threatening to cause cracks in Tibetan unity and hitherto the faith of the people in their religious leaders” (24). It is this very fear of new ideas that K. Dhondup responded to in his piece on Karmay’s article. Dhondup agreed that the inaccuracy of the definition of *cho* (religion) as used in the Tibetan draft constitution was problematic if *cho* signified Buddhism. He suggested “secular democracy” was more suitable as that would bring Tibetan Muslims, Bonpos, Christians, and Athiests within the fold of Tibetan society (“The Unveiling” 24). He reckoned the time had come for Tibetans to be introspective. He suggested that the “tragic end” of progressive Tibetans such as Gedun Chopel and Lungshar “should make us realize that we will ‘advance progressively backward’ if we mock and mutilate every new idea which is a bit unpleasant or unconventional” (24). The



writings of Dhondup, one of the most progressive writers and critics, along with Jamyang Norbu, Dawa Norbu and Samten Karmay were rarely understood or accepted within the exile community.

### **After Ockenden**

Almost a decade after the Ockenden incident, Sangye Tenzin was nominated to represent the Amdo constituents in the Tibetan Parliament, then known as the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies (ATPD). The Standing Committee of the ATPD held an extra session at the request of the Election Commission on 17 October 1975, to discuss his nomination along with that of Gonpo Tseten, who was an Amdowa from Clementown. The committee discussed Tenzin's past effort to impart Bon religion among students and to fight for equal religious rights and representation of Bon in exile. The committee stated that the incident had been well documented in the *Tibetan Freedom*. Similarly, they stated that Gonpo Tseten had worked with a Taiwan newspaper and that several people from Amdo had signed a petition to argue against his case. The opinion of the majority of the members was that the propagation of the Bon religion was a duty of a person of the Bon faith so there was no basis for disqualifying Tenzin for his personal beliefs (ATPD "Minutes"). This indicates a shift in earlier perspectives and attitudes about Bon.

The progress in Tibetan attitudes towards Sangye Tenzin and Bon was not, however, reflected in the Parliament votes on 21 October 1975. There was only one vote in support of Tenzin; the rest of the 15 Parliamentary members voted against him,

leading him to withdraw from the candidacy.<sup>203</sup> Bon religion was finally acknowledged, and a religious representative was elected to the sixth Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies (ATPD), the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile in 1977 alongside representatives from the Gelug, Kagyu, Nyingma, and Sakya schools. This move came more than a decade after the establishment of the Tibetan constitution promising equality to all Tibetans. Today, Gelug hegemony is not much of a problem given the successful branding of Tibetan Buddhism in the global spiritual industry. Tibetan Buddhist teachers of all schools have their niche markets secured in the West and the concerns their previous incarnations had regarding internal representation may no longer be of paramount concern.<sup>204</sup>

The Ockenden revolt is not remembered by most Tibetans today, but that does not mean it was an insignificant event or that real individuals and communities were not the victims of violence. If anything, it illustrates accommodations, humiliations, and sacrifices certain individuals were compelled to make for the nation. Duara points to the importance of the nation's "various smaller 'others'—historical others that have effected an often uneasy reconciliation among themselves and potential others" that start to form their differences (*Rescuing History* 15).<sup>205</sup> It is the potential others that deserve our attention because they contain the ability to "reveal the principles

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<sup>203</sup> The individual vote for Sangye Tenzin came from Mrs. Tsering Choden Dhompa, member of the ATPD representing Kham.

<sup>204</sup> The *Tibetan Review* issue also had an interview with Dhongthok Rinpoche, who responds to the question of Gelug dominance by saying, "I am sure, the present Gelukpa dominations not a deliberate one but inevitable. However, it must be pointed out that this should not constitute a pretext for perpetuating Gelukpa domination" (25).

<sup>205</sup> The nation is not an "original essence" and the national "self" is being defined at "any point in time by the Other" (Duara, *Rescuing History* 15).

that creates nations—the willing into existence of a nation which will choose to privilege its difference and obscure all of the cultural bonds that had tied it to its sociological kin” (15). Instead of incorporating multiple views of the nation into the Tibetan national history and viewing political identity as flexible, Tibetans in exile may have looked up to a singular view of the nation. The struggle for recognition for new ideas continues as does the struggle to define and practice concepts such as democracy and unity that are the substructures of the exile polity.

Unity remains the most used trope in speeches made by exile leaders as well as in cultural representations such as songs, poems, and discussions. Unity, however, remains in danger of containing contradictions that impede multiple points of views, collaboration, and creativity within the exile society. As such, it has the potential to limit both new conceptions as well as practices within the community as will be discussed in the following chapters.

## Chapter 4

### Minoritizing Dissent: ‘The Thirteen’

Tibetans must not perpetuate provincialism or sectarianism. They should not be conscious of whether they come from U, Tsang, Kham or Amdo; they must be conscious only of the fact that they are all Tibetans. They must be well organized and united to defend their rights; and they must strive to live and function under the leadership of the Dalai Lama in their struggle for a free, democratic state (Tsepon Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History* 325)

This chapter attempts to write the story of the *Bhod Dedon Tsokpa* (Tibetan Welfare Association), known more commonly by the moniker *Tsho Khag bcu Gsum*, (Organization of 13) a conglomeration of Tibetans led by thirteen lamas and chieftains from eastern Tibet, whose ideas of belonging placed them in opposition with the goals of the Tibetan United Association (TUA). Members of the Organization of the 13 found themselves deliberating between two choices: consenting to the TUA’s and the exile government’s assimilationist policies that they feared would make them lose their diverse regional and spiritual practices and authority, or resisting exile government policies and consequently submitting to a life of being doubly exiled. They saw themselves as patriots— many of them being veterans and supporters of Chushi Gangdruk— and nurtured the goal of preserving the cultural and religious practices they knew intimately. But more importantly, they believed that being Khampa, Bonpo, Kagyu, Sakya, and Nyingma were ways of being Tibetan.<sup>206</sup> In order to preserve their particular regional languages and culture, the group sought help from the Tibetan Industrial Rehabilitation Society (TIRS)—

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<sup>206</sup> Although I use the term Khampa here as a category, I wish to point out Kham’s diversity.

established and funded by foreign aid groups in 1965 to help Tibetans run small-scale industries— to build their own settlements, comprised chiefly of members of their traditional tribes. In 1966, they registered themselves as the Tibetan Welfare Association (TWA), a non-political welfare organization with the Indian Government under the Charitable Societies Act. Their effort to be self-sufficient was interpreted by the TUA as an attempt to split from the Tibetan society in exile and destroy its unity — both viable positions. Thus, they gained an ill reputation and did not receive any commendation from the rest of the Tibetan society.<sup>207</sup>

To tell the story of the Tibetan Welfare Association is to also draw attention to alternative or marginal narratives of the Tibetan struggle for belonging and

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<sup>207</sup> In an address to the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies in Dharamsala on 28 July 1994, it is unclear if the Dalai Lama is referring to the TWA or simply to Chushi Gangdruk. He expresses his disappointment over members of the Chushi Gangdruk starting a new movement with the goal of re-establishing relations with Taiwan by signing an agreement with Taiwan's Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission (MTAC) in Taiwan in 1994. The Dalai Lama explains that the Tibetan and Mongolian Affairs Commission was precisely the problem, in that it had created difficulties in the Tibetan society in exile for many decades. Given that the Chushi Gangdruk was taking a step that the exile government was trying to accomplish—establishing new relations with the Taiwanese government—the move to make contact with a foreign nation and “sign a document” was “generally improper” (Kashyap 62-3). It also, as the Dalai Lama points out, showed a disregard for the exile government's policies (63). The Dalai Lama's reproach is mild given the seriousness of this act. He then refers to Kham's importance as a province, and explains that in the past there were many people from Kham “who, for the sake of religious and secular affairs, kept their communities and experienced difficulties....In brief, as for those persons from the Sakya, Gelug, Kagyud, Nyingma and Bonpo traditions who hold, protect and propagate the Buddhist teachings and practice, a large number of people from the province have for long served the cause of the religion...” (63-4). Making this link, he returns to the present action of the Chushi Gangdruk, and states that such actions can be dangerous if it leads to people of Kham losing their faith. He continues, “In the past it has happened that a minor cause resulted in giving rise to many prejudices. When prejudices and doubts have developed in people's minds, whatever activities are undertaken, they will be of somewhat vague nature and there will be meaningless internal strife” (64). He continues to explain that “a small cause” can bring about “internal degradation.” He advises members of the Parliament of the importance of not engaging in “senseless talk motivated by meaningless prejudices and doubts” and that the “painful experiences” of the past ... the importance of clearing the present problem and of ensuring that the “disease” not reoccur (64). It is such oblique allusions that hold TWA members forever in tension. Did the Dalai Lama acknowledge that they had “experienced difficulties,” or did he make a point that their difficulties were a result of their “prejudices” and “disease”?

democratic self-governance in exile. I use the term marginal to recognize this group's new configuration as a minority within the Tibetan exile population, while keeping in mind that the leaders of the TWA held positions of power within their own groups.<sup>208</sup> Far from being dismissible as regional matters, or self-serving desires to maintain traditional titles, both applicable positions, dominantly Khampa-led assertions of Tibetanness, in terms of both armed anti-Chinese resistance within Tibet and challenges to the unity and middle-way politics of the Gelug-dominated government-in-exile are central, I contend, to a complex understanding of the mid-to-late twentieth-century narrative of the Tibetan struggle for democracy, identity, and nation. By promulgating an alternative vision of nationalism—the one inclusive of the traditionally valued religious and regional diversity—the TWA found itself placed between a rock and a hard place. This is to say they were situated between Chinese incursions against Tibetan sovereignty, on the one hand, and the exile government's marginalization of Khampa politics as traitorous concerns, on the other.

It is pertinent to understand that stories of the TWA do not represent the struggles and desires of a supposedly monolithic group called Khampas or of a place called Kham. The members of the TWA came from different regions of Kham and followed diverse religious practices.<sup>209</sup> While it is true that the TWA was led by elite lamas and chiefs whose opposition to the reforming tendencies in the ideology of unity stemmed in part from their reluctance to give up their traditional positions of

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<sup>208</sup> A majority of the Tibetans in exile was comprised of Tibetans from Central Tibet.

<sup>209</sup> For example, Bir's two camps were divided into two camps, one for those who came from Nangchen and the second for those who were from Dege. The Bonpo community gathered together because of their religious faith so they had Tibetans from all three regions of Tibet.

inherited or incarnated power, the dismissal of their insistence for inclusion as a regionalism that is always already opposed to the CTA's mandate of unity is also a problem. The alternative would have been more productive, that is, allowing the possibility of the source of ethnic or nationalistic tension as one related to "the existence of unrepresented political systems," or presence (Shain, *Governments* 9). Or, understanding that both regional desires and democracy aspired to the same goal of Tibetan freedom. Instead, exile officials chose to confine and understand democracy as a "form of majority rule," thereby relegating regional desires as anti-democratic and in conflict with unity (9).<sup>210</sup> This further resulted in obscuring the wishes and dreams of the minorities who might have felt they were not given a chance to bargain their position in the exile community.<sup>211</sup>

For the above reasons, it is productive to analyze the TWA's position by looking at the deep historical and social kinships that their desires correspond to. It is also crucial to ask if and how their histories, values, and ideas of social organization—that included group loyalty, autonomy, diversity, and reluctance to give up their power and submit to authority— were adequately considered or reflected in the policies of the reformed and democratic government-in-exile. Read as an example of suppressed knowledge resisting the dominant national identity, their

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<sup>210</sup> In the introduction of the book on exile governments in recent world politics, Yossi Shain addresses the limitations of confining or understanding democracy only as "the form of majority rule" (Shain, *Governments* 8). He supports Francis Fukuyama's observation that nationalist movements are "not opponents of liberal democracy, although they are often perceived as such" (8-9). Ethnic and nationalist tension arises from unrepresentative political systems (9).

<sup>211</sup> Eric Hobsbawm points out that democratic systems "do not work unless there is a basic consensus among most citizens about the acceptability of their state and social system, or at least a readiness to bargain for compromise settlements. This, in turn, is much facilitated by prosperity" (Hobsbawm, *The Age* 136). A process of "redemocratization" that acknowledges the hopes of minorities was never a consideration in bridging the gaps and softening the bruises of past tensions (Shain, *Governments* 9)

story contains latent possibilities for “more capacious” democracy and citizenship and encourages one to “reappraise the meaning of democracy itself” (Dayal 4).<sup>212</sup>

The interest of this chapter is not to memorialize the TWA. It seeks, rather, to study the desires of the individuals in this group as juxtaposed to the objectives of the Tibetan exile government in an attempt to understand the ideology and practice of belonging, and the development of right-bearing individuals as refugee-citizens in the formative years of Tibetan exilic life. This entails understanding not just what the TWA set out to accomplish, and what their interactions were with members of the group and with the exile government, but also what the Tibetan society and the exile government knew of their existence, their histories, and how it viewed their contributions to the society. Since it has been more than fifty years in exile, the present is the opportune moment to revisit their story as one sectional history in relation to the ideological development and theorization of unity in the Tibetan society in the early years of life in exile. The TWA’s response to the sacralization of democracy and nationalization of Tibetan Buddhism that sits at the heart of the Tibetan polity is also insightful and useful.

The formation of the TWA established two competing narratives in exile for the Tibetan nation-to-come: the dominant vision of the TUA which was also that of the exile government, and the marginal one of predominantly Khampa individuals whose leaders represented the traditional hereditary and elite class of nomadic Khampa polities as reincarnate lamas and chieftains. The former’s ideology of a

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<sup>212</sup> Samir Dayal is referring to marginalized narratives



unitary Tibet informed by modern concepts of democracy, rights, and equality was supported and disseminated by the institutions and social organizations in exile, and supported by the majority of Tibetan refugees. The latter's insistence on preserving regional kinships and diverse religious practices was a response to the "politics of unity"—one that they believed suppressed intra-cultural and religious differences and minority histories—and was labeled as being anti-government and un-Tibetan.

Tibetan historiography and a typology of Tibetan nationalism are incomplete without the aforementioned two narratives.

Violence is never far from any history of nationalism, and the triumph of a particular nationalism "is seldom achieved without the defeat of alternative nationalisms and ways of imagining peoplehood" (Billig 28). The Tibetan Welfare Association contributes to our understanding of how Tibetan nation-building in exile involves a constant negotiation between deference and dissent and between unity and difference. It shows how the difficult passage to a new subjectivity for all, but especially those on the margins, is about internal as well as external recognition, a process that navigates loss and retrieval of ways of being in the world. The story of the TWA can be read in a number of ways: as a demonstration of an assertion of democracy; as a chapter from the experimentation of democracy in exile; as struggle for power; and as a caution against similar rifts in the community. It is also the story about tribes and how tribes are made into nations. And to that effect, it is directly

related to the aporia at the heart of national projects: that of the production of a past and the potential violence in acts of belonging (Hobsbawm, “Ethnicity” 255).<sup>213</sup>

### **Building a Harmonious Society**

In the winter of 1964, Khamtrul Rinpoche Dongyu Nyima, the eighth in his lineage in the Drukpa Kagyud tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, and Chokling Rinpoche Pema Gyurme, the third in his lineage of the Nyingma tradition, were in Delhi. Also in Delhi at the same time was Gungthang Tsultrim, an ex-monk from Amdo, who had served the famous Gelug lama Gungthang Tenpai Donmey of the Tashi Kyil monastery in Amdo.<sup>214</sup> Tsultrim, merely two years into life in exile, had formed the Tibetan Amdo Drama Troupe with approximately a hundred people and toured the major cities in India. His troupe had performed to packed audiences in Bombay and Delhi and received reviews praising the extravaganza and the novelty of the performances.<sup>215</sup> The two lamas had heard about the troupe, and they had also heard that Tsultrim was aspiring to create a model settlement that contrasted with the exile government’s melting pot of refugee settlements. Tsultrim hoped the settlement in Clementown would represent all regions of Kham and the four religious schools.

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<sup>213</sup> The problem however, Eric Hobsbawm points out, is that the kind of history nations seek is a “retrospective mythology” (“Ethnicity” 255). The past, also a construction, relies on remembering as well as forgetting. The notion of forgetting is made clearer by Ernest Renan who suggests that the essence of a nation is that “all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things” (Renan, “What is a Nation” 11). Hobsbawm echoes Renan in that historical error is a crucial factor in the nation’s make-up.

<sup>214</sup> Khamtrul Rinpoche’s Khampagar monastery in Lhathog was under the patronage of the King of Lhathog (presently in Chamdo prefecture). Chokling Rinpoche’s monastery in Tibet was of Khampa ethnicity but under the Lhasa government. It remains under TAR jurisdiction.

<sup>215</sup> Advertisement in *Time of India* on 15 and 16 Feb 1962, in Bombay. One review in *The Times of India (ToI)* raved, “Seldom has the theatre-going audience in Bombay felt so wholly transported to another region and clime as at the second presentation of their dance-drama by the Tibetan Amdo Cultural Dance-Drama Troupe, at the K.C. College, under the auspices of the Asian Arts and Culture Center” (“Unusual Fare,” pg.3).

Accordingly, the settlement was organized into blocks for different regions of Kham and Amdo—such as Nyarong, Dege, and Gawa— with the hope that people would live in a federation and preserve and practice their own languages, customs, and religious traditions. Tsultrim had plans to build a Gelug monastery and Zongnor Rinpoche, a Nyingma lama, had already committed to building his monastery on an acre of land promised to him. Zongnor Rinpoche and Tsultrim had met during their terms as members of the legislative body of the exile government and had become good friends during their terms (Topgyal).<sup>216</sup> The exile government, on the other hand, was settling Tibetans from different parts of Tibet in each settlement in hopes of building solidarity between Tibetans and producing a more unitary cultural identity run by a centralized system. Since the majority of the exile population was from Central Tibet, the everyday representations of Tibetan culture in the settlements were being built around central Tibetan traditions whether it was language, dress, prayers, or performing arts. Although the dominance of the central Tibetan norm is questioned more openly in recent years, partly due to the increasing trend of Tibetans from the regions of Kham and Amdo to wear their diverse regional dresses and to speak in their languages, this is particularly true within the Tibetan communities in the West, most Tibetans then accepted and understood the government’s goal for a homogenous and more harmonious society.

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<sup>216</sup> When Gongthang Tsultrim and Zongnor Rinpoche worked together as Members of Parliament in Dharamsala, Tsultrim had stated he would build a settlement and Zongnor Rinpoche had said then that he’d be interested in living in his settlement. So when Tsultrim did get the land a few years later, and the funds to build the settlement, he asked if Zongnor Rinpoche was interested in building his monastery in Clementown (Togyal).

That some traditions came to be privileged and normalized as a shared Tibetan identity does not suggest that there existed truer or more stable traditions, but simply that the adoption of central Tibetan as well as Gelug traditions in the early years of exile was partly practical (central Tibetans comprised the majority of the exile population), and partly strategic (the exile government was led initially by old Lhasa aristocrats and government officials who were mostly Gelug). The act of establishing a hegemonic standard in exile did produce, however, competing options and desires because the exile Tibetan population was composed of a more diverse group of Tibetans than what had prevailed under the Ganden Phodrang Tibetan government before 1959. Tsultrim seemed to understand the lamas' as-yet unexpressed desire to build a settlement with the people from their traditional villages.

Tsultrim was already a controversial figure when the lamas met him. His Tibetan critics faulted him for over-reaching; he was accused of starting the dance troupe with the intention to destroy the Tibetan community in exile (TUA, *Truthful History* 98). While no explanations were ever provided for the accusation, it is possible that by establishing a Tibetan Amdo performance group, Tsultrim was seen as upstaging the exile government's Tibetan Dance and Drama Troupe (renamed Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts or TIPA in 1981) established on 11 August 1959 in Kalimpong with twenty-six members.<sup>217</sup>

Tsultrim had served three years as a member of parliament in the new Tibetan exile government. He was also accused of being at the head of the anti-Communist

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<sup>217</sup> Also called the Academy of Tibetan Music, Dance and Drama.

organization started by the Mongolian-Tibetan Affairs Commission in 1964 (TUA, *Truthful History* 99-101). The Mongolian-Tibetan Affairs Commission (MTAC) was an agency established under the Kuomintang (KMT) government in Taiwan to oversee Tibetan and Mongolian affairs.<sup>218</sup> The Koumintang government's position on Tibet—it considered Tibet an integral part of China—led to discontinued relations between KMT and the exile government for a few decades. In fact, many Tibetans believed that MTAC funded certain Tibetans in exile to cause conflict within the society; therefore, accusations of having ties with MTAC fell in the realm of anti-national activities.<sup>219</sup>

Chokling Rinpoche and Khamtrul Rinpoche had gone to see Tsultrim every evening in Ladakh Budh Vihar—a hostel for Ladhaki students and for Ladakhi pilgrims passing through Delhi that had also become a transit camp for Tibetans in 1962—during their stay in Delhi. Orgyen Topgyal, who was present in Delhi at that time, remembers that “they would return with stars in their eyes” (Topgyal).<sup>220</sup>

Tsultrim was an eloquent and inspiring speaker. He was said to “coax the sun out from a gray sky” (Topgyal). He held the opinion that Tibet's independence was some

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<sup>218</sup> The Dalai Lama explains that in 1959 Chang Kai Shek had stated that once Mainland China was liberated, Tibet would be given the right to self-determination. In addition, Chang had stated to the United Nations that he “considered Tibet to be a part of China while supporting the cause of Tibet” (*Speeches* 110).

<sup>219</sup> Taiwan most recently confirmed the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission would be “phased out” by 2017 (Chung web). Previously, in 2003 it had wound down the MTAC and a new Taiwan-Tibet Exchange Foundation established on 20 January 2003 was to take over some of MTAC's work.

<sup>220</sup> Established as Laddakh Bauddha Vihara, the outpost near Kashmir Gate in Delhi was envisioned by Bakula Rinpoche. It served as a pilgrim hostel for Ladakhis who traveled for religious pilgrimage, and education for Ladakhi students and as political representation for Ladakhi interests in the Indian capital (Dodin 392). During the India and China war, many Tibetans from the border areas took refuge in Ladakh Budh Vihar. Gyalrong Trichu Dorje Passang (also known as Trochu Pon) and his people lived there (396).

time away. He told the lamas that it would take a while, at least 30 years, for any significant political change. He believed it was important for Tibetans to become self-sufficient in the interim as the Dalai Lama advised.<sup>221</sup> Tsultrim's ideas had differed from Gyalo Thondup's optimism on the Tibetan future. Thondup, one of the most prominent political figures in the exile society had indicated that if Tibetans had fourteen steps left towards independence, then ten had already been made (Topgyal). Following his lead, many Tibetans had begun prefacing the activities of the present with "When we return to Tibet..." as though freedom was palpably waiting around the mountain bend (Topgyal).

Tsultrim had heard about the Bhoodan Movement, the land gift movement established by Vinoba Bhave in 1951. The Movement encouraged individuals to think of themselves as trustees of their properties and to share what they had been given; this resulted in the voluntary donation of thousands of acres by landowners to benefit landless people.<sup>222</sup> Tsultrim saw opportunity and hope in the movement's revolutionary turn away from what one of its supporters described as "revolutions of violence and revolutions made by law" (Narayan 206). Tsultrim had decided to make his petition directly to Bhave, whom he had learned was in Mathura. Tsultrim and his trusted driver and aide Jinba had introduced themselves as Tibetan refugees, and had

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<sup>221</sup> Jinba stated that the Dalai Lama had told Tsultrim that he and all Tibetans should assist him in the project to build the exile community.

<sup>222</sup> The Bhoodan Movement is also representative of the Gandhian movement in that it was based on people's initiative and collaboration. In 1963 Vinobha Bhave defined the political ideology of the Movement as attainment of "decentralized democratic socialism by non-violent and peaceful means" (Pradhan 22). Jayaprakash Narayan explains that Vinoba was artful in investing old words with new meaning and that the *dan* in his use meant "sharing together" and not "gift" (204). The other message was to "devise a programme of self-help and self-government" with people in small communities working with new values and ideas to create "new institutions and forms of social life" (204).

explained their desire to build a settlement. Tsultrim had informed Bhave of the organization he had recently set up, the Nehru Memorial Foundation (Jinba). Bhave had asked Jayaprakash Narayan—an activist and social reformer who had joined the movement in 1952 and who by 1954 had dedicated his life to the cause—if there was land available.<sup>223</sup> Narayan had responded that the King of Dehra Dun had recently donated some of his hunting land in Clementown and that was how Tsultrim was supposedly able to build a Tibetan settlement in Clementown.<sup>224</sup> The alternate version is that Tsultrim was only able to acquire the land after the Dalai Lama gave his support for the project to the leaders of the Bhoodan Movement (TUA, *Truthful History* 99). Regardless, the timing had been perfect; Tsultrim secured 100 acres of land from the Bhoodan Movement.<sup>225</sup> In the process, Tsultrim established contact with social reformers such as Jayaprakash Narayan who had political presence within Indian political systems and this meant that Tsultrim could bypass the exile

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<sup>223</sup> Many socialists drew inspiration from Jayaprakash Narayan (since 1934). He had been asked to join Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru’s cabinet and had refused (Narayan xl). He believed that in order for socialism to bring “mankind” closer to freedom, equality, brotherhood and peace, it had had to be transformed in India as *Sarvadaya* (a word made meaningful by Gandhi to bring “progress to all.” He explained that Gandhi felt that Sarvadaya would help build a society different from the one that existed in India, a society without exploitation and built on equality (Narayan 279). Jayaprakash Narayan agreed with Gandhi that these goals could only be achieved if the means were morally consistent with the end (192).

<sup>224</sup> Alternate versions suggest it is through Lobsang Lhalungpa, who was a good friend of Tsultrim’s, that the land was acquired.

<sup>225</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan had advised Tsultrim to register the land with the Lucknow court, which he did (Topgyal). It is ironical that the Bhoodan land went to the TWA whose leaders had held positions of power and possessed wealth in their nomadic regions in Tibet. To some extent, it can be argued, as their opponents did, that the TWA was not really building a new society in exile with progress for all as per the goals of the Sarvadaya movement because of the hierarchies built into their positions.

government and speak directly to the Indian leaders if needed. Such developments must have added to the exile government's concerns.<sup>226</sup>

Khamtrul Rinpoche and Chokling Rinpoche were emboldened by Tsultrim's project and confidence. They had been struggling thus far to keep their followers and monks together as they moved from one road construction project to another. They had resisted being resettled into the new camp in Bylakuppe precisely because they did not want to be split from their tribe. They were also very concerned about the brief imprisonment of Dudjom Rinpoche, one of the revered lamas in their sect, in 1963. The event is sketched in Dudjom Rinpoche's biography and it provides, in part, a glimpse into the general mood among the Tibetan exiles in the 1960s. According to Khenpo Dongyal, the author of the biography, Tibetan culture was already taking root in exile, but "a few high Tibetan officials" were concerned about how and who was shaping it (Khenpo Dongyal 129). These officials are believed to have held a different idea about how to maintain Tibetan culture and political autonomy based on their belief that Tibet had lost its freedom due "to a lack of unity." Khenpo Dongyal quotes "officials" as having stated that "Now is the perfect opportunity for change. Let us call ourselves Tibetan rather than identify with our local region. Let's have a single school of Tibetan Buddhism rather than the excess of traditions that exists currently" (129). Such a statement, whether imagined or real, alarmed some followers of the

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<sup>226</sup> Tsultrim's network of contacts include Bakula Rinpoche, Lama Lobsang (who was running Ladakh Budh Vihar), Lobsang Lhalungpa (he established the first Tibetan Radio program of All India Radio) and it is possible that through them he was introduced to important Indian political figures and also to new ideas. Much like Bakula Rinpoche who was able to get around the state politics in his homestate of Jammu and Kashmir and appeal directly to Pandit Nehru, Tsultrim too was building a network of contacts within the Indian government which meant he had the possibility to do the same.



Nyingma, Kagyu, and Sakya schools. Khenpo suggests that non-Gelug followers began to wonder, “If we make one school, which will it be?” They also began to speculate that this was a “plan to destroy the schools of Nyingma, Kagyu, and Sakya!” (129-130)

Khenpo Dongyal suggests that it was partly such fears that deepened the resolve of the new minorities to live together. Dudjom Rinpoche’s students had requested him to move to the settlement in Orissa, where they were and Rinpoche had traveled to Dharamsala to ask “Tibetan officials to fulfill this wish” (130).<sup>227</sup> Nothing is mentioned further in the book about the government’s response, but after having met the exile officials, Dudjom Rinpoche traveled to Siliguri where the Indian police put him under house arrest.<sup>228</sup> Khenpo Dongyal writes, “It was said that there were those jealous of Rinpoche’s flourishing activities, and with sectarian sentiments and political motivation, told the Indian intelligence organization that he was collaborating with the Chinese Communist Party and was receiving a salary from them” (130). However, the Dalai Lama, the King of Sikkim, and the King, Queen, and ministers of Bhutan besides other important figures promptly wrote to Jawaharlal

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<sup>227</sup> At that time Kathok Ontol Rinpoche, who was the head of Kathok Monastery in Kham, was travelling with Dujdom Rinpoche. Dujdom Rinpoche asked Kathok Ontol to read their situation in a mirror divination. Kathok Ontol saw a Padmasambhava statue “wrapped in a barbed wire” (Khenpo Dongyal 130). Dudjom Rinpoche had been requested by the exile government to help prepare texts for Tibetan schools in 1963. After working on the curriculum in Dharamsala, Rinpoche had visited Ladakh, India for two weeks giving empowerments and teachings to his students. Dudjom Rinpoche’s popularity in Ladakh had raised concerns within the dominant Gelug exile polity according to his students.

<sup>228</sup> There are many versions of the circumstances and timing of this arrest. Drawupon Rinchen Tsering thinks it was after the big meeting in Dharamsala where Gyari Nyima, a member and supporter of the TUA stated that it was time for the end of the rule of hereditary lamas. Dudjom Rinpoche was in the audience, he had been invited to be there.

Nehru for the release of Rinpoche (131).<sup>229</sup> While this incident might not have had anything to do with Thondup or with the exile government, its framing within national concerns was received as a warning by lamas from non-Gelug faiths. The fact that Dudjom Rinpoche, a highly respected and powerful figure in Tibet, felt he had to seek the exile government's approval or help (both could be argued) to decide where he ought to settle in India, provides a glimpse into the importance of the exile outfit. Given these events, the lamas thought that Tsultrim's undertaking was impossibly courageous.

In the spring of 1965, Tsultrim invited Chokling Rinpoche to visit him in Rajpur, near Clementown, where his proposed settlement was being constructed. People had already begun to settle into the new homes. Chokling Rinpoche found himself in a conclave with Khamtrul Rinpoche, Kathok Ontol of the Nyingma tradition, and Tobga, who was the nephew of the Sixteenth Karmapa, the head of the Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>230</sup> The group met a second time in Delhi, this time joined by Gyarong Dorje Passang, who had been vilified in the TUA's pamphlet *Seven Resolutions and Supporting Documents* published in 1965, and Palyul Zongnor Rinpoche, a well-regarded Nyingma lama who had moved to Clementown from Rewalsar, Himachal Pradesh.<sup>231</sup> It was at this gathering that the attendees bonded over their concern over the TUA's power and its ideology of unity expressed in the

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<sup>229</sup> It is unclear if the arrest took place in 1963 or 1964. Three people interviewed referred to a rumor they had heard that a Khampa man in the same prison as Dudjom Rinpoche overheard an Indian jailer retort on Rinpoche's release that, "one brother put him in and another brother took him out" (a reference to Gyalo Thondup putting him in jail and the Dalai Lama helping him get out).

<sup>230</sup> Kathok Ontol was from the Kathok monastery in Dege.

<sup>231</sup> Dorje Passang had sent his sons to Taiwan and had been named in the *Seven Resolutions*.

1964 manifesto, *Five Aims of the Tibetan United Association* and the 1965 text with seven resolutions. The TUA had led an impassioned door-to-door campaign and gathered an impressive membership in the first year with representatives in settlements in Dharamsala, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Bylakuppe, Simla and other places paralleling the CTA's centralized network. Indeed, many exile government officials had become TUA members.<sup>232</sup>

*Five Aims of the Tibetan United Association* only served to rupture the wounds created by Dudjom Rinpoche's arrest and deepen doubts about the real meaning of unity. Rumors or not, the word had been spreading among non-Gelugs that children attending Tibetan settlement schools were made to recite only Gelug prayers and that the religious teachers were confined to the Gelugpa school. Some people even went so far as to say that if in Tibet the Chinese Communists were indoctrinating Tibetan children with Socialism, in exile, children were given "Gelugpa teachings" (Khenpo Dongyal 130). This increased the fear that "The official statements and actions, therefore, didn't promote unity; rather, the strategy created deep dissension in the hearts of many Tibetans" (130).

The non-Gelug Tibetans began to ask if *chikdrel* (unity) was more accurately translated as blending into one (Norbu, K). If so, who was doing the blending or converting, and to what? Was the culture that the TUA was claiming to defend and revive as Tibetan culture a new invention or a modification? Was the TUA creating a Tibetan identity whose allegiance was to be built around one figure, the Dalai Lama,

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<sup>232</sup> The TUA campaigned door to door with membership sign-up sheets and many Khamapas signed up for fear of being labeled pro Chinese (Achu).

at the cost of multiple regional and religious loyalties? (Norbu, K). These questions and doubts about unity intensified with the TUA's second document, *D'otso don tsen dun dhang dh'e gyab gnon bches bjhugs so*, or *Seven Resolutions and Supporting Documents*, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3. This document elaborated on the importance of unity as a tool of resistance against the Chinese and as a shield for internal disintegration. To achieve those ends, the resolution espoused the right views and actions to be followed, chiefly by pledging to follow all the wishes of the Dalai Lama. In addition, Tibetans were to monitor other Tibetans and to report any untoward behavior to the CTA and to the Indian government. The document was a manual on the duties of belonging to the new Tibetan polity in which the Dalai Lama was the instrument of influence and authority.

Since Dujdom Rinpoche's arrest, lamas and followers of non-Gelug schools had been worried that they would become the next targets. They feared that the TUA and the exile government wanted Tibetans to lose their sect affiliations (Norbu, K). The TUA's *Seven Resolutions and Supporting Documents* mandated national integration and established the Dalai Lama and his government as the only authority regulating and defining larger issues such as national identity and goals as well as directing the more mundane organization of the refugee community in terms of access to resources, livelihood, and everyday routine within the refugee settlements. Each of the individuals in the TWA cabal had clashed with exile government officials over what TWA members considered to be small differences: some had organized themselves into groups comprised entirely of their tribes to work on the road

construction camps instead of following instructions from the *lam ze* or *lam kyichap* (supervisors), who were usually Central Tibetan aristocrats sent by the Tibetan government to organize teams of ten Tibetans from different regions of Tibet for a total of one hundred workers;<sup>233</sup> some had refused to be resettled in the new Tibetan refugee settlements in South India citing their fear of the heat; and some had sought aid directly from international organizations.<sup>234</sup> In addition to wanting to live with their own nomadic tribes, these groups also wanted their traditional chiefs to serve as settlement officers in place of those nominated by the exile government.

All the above requests and actions were decried in the TUA's resolution as being harmful to Tibetan unity. The TUA supporters felt that TWA members wanted the benefits of belonging to the Tibetan refugee community but were not willing to make any accommodations or sacrifices. Tsultrim, on the other hand, understood the desires of the TWA members and had a solution: he suggested they all build their own settlements (Yujay). He promised to introduce them to Pat Brewster who was the director of the Tibetan Refugee Programme of the National Christian Council of India and who had worked with Tsultrim in getting funds from the Swiss Aid to construct about hundred homes in Clementown in January 1965.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Namkha Dorjee, Chokling Rinpoche, Khamtrul Rinpoche, Pon Sangye Namgyal and their communities sought to organize as teams under their own supervision rather than under the supervisor sent by the exile government. This was the main problem, not that they were organizing into groups made up just by their people.

<sup>234</sup> Namkha Dorjee, Chokling Rinpoche, and Khamtrul Rinpoche went directly to Mr. Nag in Delhi to inform him they were not receiving aid from the exile officials.

<sup>235</sup> Gongthang Tsultrim and Pat Brewster were introduced to each other by Lobsang Lhalungpa who worked in the All India Radio, Delhi. Brewster was helping Tsultrim by January 1965 as he writes to Ernest Wiederkehr of Swiss Aid to Tibetans in updates on the project.

The Clementown pioneering project was important and not just for Tsultrim and his admirers. Brewster wrote in glowing terms of the final plans for the settlement in his letters to Dr. Ernest Wiederkehr at the Swiss Aid to Tibetans in Geneva. On 9 March 1965 Brewster wrote that the Dalai Lama's Bureau, the engineer, and his Tibetan partners were very pleased with the "masterly plan." He mentioned that the plan had "features of design which are peculiar to Tibetan architecture - for instance, the windows and the shape of the outside walls." He predicted that "this could well be the future pattern of Tibetan housing in India; I'd like you to convey to your Committee the importance of this pioneering effort in establishing a characteristically Tibetan design at low cost."

Brewster's reports and letters to the head office of the World Council of Churches provide a time line to the establishment of twelve settlements that would comprise the settlements of the members of the TWA.<sup>236</sup> Brewster's report on 21 February 1966, confirmed the establishment of the Tibetan Industrial Rehabilitation Society (TIRS) as an office that would channel funds from overseas agencies, prepare projects for donor agencies, and oversee the implementation of Tibetan projects in India under the sponsorship of the Dalai Lama ("General Description") The TIR team consisted of Brewster as a consultant, W. Davinson as the field director, and Mervyn Bobb as the general officer. It is clear from the letters and reports that Brewster and Davinson were personally involved in appraising and purchasing the lands of Bir and

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<sup>236</sup> Only 12 settlements were built; Dorje Passang left India after the campaign against him by TUA.

Dehra Dun (Brewster, Letter to Wiederkehr. [11 Aug] 2).<sup>237</sup> In a report on Tibetan refugee aid programmes in India on November 1966, Brewster suggested that the project build a self-supporting Tibetan community depended on undertaking “projects on a larger financial scale, with greater freedom of operation decision and expenditure by the officer in charge” (“Tibetan Refugee” Nov. 1).

Tsultrim and Brewster introduced the Khampa lamas and chiefs to Mr. Nag who was the Under Secretary of External Affairs of the Government of India. The Khampa leaders and lamas were assured by Nag that they were not breaking any laws in India by getting direct help from aid agencies and bypassing the exile government (Topgyal). By 1966, Namkha Dorje and his tribe were settled at Camp no. 4 in Mainpat, Madhya Pradesh and Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, Sangye Namgyal, and the community of Bonpos built a settlement with the help of the Catholic Relief Agency in 1966 in Dolanji, Himachal Pradesh. By mid-September 1967, TIRS had set up many industrial projects and settlements. Among these were the Taopan Gapa Welfare Society with a lime quarry at Kumrao in 1966, the Kham Kathok Welfare Society with a hydrated lime plant in Satuan in 1966, and the settlements in Bir with a Woollen Mill and a Tea estate. Even if the exile government disapproved of these settlements, intervening directly would have meant revealing internal strife to its Indian and foreign counterparts and benefactors, and presenting a unified polity was crucial for recognition as well as for the resettlement of all Tibetans.

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<sup>237</sup> Tibetans refer to Davinson as Captain Davinson. Pat Brewster states in his letters that he went to see some of the lands personally. The oral interviews corroborate his version. Davinson went to see the Bir property as soon as he heard of it (Topgyal).

The TUA and Tibetan government officials suspected that Brewster was responsible for teaching the thirteen leaders to organize themselves (Tenpa; Topgay). While that gives too much agency to Brewster and none to the TWA leaders, it is clear from Brewster's correspondences to his supervisors that he supported the members of the TWA in building their settlements. He seemed to champion settling Tibetan communities "in small groups to preserve as far as possible their cultural and religious cohesion" ("General Description" 21 Feb. 2). Brewster mentioned in his reports, as early as December 1965, that the Tibetans at the road camps were being overlooked by relief efforts and that they needed to be settled. He also wrote in a report in December 1965 that most relief agencies were moving towards economic rehabilitation and education and suggested that future goals be aimed at "hastening the drive towards independence and self-help" ("Review of Tibetan" 2). He thought he could play a strategic role in working directly on such projects and proposed buying land and settling the refugees. He cited Clementown as a model (8). Brewster seemed to already have the members of the TWA in mind for his future projects in these correspondences.<sup>238</sup>

The exile government's interest in centralizing all aid movement is understandable given that welfare entitlements is one of the powerful means that States rely on to promote the idea of national identity or identification with a national community. Ann Frechette explains that States are challenged when other

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<sup>238</sup> In a separate incident regarding the revolt in Ockenden school, Pat Brewster is mentioned in a letter as having told Bob Woodard, that the only way to rehabilitate Tibetans, if the exile government was not cooperating, was to support small groups (Woodard 75)



organizations “encourage alternate identifications of the self with other communities” (20). TWA members were in a situation where they were in touch with many different representatives from international organizations as well as with influential Indian politicians and social workers who encouraged their diverse histories, values, and identifications.<sup>239</sup> To some extent, these representatives introduced TWA members to alternate values and ideas about democracy.

### **A Federation of 13**

In his autobiography *The Autobiography of Juchen (Kalon Trisur Dege Juchen Thubten Namgyal Kutse Logyue)*, Juchen Thupten, a lifetime politician who served in the Tibetan Parliament, and was Speaker of the Parliament and thereafter a Cabinet Minister, writes that the first formal meeting of the TWA leaders took place in the house of an industrialist named Ashoka in Calcutta in April 1966 (6:215).<sup>240</sup> The leaders of the thirteen groups were all linked through Tsultrim, but some of them were familiar with one another because they shared regional or religious histories.<sup>241</sup> At the first meeting, they focused on identifying the key players of the TUA and their goals. The attendees felt the TUA was working to “single out lamas and leaders and subdue them” with the plan to “wipe out religious sects, regional and master-disciple

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<sup>239</sup> These include Freda Bedi (who was asked by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to run the Social Welfare Board. She became a student of the sixteenth Karmapa), and Mr. Nag. Photos of TWA leaders with Mrs. Indira Gandhi indicate they were making their presence known.

<sup>240</sup> Ashoka was a patron of Karmapa and was the owner of a pharmaceutical company according to Juchen Thupten in his autobiography.

<sup>241</sup> Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche met Tsultrim via Lobsang Lhalungpa (Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche); Zongnon Rinpoche and Tsultrim met while serving the Tibetan Parliament as did Drawupon Rinchen Tsering (Drawupon).

bonds” (trans. 6:126).<sup>242</sup> The attendees also felt that the TUA’s agenda would be detrimental to Tibetan culture, people, and way of life. They decided to oppose the TUA on all fronts by securing “one’s own religious institutions and settlements” (trans. 216). The group worked on practical strategies that would help them dodge the TUA’s accusations of anti-government practices. They were in consensus that the TUA’s leader, Gyalo Thondup, had used the newly instituted ideology of democracy and unity to settle personal scores with Lhasa aristocrats, and that he was now turning his attention to displace the solidarity among Khampas and the hegemony Khampa lamas and chieftains enjoyed in their communities. They suspected him of wanting to put a new elite in place. Khampa leaders speculated that a homogenous Tibetan identity would make it easier for Thondup to control the population, especially one already disposed to being apolitical and passive (Yujay; Tenzing, K).

The TUA’s seven resolutions in 1965 prioritized vigilance and ousting of Tibetan spies working for Communist China and Taiwan Nationalist Party officials over building affinities between different groups of Tibetans.<sup>243</sup> While spies were a concern—even as early as 29 April 1959, India’s Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru told the Rajya Sabha that there were spies operating in Kalimpong<sup>244</sup>—the clandestine nature of the task left no room for protection for one once charged as an agent for the enemy. The distance between patriot and traitor and the conflation

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<sup>242</sup> All quotes from Juchen Thupten’s book and from the TUA texts are done for this dissertation by Bhuchung D. Sonam.

<sup>244</sup> For more see “Freedom Given Only for Religious Activities.” *Times of India*, 21 April 1959. Nehru stated that the Dalai Lama would be able to continue his religious activities in India, but not political activities.

between a dissenter and traitor appeared arbitrary, especially to Tibetans who disagreed with the policies or ideologies sanctioned by the exile government officials or its affiliations, such as the TUA. These fears and rumors were prevalent enough that a foreign aid worker, fearing for the safety of a member of the TWA, wrote in a letter to the head office that “apparently Amdo’s [sic] are being taken off to prison in Rajasthan quite frequently, for no particular reason” (Maclehose, Letter to Pearce [31 July]).<sup>245</sup> There were rumors that the TUA had begun compiling a list of Tibetans who were obstacles to unity: Gungthang Tsultrim and many men from Chushi Gangdruk, who clashed with Thondup, were said to be on the spy list (Drawupon).

Unity was received as an imposition. It was not viewed as an invitation to belonging or inclusion in a capacious sense of democratic self-rule. For many of the TWA members, their group identities were significant to their individual identities. These Tibetans had barely recovered from the break in their history, and they had not yet built faith in the Tibetan government to give up what was important to them: their memory of the past as they had known and experienced it. Regional identification, a category that had long been a practice among Tibetans, was increasingly viewed as an obstacle to the struggle for Tibetan independence, and the Khampas began to feel like a problem. They believed they were being treated unfairly (Norbu, K).

The second meeting was held in Delhi in the same year. At this meeting, the settlement leaders discussed the need to legally register themselves as individual

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<sup>245</sup> Diane Maclehose writes to Joyce Pearce on 31 July 1966 expressing her fears over the safety of Sangye Tenzin, the teacher at Ockenden School who was at the center of a controversy over “proselytizing” Tibetans to Bon.

associations, and in addition, to register collectively as a single organization with the Indian Government. Doing so, they decided, would strengthen their numbers and secure legal protection from the Indian government should they need to be protected. But this was also risky because the exile community was discouraged from forming organizations outside of those sanctioned by the CTA (Yujay). The Dalai Lama himself had stressed the importance of being a “unified people” and was against the “establishment of any institution which might directly or indirectly promote conflicts amongst [Tibetan] people or tend to foster sectional or local interests at the expense of the national interest” (Dalai Lama, *My Land* 232). The group thought that having the Karmapa, the head of the Kagyu school, as their patron might mitigate some of the doubts the government might hold.<sup>246</sup> It is possible that they thought Karmapa’s decision in 1961 to move with his entourage to Sikkim, where he had many followers, with the intention of building the first Kagyu monastery in exile, put him at risk of offending the exile government.<sup>247</sup> Karmapa’s position as a prominent Buddhist leader was not limited to the eastern Tibetan community but extended to the Buddhist communities in the mountain regions of Nepal, India, and the Kingdom of Bhutan. The decision to ask him to be their patron might have been strategic in addition to following a practice that was not out of the realm of tradition. Karmapa was not present at the meetings, but he had sent a representative. To their disappointment, Karmapa turned down the offer to serve as their patron.

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<sup>246</sup> Tibetan nomadic communities were held together by mediation and most often it was religious figures who functioned as the mediators.

<sup>247</sup> Construction began on Rumtek monastery in 1962 and was completed in 1966 (*Tibet Documentation* 123)

In 1965, Gyalo Thondup was viewed as the leader for both the TUA and Chushi Gangdruk, but there were already ruptures within the latter organization. Thondup had decided to merge the Chushi Gangdruk-run press called *Sungkyop Parkhang*, established in 1963 in Kalimpong, with *Rangwang Parkhang* citing that two newspapers were unnecessary and inefficient. The merge resulted in *Bhomed Rawang* or *Tibetan Freedom*. Opponents of Thondup felt it was a ploy to get rid of the Khampas (Barchung Thutop, Dhondup Phuntsok, Amdo Khato and Tedrung Yeshe Trinley) who ran the *Sungkyop Parkhang* (Thupten 6:217-218; Norbu, R) Thereafter, the Chushi Gangdruk and the TUA were “knife and meat, fire and hair” (trans. 6:218), and Chushi Gangdruk and the TWA became “different mouths of the same stomach” (218). The relations within Chushi Gangdruk worsened when many other controversies arose in the Mustang base and Chushi Gangdruk split into two groups: the new and the old. The new group was seen to be associated with the TUA and the old group with the TWA. The tensions between the TUA and the TWA were, thus, also reactions towards Gyalo Thondup.

The third meeting took place in Delhi with the following individuals: Kamtrul Rinpoche and Dozong Rinpoche from Tashijong; Chokling Rinpoche from Bir, Zongnor Rinpoche from Mindrolling Monastery in Clementown, Drawupon Rinchen Tsering from Taopon Settlement in Kamrao; Pon Sangye Namgyal from the Bonpo camp in Dolanji; and Gunthang Tsultrim from Clementown. Everyone reconfirmed their desire to form an organization. They sought Karmapa’s support a second time. To their surprise and joy, Karmapa travelled to Dharamsala to meet the Dalai Lama

and was assured by the Dalai Lama that he had no problem with the organization if Karmapa was to be their patron.<sup>248</sup> Upon his arrival to Delhi, Karmapa and as many as 70 individuals from the collective convened at Lodhi Hotel. Karmapa explained to the group that the Dalai Lama had expressed his consent and everyone rejoiced (Drawupon; Yujay). Karmapa stated that the task of the collective was to preserve Tibet's spiritual traditions and not to oppose the exile government. With that, the collective, *Bod Dedon Tsokpa*, Tibetan Welfare Association, a cultural organization, was formally established.

It was at this meeting that members voted for a standing committee. As a patron, Karmapa was President; the remaining committee members were appointed or agreed upon: the Eighth Khamtrul Rinpoche Dongyu Nyima and the Third Chokling Rinpoche Pema Gyurme as Vice-President; Gungthang Tsultrim and Yongdzin Lopon Tenzin Namdak as General Secretary; Jago Namgyal Dorje and Pon Sangye Namgyal as the treasurers. The founding members were Drawupon Rinchen Tsering, Palyul Zongnor Rinpoche, Kathok Ongbo Tulku from Kathok, Yaling Wangyal (Lingsang), Bongsar Namkha Dorje, Chanzo Damchoe Yongdue (Gen. Sec. of Karmapa at Tsurphu), and Nangchen Lharge. The organization's head office was to be based in Jangpura, Delhi. Karmapa offered them several thousand rupees towards their first operating funds. He also offered them the gifts he had received on his visit

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<sup>248</sup> A Press Release issued by the Information and Publicity Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on 9 August 1978 confirms that Karmapa's appointment as the head of the organization was approved by the Dalai Lama (2).

to Bir and Dharamsala. The committee drafted practical standing rules, for example, permitting members to stay in the office in E-28, Jangpura, New Delhi, for free.

The Tibetan Welfare Association brought together prominent families of Kham and dissolved some long-nursed feuds in the process.<sup>249</sup> The notable figures were: Jago Namgyal Dorje (of Dege settlement in Bir) was a prominent figure from Dege, Barchung Thutop Gompo (of Dege settlement in Bir and Bylakuppe Camp) was the chieftain of Barchung in the Kingdom of Dege; Sangye Namgyal (of the Bonpo settlement in Dolanji) was the chieftain of Sogh Geimar in the Nagchu region;<sup>250</sup> Kathok Ongpo Tulku (of Kathok Settlement) was a big lama from Kathok in the Kingdom of Dege; Lingsang Choegyal Jigmey Wangdu (of the Lingsang settlement in Puruwala) was the King of Lingsang;<sup>251</sup> Namkha Dorje (of Mainpat Camp 3) was chieftain of Bongsar in the Kingdom of Nangchen; Lhagye (of Nangchen Camp in Bir) was chieftain of lower Bongba of the Kingdom of Nangchen; Drawupon Rinchen Tsering (of Drawupon Kamrao settlement in Kamrao) was chieftain of Gawa in the Kingdom of Nangchen.<sup>252</sup> It also brought together illustrious lamas of Bon, Nyingma, Kagyud, Drukpa Kagyud and Sakya: the Sixteenth Karmapa, Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, Druwang Pema Norbu Rinpoche, Neten Chokling

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<sup>249</sup> For example, Drawupon Rinchen Tsering and Jago Namgyal Dorje held unresolved tensions over the war in Yushu that involved the Chinese in the mid-1950s.

<sup>250</sup> This is in Sogh Geimar, in the area of Nagchu (*Sogh* for the river *Soghde* which ran through the region and *Geimar* for the low hidden valley). There were 39 chiefs in Hor and Sogh Geimar was one of the regions of which Sangye Namgyal was chief.

<sup>251</sup> Yarlung Wangyal was a minister of Kingdom of Lingsang and was the one who brought the camp together and who asked Sey Jigme to join them. Sey Jigme came after his father died.

<sup>252</sup> I use the “was” because their tribe was still with them and still considered them their chief.

Rinpoche, Khamtrul Donju Nyima Rinpoche,<sup>253</sup> Palyul Zongnor Rinpoche, and Kathok Ontol Rinpoche. Such a diverse gathering of chiefs and lamas was perhaps unprecedented in recent Tibetan history, as was the project that brought them together. The irony of a solidarity to protect their regional tribes and their religious community within a Tibetan exile polity whose objective was to oppose Chinese colonialism and the destruction of Tibetan ways of life was not lost to this membership. While the settlements led by erstwhile regional chieftains (Namkha Dorje's settlement in Mainpat, Lingsang camp in Puruwalla, Kathok camp in Satuan, and Bir Dege camp in Bir)<sup>254</sup> comprised of Tibetans from the same nomadic clan, the settlement led by the lamas were diverse, in particular the Bonpo settlement, which drew Tibetans from all three regions of the Tibetan plateau to live together.

Their stances against the TUA had made them the marginality of the margins in exile. Together they resisted the transition to the modern idea of a political association recognizing a sovereign individual and a sovereign state as it meant giving up older traditional powers and heterogeneous Tibetan polities. They did, however, use their group rights to battle against the exile government's centralizing political goals, revealing to some extent the porousness of the liminal space in exile to slip through both the exile government and the new refugees' positions to make sense of the world they were now part of. The TWA members insisted they had organized as a group to counter the accusations and threats issued by the TUA's instrumentation

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<sup>253</sup> Dorzong Rinpoche was also present at the meetings and he became the secretary after Tsultrim's death.

<sup>254</sup> Drawupon Rinchen Tsering's settlement in Kamrao had people who had been members of his nomadic region but because there were fewer people from his region in exile, the settlement was open to Tibetans from other parts who wanted to live in the camp.



of unity (Thupten; Topgyal). The TUA and the TWA are introduced as rival political parties contesting for support from Tibetans in Dudjom Rinpoche's biography.

“During the 1960s two separate and rival political parties, ‘United Tibet’ (which represented central Tibet) and ‘Thirteen Ethnic Groups of Tibet’ (which represented mainly eastern Tibet)” were seeking support from famous individuals to join them (Khenpo Dhongyal 23). The question I am interested in, however, is why did a discrete group of Tibetans feel they needed to form a collective in order to protect themselves from their own exile government and people?

The TWA's fears are in no small part traced to arrests of Tibetans, mostly eastern Tibetans in 1963-1964 and the documents published by the Tibetan United Association in 1964 and 1965 as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3. *Seven Resolutions and Supporting Document* had planted a sense of foreboding for many individuals and succeeded in bringing about the social death of prominent political figures of the past such as Wangchen Gelek Surkhang, Tashi Dhondup Yuthok, Yamphel Pandatsang, and Dorji Pasang by naming them or hinting at them as dissenters. These documents served to differentiate “good” Tibetans from “anti-unity” Tibetans resulting in banishing offenders from the community and effectively providing a veiled threat to other suspected offenders. Such tactics are common to the process that governments or nation-states' employ to cultivate loyalty among the citizens (Shain, *Frontiers* 20).<sup>255</sup> As stateless peoples, Tibetans were already enduring

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<sup>255</sup> In addition to the stigma of being named disloyal, authorities can also “impose a psychological as well as material penalty of citizens who reject the regime's authority” which can have a lasting effect such as loss of “life-long association to loss of life, with such intermediate penalties as excommunication, defamation, and deprivation of livelihood” (Shain, *Frontiers* 20-21).

degrees of privation resulting from being excluded from the category of recognized citizens of Tibet, and this internal discrimination and exclusion from the Tibetan community in exile left them on the lower end of belonging. That is, the exile polity, in behaving like a state, was in danger of replicating the very abuses it accused the Chinese of conducting against Tibetans: the marginalization of Tibetans, erasure of Tibetan cultural practices, and formation of a second-class citizenry within its own exile territory.

Nationalist sentiment operates most clearly at the level of quotidian life. Unable to bear the contempt, hostility and the constant harassment, some individuals named in the *Seven Resolutions and Supporting Documents* returned to Tibet, some to Taiwan and others lived in an indefinite liminality of being doubly exiled in their homes in India.<sup>256</sup> It did not take long for the small Tibetan refugee community to identify the other unnamed individuals presented as dangerous to unity in the document. It was the exclusionary agenda of unity that brought discrete Khampa groups together. Their objectors named them *Tsho khag bcu gsum*, (Organization of 13) for the thirteen leaders and their tribes and they were largely known by this name.<sup>257</sup> The TWA was born out of necessity and out of despair (Yujay). Critical members of the exile community felt the TWA wanted all the benefits of belonging to

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<sup>256</sup> Yuthok and Surkhang lived in Taiwan for a few years, then Yuthok settled in Canada and died there, Surkhang died in Taiwan. Wangmo Pandatsang came to Dharamsala to seek an audience with the Dalai Lama in 1966 and was harassed by Tibetan masses on the streets of Dharamsala. She did not get an audience with the Dalai Lama. The people of Darjeeling shunned her and reported her to the Intelligence bureau. Likewise, Dorje Pasang had to leave India because of the efforts by community members to harass him.

<sup>257</sup> Most individuals I interviewed said they'd heard that the TUA had given them this name because the number 13 was inauspicious for Western mythology. They also said that they asked Karmapa about it and he said it was a good name because 13 had no negative connotations in Tibetan Buddhist culture.

the exile government in addition to maintaining their traditional nomadic social and political formations, a viable critique. They felt the TWA used one or two incidences of conflict to build an argument of systemic prejudice against the Khampas.

The act of forming or making a group public is also to endow itself with the power to speak in their name. The formation of a group, however, presents problems because instead of “advancing the legitimate claims of its members, it may turn an oppressive power on them” (Isin and Wood 38). In addition, the danger of groups representing themselves in opposition struggles is that they may be led to essentialize “properties of individuals that make such groups by appealing to nature, God or science” (38). Both the TWA and the exile government can be critiqued along these lines. The TWA was an organization led by men, much like the TUA, and not by men voted democratically into prominence but by men who had been born into positions of power and into a long lineage of privilege. They ran the organization much like they had presided over their remote nomadic tribes, without formal regulations, without accountability, and with some impunity. These were strong-willed, authoritative, and brash warriors. Not all were competent leaders, not all were literate, and very few understood democracy as a tool to be practiced within the organization. The leaders respected each other’s traditional roles, were cognizant of their diverse histories, and held each other in mutual respect, which helped shape them into a federation-like group. What united them was their commitment to Tibet’s freedom and to preserving their traditional hierarchies, tribes, and resisting what they suspected was the exile government’s plan to nationalize one kind of Buddhism over

others. There was, however, little room or opportunity in such company for ordinary men and for women within the groups to make their opinions known. The assistants to the chiefs and lamas didn't have the liberty of speech in the presence of their superiors. In general meetings, Bonpos, and men from Central Tibet—a few from the Bonpo settlement—were in the minority, and they often felt diminished and ignored during these meetings (Gyatso, L). Women were never invited as participants in these meetings, and yet it was the women—wives, mothers, and sisters—who labored to financially support their families, maintain their homes, and send their children to be educated. It was women who maintained order in the domestic sphere while the men occupied themselves with politics outside the home.

The meetings were only called in times of crisis, and summons were made for these through telegrams (Yujay). There were no rules, no discussions of the agenda at these meetings; the members “functioned loosely and chaotically” and made “quick decisions” (Gyatso, L). Back in their settlements, the leaders functioned independently of each other. In many ways, they functioned as autonomous but connected bodies, just as they had in their nomadic villages in Amdo and Kham before 1950.

### **Naming the Enemy**

Why was it that TWA members, the minority among Tibetans in exile, were the ones to object to the policies of the exiled government that aimed to keep Tibetans as one unified people? What drew these diverse groups together to protest against what they viewed as repressive effects of unity? Not too long after Tsultrim's death,

Samten Karmay's letter to the *Tibetan Review* was published under the title "Who Are the Amdowas?" He suggested that the "important undercurrent" that brought the "13" together was "the old desire to counteract possible danger based on the old fear of abandonment, i.e., one day the Tibetan government in exile might enter into negotiations with China and sell out Amdo and Kham in order to gain independence for Central Tibet" (27).<sup>258</sup> Karmay explains that after the breakdown of Central Tibet in the 9th AD, the north-eastern part of Tibet, also known as Amdo, was "ruled by small chieftains." Although they functioned as autonomous regions, they had never broken away "culturally" from Central Tibet (27).

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Central Tibet's cultural and political influence over Amdo had waned significantly. The relations between the two regions had suffered a jolt in 1918 when Central Tibet had "shamefully agreed with China to recognize Tibet's border extending only up to Dri Chu" (27). This decision inevitably served to alienate Amdo and half of Kham "from their compatriots of Central Tibet" (27). The Lhasa government's refusal to come to the aid of Chushi Gangdruk, the armed resistance organization against the Chinese based in Kham in the mid-1950s, only confirmed the apprehension some Khampas felt for Lhasa officials. Many of the TWA members were Chushi Gangdruk veterans, and they knew that the Lhasa government had kept its distance from them when they had needed support. They also

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<sup>258</sup> The Dalai Lama has on more than one occasion assured Tibetans that the "fortunes of us all depend on the fortunes of the three provinces" (Kashyap 64). In his address to the parliament on the Middle-Way Approach on 28 July 1994 he refers to the fears some people have about Kham's exclusion. He states that the reasons for such talk is unfortunate and that it is important people refrain from "senseless talk motivated by meaningless prejudices and doubts but should maintain the purity of our commitments" (64).

felt that central Tibetan government had looked at the Chushi Gangdruk as “troublemakers” (27).

Indeed, the modern borders of Kham and Amdo were set in 1727 when the Ganden Phodrang, the Tibetan government established in 1642 by the Fifth Dalai Lama, lost control of large areas of Kham to the Sichuan and Yunnan regions of China during the reign of the Manchu emperor Yung Ch’ en (Goldstein, *History* 3 80; Knaus, 4).<sup>259</sup> Amdo had already been placed under the jurisdiction of Xining in Qinghai, China in 1724 (Goldstein, *Snowlion* 16). The Manchus (Qing) made some effort to control and expand the *tusi* system to these regions by recognizing local chiefs as heads of new prefectures and integrating them into the imperial system by granting court titles to them (Goldstein, *History* 3 81).

Recent history provided little evidence of the Lhasa government’s affection for the regions in Kham and Amdo and TWA members felt that they had to “have their own interest group in future negotiations about the status of Tibet” (Roemer 73). To a great extent, history had cautioned Tibetans, to echo Yossi Shain’s words, to

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<sup>259</sup> The break up of the Tibetan kingdom in the eleventh century meant that many eastern Tibetan regions of Kham and Amdo became independent or fell to neighboring states. Dawa Norbu contests Chinese claims that Tibet was officially incorporated into China during the Yuan Dynasty by pointing out that Tibet was one of nineteen conquests that made up the Mongol global conquest of Asia. Unlike other conquered countries Tibet was saved in 1207 by submitting to Chingghis Khan and in 1240 by the Sakya Pandita’s appeal to the Godan. This means Tibet became a special or indirect part of Chingghis Khan’s empire 72 years before his sons or grandsons conquered China in 1279 (Norbu, *China’s Tibet* 47). Additionally, The lama-patron relationship beginning with Kubilia Khan and the Phagpa Sakya, which furnished the foundations of the Mongol polity in Tibet, came to an end in the middle of the 14th century when the myriarch of Phagmo rebelled against the Sakya government. The Mongol military could not intervene and the Sakyas were overthrown. The Phagmo ruler established a different rule. This allows for an interpretation that historically Tibet was independent of Mongol domination before the Ming dynasty came into existence (Wylie 336).

“forgo the perception of congruence” between their “ethnic affiliation” and their “national identity” (Shain, *Kinship* 19).<sup>260</sup>

Prior to the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950, most of the members of the TWA fell in the category of regions that Dawa Norbu describes as “self-governing societies,” who had prioritized “local and tribal interests” over “national concerns” (*Road* 97). Their communities were comprised of nomadic, semi-nomadic, or settled communities organized politically into tribes ruled by hereditary rulers, kings, and monastic leaders who had enjoyed their autonomy and individuality.<sup>261</sup> Some of their regions rarely had a relationship with the Tibetan government, or if they did, they had been “dissatisfied with the Lhasa administration” even if their “spiritual allegiance to the Dalai Lama was absolute” (97).<sup>262</sup> Khampa loyalties were divided even on the eve of the Chinese attack; some were said to have preferred the Chinese over the Tibetan Lhasa administration (Thondup 101-102).<sup>263</sup>

Chiefs in Kham had considerable freedom, they governed their people according to their own traditions and law, and they had the power to pass their title down the family line (Drawupon). The decentralized political system and the

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<sup>260</sup> Yossi Shain is referring in this context to ethnofocal libertarian states that are established by a dominant group (*Kinship* 19)

<sup>261</sup> Tribes are not specifically referring to nomadism as there were semi-pastoralists referred to as tribes. Richard Tapper says that the coincidence between nomads and tribes is not so much causal as it is a function of their relations with the state. He suggests that states developed from military forces that drew from nomadic tribes’ armed groups. Rulers sometimes created tribes and tribal chiefs and nomadism was a strategy (*Frontier* 8).

<sup>262</sup> Khampagar monastery, Neten Chokling Rinpoche’s monastery fell under the Ganden Phodrang government and the people of the region, most of them Khampas, suffered rape, extortion, and discrimination from the Lhasa government officials.

<sup>263</sup> Whatever the nature of problems between Kham and the government in Central Tibet, the ties of language, culture and a common heritage could not be broken. The strongest of these ties was religion. (Sperling, “Chinese Venture” 10).

autonomy enjoyed by various agents in Kham fostered deep regional or local group affiliations but it did not develop into “a sense of a Kham nation,” nor a “broader nationalist affinity” (Tsomu, *Rise of Gonpo* 11). Most nomadic communities’ allegiance was to their respective local rulers or their immediate lords, perhaps even above the regional king. Governed by their own systems and by hereditary rulers called king (*gyelpo*), leader (*ponpo*), governor (*depa*)<sup>264</sup> or the titles bestowed by the Qing, leader of one hundred households (*behu*) and, leader of one hundred men (*bechang*), the people of Kham saw themselves as being neither under the Chinese nor under the Ganden Phodrang government. The absence and presence of authority roles in these different groups had been variously influenced by their diverse political arrangements and daily activities. I employ the term “tribe” or “regions” to speak of the diverse Khampa polities keeping in mind Richard Tapper’s argument that as an analytical concept, “tribe” is best viewed and closest to indigenous concepts as a “state of mind, a construction of reality, a model for action, a mode of social organization” that is “essentially opposed to that of the centralized state” (*Frontier*, 9).

George N. Patterson, a missionary who was living in Kham since 1947 and close friends with the Pandatsang family, successful traders in Dartsedo, Kanding, and China, writes that there were as many as 39 major tribes in Kham and 25 tribes in Amdo and that for as long as 800 years, “since Genghis Khan, they had usually been occupied in fighting each other, raiding each other’s property, territory or trading caravans - or in fighting the ever-intrusive Chinese” (Patterson, *Requiem* 25). He

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<sup>264</sup> See Yudru Tsomu for more on the political systems of Kham (*Rise of Gonpo* 6-8).



compares the mutual relation between Kham and Amdo tribes, and their relation to the people of Lhasa, as being similar to the relation of “the Scots and the Irish to one another and the Government of London some two centuries before” (25). The exile government’s emphasis on unity is also to be read with such histories in mind.

The majority of the TWA members came from the nomadic tribes in Kham and Amdo. These regions had maintained historic forms of tribal organization that contrasted a great deal with that of the Tibetan polity in Central Tibet.<sup>265</sup> This included smaller groups as well as larger communities who guarded their territories and had hereditary chiefs. These groups were rife with alliances, feuds, and rivalries and these were related to the rise and fall of strong leaders.<sup>266</sup> The tribes forged relations with one other through friendship, war, and through marriage alliances (Tsomu, *Rise of Gonpo* 18-19).<sup>267</sup> While these various ties could and did endure for generations, allegiances were “constantly shifting” among these regional powers (19). The regional political and social autonomy, however, did not indicate the absence of a larger Tibetan ethos for there existed strong forms of what Eric Hobsbawm calls “supra-local” and some political “proto-national” bonds of collective belonging

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<sup>265</sup> Richard Tapper suggests there are three conceptions of “tribe” in currency among anthropologists: the equation of tribe with pre-colonial “primitive” societies; the post-colonial reference of tribe with ethnic group, community or people. Often this views tribe as clan-based political organizations linked by kinship and descent” (*Frontier*, 5). The third views tribe as political groups “defined by territorial boundaries and by accepted mechanisms for the resolution of internal disputes (5). Tapper attributes this view to British social anthropology influenced by Evan Pritchard’s study of the Nuer people of the Sudan (5).

<sup>266</sup> Much like the nomadic organizations in Iran that Richard Tapper studies where alliances and rivalries led to unified leadership or conflict (17).

<sup>267</sup> Richard Tapper’s own work suggests the difficulty of fixing the definition on the grounds of culture (descent) or political structure (chiefship). He refers to the larger groups as “confederacies” and locates “tribes” at the lower level of political structures with a maximum of a few thousands of individuals (*Frontier* 7). Some of these communities “combine territorial and political unity under a chief with an ideology of common descent” (7).

(*Nations* 46-47)<sup>268</sup> These were based on shared religion, history, written language, race, and all were firmly braided together by a religious legacy. Khampas were responding to this broader feeling when they described themselves “in terms of religion and defined themselves as *nangpa*, ‘insider’ referring to Buddhists” (Tsomu, *Rise of Gonpo* 11). *Nangpa*, a metaphor for being Tibetan, includes in its many associations, a history of defending Buddhism and its leaders. It provided the base for solidarities built among different groups of Khampas who took up arms to resist Chinese rule and reforms in the 1950s and 1960s. It also provided the possibility of Tibetans pledging their loyalty to the Dalai Lama once in exile in 1960.

Although group loyalty kept individuals in check, nomadic pastoralists are seen to be relatively autonomous in their “mobile society,” precisely because their mobility meant there was little to leave behind. Indeed, the mobility of the nomadic pastoral life is stated to have provided or demanded a skillful evasiveness of authority and law (Ekval, *Peace* 1122). Tibetan nomads also were loyal to the chiefs of their nomadic tribes and clans, who wielded power and maintained unity. The system of the nomadic community also meant that individuals could be easily accepted into another nomadic community (Ekval, *Peace* 1124). Communities and individuals had relative freedom to choose war or peace in contrast to States where it is only as communities that war becomes an option. “Thus for the Tibetan nomad the issues of peace or war on each and every level —individual, clan, encampment, tribe or

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<sup>268</sup> Eric Hobsbawm identifies “feelings of collective belongings” that already exist (what he calls supra-local forms and political bonds that can be operated to fit as modern states and nations) (*Nations* 46-47).

federation of tribes—were current, day to day, matters of urgent concern” (1124). To that extent, dissent was unremarkable to such communities.

Nomadic Amdo (and Khampa) tribes share some ideas about “social organisation run through nomadic society” such as loyalty to the group, features of the feud and “an attitude to leadership that combines a recalcitrance with a selective submission to authority” (Pirie 84). Fernanda Pirie observes that the complex relations between individual behavior (“careless attitudes towards authority”) and responsibility of the leaders and the women in the Amdo tribes in the Machu and Dralag counties in Tibet (now Qinghai, China) construct a “mode of social organization” that is at its heart “opposed to that of the state, with its centralising tendencies, policies of command and authoritarian attempts to control ‘criminal’ behavior” (Pirie 97). While Pirie is writing from a more recent study of relations between Amdo nomads and the Chinese government, the environment she writes about is similar to the polities that the members of the TWA had belonged to in Tibet. Nomads had a deep connection to and deep identity with the land itself, with its mountains, rivers, animals, the stories and myths that linked the nomads with their chiefs and the spirits of the land.

The fraught relations between the TWA members and the exile government can also be understood as a fraught relation between rulers and their agents on the one hand, and people who lived on the periphery and deliberately kept a distance from the

state's orbit on the other hand. This was once a real option.<sup>269</sup> Thus, the TWA's marginality can be read as a political stance. Its leaders knew what they were rejecting, because they had come from social and political units who (not dissimilar to the people of the Zomia states) had been in constant motion, who had lived with fluent borders, who had moved quickly, and who had few "permanent allegiances" (James 39). A majority of the TWA members were from nomadic tribes who were familiar with intertribal mobility and with the division of tribes into smaller groups as a tactic to evade political and social incorporation. Thus, the TWA's position was a "state effect," and it cannot be understood without its position to the exile government that was reconfiguring itself in the mold of the modern nation-state.<sup>270</sup> The exile government's national project of unity depended on conformity and uniformity, and there were consequences to breaking the rules of membership in the nation. Although the exile government attempted to provide a sense of continuity to the regional and sectarian identities of Tibetans, considering these as highly active features of the political and social fabric of Tibetan society, they also sought to produce a new identity that was capable of uniting the old familiar features into a new tradition.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Scott C. James' work on *Zomia*, a name for regions above three hundred meters in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Burma (now Myanmar) focuses on the largest regions of the world where people are not fully incorporated into nation-states. He argues that these communities moved in and out of states and "stateness," and that they were "barbarians" by design (8). He explains that the stigmatization of hill people as primitive were "political adaptations of nonstate peoples to a world of states" (9). Thus, these groups resisted the project of nation building and state making and they were regions of resistance and also of refuge (23).

<sup>270</sup> Scott C. James points out that the category of the "barbarian" in China was given to those who "at any given time are made to stand for an idea, any of the peoples living on the periphery" who met the criteria of "non-subject status" (121).

<sup>271</sup> The Tibetan Parliament is divided into regional and sectarian constituents, and tribal and sectarian identities are important in being voted into these positions.

What to Khampas seemed traditionally Tibetan and worth preservation—such as their own languages, social structure, and customs—was too particular, hierarchical, and regional in the exile government’s idea of a reformed and egalitarian Tibet. Perhaps the TWA’s attitude towards regionalism at this historical juncture of exile was not so much a representation of a “body of ideas, values and policies” to create a region, but more of a representation of “a type of world order” (Soderbaum 3). The TWA wanted to preserve an idea of where they came from and who they believed they were. This however also meant differentiating themselves from what was being cast as the more authentic Tibetan traditions and customs. The Tibetan use of “regionalism” includes a wide range of spaces, from individuals identifying themselves as belonging to the regions of Kham, Amdo, or U-Tsang, or organizing themselves into social and cultural groups based on their regions, or forming political groups that seek to fight for the interest of their regions. Most often, regionalism is associated with Khampas and to a lesser degree, to Amdowas. Not surprisingly, the TWA’s achievement in building the settlements is not mentioned in any official text; they are either referenced as examples of bumps in Tibetan unity by Tibetans or as examples of dissenters in texts written by scholars.

Stephanie Roemer mentions the “13 settlements” briefly in her study of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile as an example of a dissenting group within the Tibetan exile community. She explains that these individuals were “only partly willing” to accept the exile government’s “organizational schemata” in the resettlement process (72). They did not go along with the “efforts of the CTA to assimilate them in the

politically dominant central Tibetan structure, while at the same time denying their own traditions” (72). Faced with the centralizing powers of the exile government, these groups attempted to “secure their traditional leadership within their communities” (73), which in nomadic parlance meant keeping the tribe physically together. Roemer’s description captures the underlying tensions between the exile government and the TWA who were both learning about democracy and citizenship: the government in defining the boundaries of rights and duties, and TWA of exercising democracy and resisting its limits and responsibilities. Roemer’s description also points to how the metaphorical construction of the regions of Kham and Amdo at this particular historical moment in exile was to some extent “embedded in the social dynamic of society” and was socially constructed and held together by “historically contingent interactions, shared beliefs and identities, norms and practices” (Soderbaum 6). This was a construct devised by non-state actors to protect or transform the structures and values that they felt would not be ensured by the new exile government, and equally defined by the exile government as regional maneuvers dangerous to Tibetan unity. The TWA served as a kind of counter-hegemonic civil society, and a form of micro-regional space, led by Khampa elites who championed for the right to practice democracy without exhibiting any evidence of a democratic structure within their own organization. They did, however, express their desires to seek to be represented in the new polity.

Lobsang Sangay, the current Sikyong (President) of the exile government, now the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), makes an implicit reference to the

TWA in an article, “Tibet: Exiles’ Journey” that discusses the practice of democracy within the exile polity. While he does not name the group, he suggests that it was the establishment of the *Chitue* (Parliament) along “regional and sectarian” lines that perpetuated divisions rather than uniting Tibetans. He points out that “exiled Tibetans from two less-populous regions, three Buddhist sects and the indigenous Bon religion rejected the Chitue, and set up a parallel organization. The exile government, lacking any organs of compulsion, was powerless to stop this. The controversy lingered for more than a decade” (123). Sangay’s indirect reference to the TWA gives it a prominent status of being an organization competing with the exile government. While some activities of the TWA members after Gungthang Tsultrim’s death, particularly the political activities of Jingchong Tulku, might make such comparisons possible, the TWA was not a cohesive organization after Tsultrim’s death.<sup>272</sup> Many of its members, such as the Bonpos in Dolanji, felt secure in having accomplished their goal of setting up their own camps and did not necessarily agree with the direction the TWA was taking after Tsultrim’s death (Sangpo).

Similarly, in her book on the Chushi Gangdruk, Carole McGranahan writes that the split between the “13 Settlements” and the exile government impacted the exile community and Chushi Gangdruk members, who also split on opposing sides. The relationship between the TWA, the TUA, and the Chushi Gangdruk is complex and impossible to enter into detail in this chapter or project. McGranahan’s analysis of Chushi Gangdruk’s “citizen-led national initiative” being driven by a need to

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<sup>272</sup> Jingchong Tulku was a lama who was accused of taking trips to Tibet in the 1980s claiming that he was representing Khampas in exile. He eventually left to live in Tibet.

defend the community, religion, and state resonates with the “13 settlements” recognition as “complementary rather than competing projects” (*Arrested Histories* 100-101).<sup>273</sup> As was with the case with Chushi Gangdruk, unity began to imply homogenization to the dominant or Central Tibetan way, and loyalties to regional leaders gradually came to be a problem in the goal to create a unitary Tibet in exile. This, in turn, as McGranahan points out, caused Chushi Gangdruk members to carry a burden of being the “other” in a community that emphasized sacrifice for the common cause. Its military movement posed a different problem; it tarnished the Dalai Lama and his administration’s adherence to nonviolence as a political strategy. While the history of a grassroots armed movement compromised the popular Buddhist exile government’s campaign of nonviolence, the veterans continued to make sacrifices for the nation long after the movement was shut down.

Carole McGranahan’s text on the veterans of the Chushi Gangdruk—an example of a subaltern and alternate history—reanimates their suppressed histories of having felt the need to hide their past in order to comply with the dominant narrative of a nonviolent movement. Her work calls attention to the dilemmas experienced by communities when history “unfolds and is remembered outside of, but often in compromised relation to, centers of power” (10). As mentioned, many members of the TWA were Chushi Gangdruk veterans. Simplistically put, the TWA’s beef was with Gyalo Thondup: it opposed his leadership. The TWA was therefore

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<sup>273</sup> Carole McGranahan writes that ideologically, the Chushi Gangdruk “signaled a new version of Tibetan nationalism, one in which citizens rallied around the state but did so without sacrificing other identities” (*Arrested Histories* 100-101). What McGranahan points out is that the warriors maintained their identity as Khampa or Amdowa or Toepa within the army (101).



sympathetic with the older Chushi Gangdruk leaders who also were encountering their own differences with Thondup and his new western-educated and CIA-trained men. McGranahan is right that “misunderstandings” informed the politics of this era, and that “Gyalo Thondup’s vision for the exile community included reform but not dissent” (147). His *yabshi* (family of the Dalai Lama) “pedigree” furnished him with an advantage over other Tibetans so that his “vision of community” triumphed over “varieties of reform” that other Tibetans proffered (147). In the TUA’s modern dictionary, unity meant that regional and sectarian identities were viewed as “backward, divisive, and harmful to the Tibetan cause” (17). The TWA’s inability to embrace this value also served to “further mark Khampas as troublemakers in the exile community” (148).

The trope of the Khampa as troublemaker precedes the condition of exile. The figure of the nomads from Eastern Tibet, particularly the Khampa is closely linked to heroism on the one hand and to lawlessness and violence on the other. Early writers who have traveled through Central Tibet mention the attitudes prevalent in Lhasa towards Khampas. Khampas continue to be depicted in literature as warriors, as bandits, and as hot-headed primitive rebels and avengers. In the contemporary novel *Falling through the Roof*, for example, the narrator ruminates on one of the characters in the novel who is a nomad from Golok, a region near Amdo and Kham. He thinks to himself “One never knew with these Goloks. The very word ‘Golok’ in the dialect of the U used to be a synonym for mischief.” The narrator continues that the word Golok is used to indicate that someone has “wreaked havoc.” The literary meaning for

Golok is still a word for “rebel” (Samphel 41). Nomads and Khampas are used synonymously in the Tibetan community to indicate backwardness, lawlessness, and intemperance.<sup>274</sup> The rule of law established under the exile government was also hoped to end the arbitrary rule of chieftains.

What is not emphasized in the analysis of the TWA by the TUA, Thondup, Roemer, and McGranahan and what was crucial to many TWA members, was the question of their religious autonomy. At the heart of the TWA members’ struggle against the TUA, and by extension the assimilationist tendencies of the exile government, was the fear that they were being asked to give up their particular religious traditions in favor of a reformed Buddhist practice, one that would be dominated and defined by Gelug practices. What is also significant to consider is that while the Dalai Lama’s authority, both in the secular as well as religious spheres, was dominant in Central Tibet, and in the religious sphere in the Gelug regions of Kham and Amdo, it was less predictable among the Buddhist communities in Nepal, India, and Bhutan who held more heterogeneous religious allegiances. For example, while the Kingdom of Mustang in Nepal was dominated by adherents of the Sakya school, both Sikkim and Bhutan leaned more heavily towards Kagyu and Nyingma

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<sup>274</sup> In a speech on a select audience on 6 September 1984 the Dalai Lama speaks on the importance of all Tibetan peoples working together for a common goal. He cautions against generalizing a group based on a few examples. He explains that many people from Eastern Tibet travel to Lhasa and he was told that while Amdo people were more peaceful in general, the people of Kham “create violence by engaging themselves in conflict” (*Speeches* 205). He advises against such prejudices and suggests these can also be instigated by the Chinese to create discord in the Tibetan community.

traditions.<sup>275</sup> This was a new equation for traditional exile officials who realized they had little control over the non-Tibetan Buddhists, who were devoted to the lamas of the Nyingma, Kagyu, and Sakya schools, and who were willing to help establish the lamas and support them in their various regions. This must have also posed new and uncertain challenges to the Gelug-led exile government especially in continuing a still Gelug-centric democratic government in exile.

The exile government began to establish a centralized system and to formulate what a reformed Tibet might look like, but reform, much needed and much like democracy, was imposed from the top. The project to build a unitary system met with resistance in the following areas and largely from groups of Amdowas and Khampas in the following areas: the national struggle for independence; the rule of exile overseers on the road construction camps and settlements; and in the formulation of a national memory and history. The TUA's Seven resolutions, indirect as they were, highlighted the actions of Khampas and framed them as being harmful to Tibetan unity and of breaking the religious bond between the Dalai Lama and his people. For example, Resolution 4 stated:

According to the deep vision of HH, the Department of Homes of our government is doing its best to make lists of people – from road labourers, contract labourers and those who are scattered in different places – who want to go to various Tibetan settlements. However, some people have started making their own list, using schools, factories and settlements as excuses to go their separate ways without the knowledge of concerned local offices started by our government. This violates *samaya* (religious bond) and destroys internal unity. We

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<sup>275</sup> This is not to suggest that they did not hold the Dalai Lama in high esteem because that would not be true. As Tibetan Buddhists, the Dalai Lama's position as the spiritual leader of Tibet or even Tibetan Buddhism was not under any dispute.

have hereby resolved that such actions, from individuals both high and the low, that destroy the exile government's plans and damage unity, should not occur and must be stopped from happening in the future in any way, either overtly or covertly (TUA, trans. *Truthful History* 204).

Likewise, Resolution 5 stated:

Due to the sole grace of His Holiness [the Dalai Lama], Tibetans residing in India, Nepal and Bhutan receive relief assistance in both food and clothing. Even though these are being equally distributed by the Central Relief Committee of the Government of India, some cunning and deceptive people seek and take relief assistance directly by using other names and without consulting/contacting/listening to our government, These actions, which are harmful to our administration, our unity as well the welfare of our people, must stop. From now onwards, all relief assistance will be received through the channels of our government, and this should not be contradicted and must be followed (trans. 204).

The exile government was trying to establish itself as the legitimate representative of the Tibetan peoples and this meant, understandably, impressing upon Tibetans a sense of duty and fealty. Khampas felt they were discriminated against and that their complaints to exile officials about acts of discrimination were not heeded. Rather, it was often pointed out that the Khampas were too sensitive and too quick to take offense (Yujay). Their obstinate insistence (and belligerence) on their right to equal treatment and to preserve their regional and religious customs and traditions led to clashes in the following fields:

**1) The anomaly of a people's armed resistance in a nonviolent national struggle**

The Dalai Lama has stated that a nonviolent approach to the struggle for Tibet was the only "possible policy" from the point of view of Buddhism and that he believed that the outcome of Tibet would have been better if "[his] people had been

able to follow it with [him]” (*My Land* 233). The grassroots armed struggle against the Chinese Communist army that began and spread through regions of Kham in 1956 culminated in the organization of Chushi Gangdruk, a predominantly Khampa-led movement. The Dalai Lama has admitted that although he admired the “guerrillas” for their determination— they brought the Dalai Lama safely into exile — he had “never been in favour of their activities” (Dalai Lama, *Freedom* 192). Nevertheless, he did not prohibit Chushi Gangdruk from regrouping in exile and setting up a base in Mustang, Nepal in 1960 with the assistance from the CIA. Andrug Gombo Tashi was the leader of the resistance army, and Gyalo Thondup was the “secret interlocutor between the CIA and the Chushi Gangdruk” (Thurston “Introduction”) for the second chapter of the resistance movement.<sup>276</sup>

Chushi Gangdruk’s story is linked to the TWA primarily through its members, that is to say many founders and members of what would be the TWA considered themselves members of Chushi Gangdruk. The prominent ones were Jagoetsang Namgyal Dorje, Drawutsang Rinchen Tsering, Barchungtsang Thutop, and Sey Dhonyo, who had fought in Tibet and who served an important role in recruiting Khampas to the Chushi Gangdruk in exile. As famous and well-regarded chieftains of their various tribes, their influence held strong over Khampas.

The resistance led several successful operations, including a retrieval of rich intelligence material in 1961, which was sent to the CIA. However, by 1964, the members of Chushi Gangdruk were divided into those who supported Thondup (new

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<sup>276</sup> See Chapter 1 and 2 for more on Chushi Gangdruk

CIA trained and educated administrators), and those who supported Baba Gyen Yeshi, (chiefs and fighters who had fought on the battlefield from parts of Kham and Amdo). Yeshi was a monk and veteran from Batang who was chosen to run the base in Mustang. Each side accused the other of embezzling funds and each side fought to have authority over the funds. Yeshi's supporters accused Thondup of misusing Tibet's treasure in gold and jewels worth eleven to thirty million dollars, and losing them in "dubious business ventures" (Patterson, *Requiem* 181).<sup>277</sup> It was also suggested that Thondup was using funds meant for Chushi Gangdruk to run activities for the TUA (Thupten 6:217).

Gyen Yeshi was accused of running the camp "like a clan leader in his native Kham" by officers who had been trained by the CIA and who were seen as "Thondup loyalists" (Knaus 293). He was accused of nepotism, of embezzlement and of misusing the funds raised for the operations in Mustang."<sup>278</sup> Ann Frechette explains that the U.S. intergovernmental organizations supporting the guerrilla movement wanted someone younger in place of Gyen Yeshi, someone they had trained and who could speak English (18). Gyalo Thondup's right hand man Lhamo Tsering was given the responsibility of overseeing the work in Mustang but he and Gyen Yeshi did not see eye to eye. Lhamo Tsering sent Gyato Wangdu to assist Yeshi but Yeshi would not cede power to the younger man and the internal conflicts festered (Thupten 6:284).

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<sup>277</sup> In 1950 Tsepon Shakabpa purchased gold bullion in the US, this was put under the Sikkim Chogyal's protection. In 1950 additional gold from the Dalai Lama's treasury was also placed for safekeeping in Sikkim. The sale of the gold never worked out. Thondup blames Tsarong for "mismanagement" and for losing the money. (Thondup 215). Tsarong's family refutes these charges with countercharges insisting Thondup was involved in making the decisions.

<sup>278</sup> See more on the conflict in Mustang in Juchen Thupten's autobiography and in the "Statement from the Kashag" (Cabinet) in 1971

In addition to the embezzlement accusations and power struggles, there were, as Drawupon admits, many problems and many freedom fighters didn't know whether to stay on in Mustang or to leave (Drawupon). Problems included mutual killing. By 1970, the contention between the two main factions led to killings on both sides and affected the entire exile population.<sup>279</sup> Yeshe's supporters among the leaders of Chushi Gangdruk, Jagoe Namgyal Dorji, Sandutsang Lo Nyendak, Drawupon Rinchen Tsering and Bawa Chakzoe Tashi, who went to Dharamsala in 1970 to speak for him were castigated by Tibetans who campaigned through letters to the Government of India and to the Tibetan administration criticizing these individuals (TUA, *Truthful History* 88-89).

The internal conflicts in the resistance group and the events leading to its dissolution in 1974 is described by the Dalai Lama as "one of the saddest episodes in the history of the Tibetan diaspora" (Dalai Lama, *Freedom* 193). The feud resulted in Gyen Yeshe's dismissal by the Tibetan government on charges of embezzlement, robbing precious items from unsuspecting Tibetans, and for killing "a number of [Tibetan] people" (Kashag, "Statement" 28 August).<sup>280</sup> This position was supported

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<sup>279</sup> See Juchen Thubten's autobiography for details on the arrest and death of Amdo Dolma Kyab on August 14, 1970. Thubten claims Kyab was arrested on February 6, 1970 on his way to Pokhara, Nepal by order of Lhamo Tsering. Lhamo Tsering claimed Kyab had charged into their compound saying he would destroy the establishment in Lo. Thupten writes that on February 21, 1970 Lhamo Tsering ordered 400 soldiers under Dhargon Pedor to fire at 32 people under Gayang or Markham, Tsepak of Karze Choeden, Asang and A-Thinley of third, ninth, and eleventh companies who went to ask about Kyab's arrest resulting in the death of 12 people and 16 horses (288). The Kashag's statement in 1971 states quite simply that Kyab had committed suicide.

<sup>280</sup> Gyen Yeshe stated in personal communications with Ann Frechette that he had been "kicked" out by the exile government (Frechette 71). The official statement from the Kashag in 1971 accused Gyen Geshe of embezzlement, killing "a number of our own people," and robbing Tibetans (Kashag, "Statement" 28 August). Chushi Gangdruk exists today in two bodies: one pledging to follow the policies of the Dalai Lama and the exile government and the other insisting still on Tibetan

by the Dalai Lama during an address to exile officials on 17 March 1971 where he referred to Gyen Yeshe as a “man of achievement” but not without fault. He explains that Yeshe “has lost huge amounts of money and even we cannot say that he has not secretly killed some of his rivals” (Dalai Lama, *Speeches* 71).

The conflict did not leave Thondup unscathed.<sup>281</sup> A group of Chushi Gangdruk individuals or supporters, Markham Thoesum, Gara Lama, Marnang Abo, Lhabso Gyaltsen, and Sersang Lobsang Dorjee began a campaign insisting that Thondup be questioned for his involvement in the disappearance of gold bullion and money dropped by the CIA into Tibet in yellow parachutes. (The controversy is referred to in Tibetan as *ghur serpo* (yellow tent). Thondup explains in his memoir that the “rumor” about him taking the money was baseless as he was in Darjeeling, not Tibet, and had “never seen the money” (188). The four men responsible for creating this rumor were “expelled from India not for their false accusations but as Communist agents. Intelligence agents from all sorts of places were stirring up rumors and fostering dissension then” (188). The supporters of the jailed men insisted the only crime the four men had committed was challenging Thondup. Thondup was in charge of the security for the Dalai Lama and he served as the head of Tibetan Intelligence work; he did not need to provide any evidence that a Tibetan was a threat

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independence. Khampa veterans of Chushi Gangdruk are stung at the irony that they are considered traitors and anti-Dalai Lama because they cannot give up their struggle for independence (Drawupon).<sup>281</sup> In a speech to exile officials on 17 March 1973, the Dalai Lama stated that Gyalo Thondup made mistakes in his work but that he also did things which nobody else could do. (Dalai Lama, *Speeches* 70)



to India or to the Dalai Lama.<sup>282</sup> They believed that Thondup took advantage of his credibility with Indian and US intelligence to put away men who disagreed with him by identifying them as Communist agents (Achu; Norbu, K; Topgyal).

The story of Chushi Gangdruk is a complex one, rife with charges and counter charges of murders, embezzlement, and deceptions.<sup>283</sup> The joke among Khampas in the mid-1960s was that if you opposed Thondup, you would be dead or find yourself in a jail in the Indian Thar desert (Norbu, R). Those who opposed Thondup felt that Chushi Gangdruk leaders had trusted Thondup and put him in charge but he had used them to get his revenge on central Tibetan aristocrats. Now that he had succeeded in disengaging aristocrats from all political power, he was working on getting rid of the power Khampa lamas and chiefs had over their traditional tribes (Yujay; Sangpo; Norbu, K).<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Chamberlain Phala, one of the most powerful politicians in Tibet and in exile, was from Central Tibet and he had gone to Taiwan, as had Thondup, and yet nothing was made of their relations with Taiwan. In contrast, when rumors were created that members of Chushi Gangdruk had ties to Taiwan, Tibetan exiles named these members as traitors and asked that they be expelled from the community (Gyatso, L).

<sup>283</sup> See Juchen Thupten (*Juchen* 6:289-296) for all the alleged murders of many Chushi Gangdruk veterans.

<sup>284</sup> The story of Markham Thoesum, a successful businessman in Kalimpong, West Bengal made its way from Kalimpong to the road camps in Himachal Pradesh and the new settlement tents in Bylakuppe as a cautionary tale of the consequences of opposing Thondup or dissenting against the CTA. Thoesum, a former monk in Khampagar monastery in Nangchen was very active within the Chushi Gangdruk community in Kalimpong and Darjeeling. When the controversy over the misuse of CIA funds reached its peak in 1962-1963, Thoesum and his friends distributed pamphlets suggesting that Thondup be investigated for misusing funds meant for the warriors. It was not long before Thoesum was arrested by the Indian Intelligence and held in Calcutta. He was accused of having ties to Communist China and was transferred to a jail in Rajasthan. Thoesum was told that he would be released after 2-3 years, (Achu). The eighth Khamtrul Rinpoche, a lama from Khampagar monastery in Nangchen, and his monks lived in Kalimpong at that time and they were asked to sign a letter by Thondup supporters denouncing Thoesum. The monks refused to sign the document because they knew Thoesum well and knew the accusations against him to be false. Thoesum was held in prison for ten years. He lost his property, his relations, and he was not permitted to return to his home in Darjeeling. What had rankled him and his friends so much was that he was sentenced without any evidence. He died a destitute man and maintained his innocence till his death (Achu).

Old nomadic tribal leaders took the TUA's concept of unity urging Tibetans to leave aside regional and religious leanings as a direct threat to their traditional roles as chieftains over their tribes. They felt doubly insecure realizing that the exile government would not come to their rescue; they believed that the Tibetan Cabinet served Thondup (Drawupon).<sup>285</sup> The Khampas feared that unity was a bludgeon offered as a salve.

## **2) Cunning and deceptive work on the road camps**

Tibetans working on road construction were living in "temporary roadside shelters," which were most often tents even in 1966, six years after they began (Brewster, "General" 21 Feb1). They didn't have reliable access to medical and educational facilities and the job's seasonal nature meant they had to search for other temporary jobs when needed (1). The construction camps were organized into collectives of one hundred people in work units (*gyashok*) managed by a representative appointed by the exile government in Dharamsala, who served as intermediary between Tibetan laborers and the Government of India's officials.

Conflicts arose between certain groups of Khampas and the exile bureaucrats, who in the early years were from the old Ganden Phodrang government in Lhasa. Khampas complained that officials made fun of their manners and their language and that officials discriminated against them, preventing them from receiving their fair share in the aid sent for refugees because they were not U-Tsang and not Gelug

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<sup>285</sup> By the 1970s the TUA had helped establish the Tibetan Youth Organization (October 1970); and the Tibetan Women's Association (September 1984). Most significantly, the two Tibetan newspapers *Bhomed Ranwang*, Tibetan Freedom and later the *Tibetan Review* were all under Thondup and served to promote his projects and serve as "his mouthpiece" (Norbu, R).

(Yujay; Norbu, K).<sup>286</sup> They were unable to opt out of the mandatory Gelug-dominated prayer sessions to attend to their own preferred rituals as Bon, Nyingma, Sakya, or Kagyu practitioners (Sangpo).

George N. Patterson, who left Tibet in the late 1950s and joined his Khampa friends in exile in India in the 1960s, alleges in his book *Requiem for Tibet* that the Tibetan Relief Organization set up in India was run by a committee of Tibetan officials and Indian associates who misused aid and “sold medicines and old clothing on the black market, and added money to their personal accounts” (181). He claims that protests were increasingly made by those Tibetans “excluded from benefits” or who felt that their fellow Tibetans were losing interest in doing “anything regarding a return to Tibet” (182). Patterson explains that these protests were directed against the Dalai Lama’s brother Gyalo Thondup who was “prominent in every decision and every delegation,” and who claimed his “authority from the Dalai Lama” (182). He also claims that the main focus of the protests was “groups of aristocratic and ecclesiastical factions close to the Dalai Lama, who were demonstrably improving their own and their families’ circumstances in every way” (182).<sup>287</sup>

Patterson does not name the groups who felt discriminated against by exile officials but TWA members point to examples of acts of exclusion. Weary of the

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<sup>286</sup> There is some indication of trouble over the distribution of funds in a report written by Pat Brewster. According to him, altogether 15 million rupees were spent on Tibetan refugees for education, rations, administration, medical programs and child welfare in 1965. The aid, he reports, “is, of course, not evenly spread. The Tibetans up in the road-camps may not get any of the benefits concerned, with the possible exception that some of their children may be attending residential schools...” (“Review” Dec 1965 2).

<sup>287</sup> George Patterson writes that he was investigating into corruptions in the distribution of aid and was writing articles (*Requiem* 183). He was declared a “yellow-rag journalist” by Mrs. Kriplani the Home Minister in the Indian Government and by international aid agencies such as the United Nations, Red Cross etc. He left India soon after complaints against him from these agencies.

tension with Tibetan officials, Namkha Dorje, who had been the chieftain of a nomadic region of Bongsar in Nangchen, one of the six kingdoms of Kham before 1950, went to Dharamsala in 1964 to request Wangdue Dorje, who was the then Minister (Kalon) of Home Affairs in the Tibetan Government-in-Exile to ask if he could form a work unit of his tribe and serve as the overseer of his group. Namkha Dorje had arrived in Mandi in 1961 to work on the road construction project with his tribe. Namkha Dorje explained to the Minister that he and his people wanted to work and live together. His request was turned down because a work unit over 100 people would be difficult to manage and there was already a station supervisor at the sites. Namkha Dorje stayed in Dharamsala for three months hoping he could reverse the decision. He explained that his people had escaped together from their nomadic village in Nangchen and that they had fought the Chinese in order live together. They were reluctant to separate now that they were in India (Yuyay). Dorje's pleas fell on deaf ears and he returned to Mandi. His tribe of 500 people decided there was nothing stopping them from working as independent contractors. They formed their own group and joined the ranks of workers known as *khushi Khampas*, which they translated as "independent, or free Khampas."<sup>288</sup>

The numbers of Tibetan refugees who joined the category of *khushi Khampas* grew in two years: the followers of Bon who grew to about 62 individuals formed their own group under the leadership of Pon Sangye Namgyal, as did the third Neten

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<sup>288</sup> *Khushi* in Hindi means "happy or free to do as one wishes." It was also a reference to Tibetans who had come to India before 1959 and had been working on the roads as independent contractors before the Tibetan refugees began working at the sites (Yujay). The term differentiated them from the Tibetan refugees.

Chokling Rinpoche and his monks. Chokling Rinpoche also had written to the exile government asking for permission to form a unit with his monks and followers, and not finding a favorable response; he also opted to work independently.<sup>289</sup> The status of khushi Khampa brought these groups autonomy, but it also served to alienate them from Tibetan refugee laborers. Khushi Khampas acquired many associations, but most damning were the accusations that they were “anti-government” and “un-Tibetan” (Sangpo). Khushi Khampas felt that exile government officials attempted to sabotage them all the time: from getting jobs, food, clothes, and charity gifts that were distributed to other refugees. The access to refugee aid was one of the first indications of their exclusion from membership in the exile community.<sup>290</sup> They did not think they had gone against the Tibetan government nor that they deserved to be excluded from resources meant for all Tibetan refugees. Indian officials did not discriminate against them, but Tibetan exile government officials did (Sangpo). Exile government officials had control over the aid resources and these groups of people felt that officials were using their authority to punish or reward people in the community.<sup>291</sup>

Neten Chokling Rinpoche, lama of Chokling monastery in Nangchen, and his tribe were repeatedly denied food and clothes by Tibetan administrators. Frustrated,

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<sup>289</sup> Samten Karmay writes that refugee administrators ignored Bonpo groups so they ended up seeking aid independently of the exile government (*The Arrow* 11 534).

<sup>290</sup> Stephanie Roemer mentions there were “financial disadvantages” for the eastern Tibetans who contested the CTA’s homogenizing policies (Roemer 73).

<sup>291</sup> Individuals in power exercise their authority through a number of ways. For Max Weber controlling economic resources is one way to get individuals to obey because they are motivated to seek their own interest. Over time, access to state welfare was contingent on having the green book and those without it were excluded from economic resources or aid otherwise accessible to Tibetan refugee-citizens.

Chokling Rinpoche went directly to the Tibetan Refugee Programme officer in New Delhi (Topgyal). The officers did not believe that the exile government would shun sections of its own people. Chokling Rinpoche's son Orgyen Topgyal remembers that two relief aid workers came to verify their complaint: the workers peeked into their refugee tents in Patilikul in Himachal Pradesh, India and were surprised to find no evidence of boxes of cheese, dried milk, cans of food. After that day, the aid organization sent the parcels directly to the address of "Mr. Chokling."<sup>292</sup> To their surprise, Chokling Rinpoche found himself with a new problem. Rumors began circulating within the exile community that Chokling Rinpoche and his people were receiving aid from Taiwan, not from the Indian Government (Topgyal).<sup>293</sup> They felt that in advocating directly for themselves and bypassing the Tibetan officials, they had slighted the exile government.<sup>294</sup>

### **3) Separating from the wishes of the Dalai Lama**

The Dalai Lama attempted as early as 1960 to "give priority to more permanent rehabilitation with facilities to enable all Tibetans to live in homogenous communities," and to provide education to the young (Phuntso 137). The Dalai Lama approached Prime Minister Nehru who was able to get state governments to allocate vacant land to the Tibetans. The State of Karnataka was the first to offer a stretch of

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<sup>292</sup> Similarly, Malcom Dexter mentioned in his letter to Joyce Pearce in Surrey that he and Sangye Tenzin had visited Kulu and Manali after an audience with the Dalai Lama and they had met Lupon Tenzin Namdak and the Bonpo group with him who "have now received rations for the first time!" This indicates that they had not been getting rations till then (Dexter, letter [13 May]).

<sup>293</sup> Tibetans who were in the government work units would remark, "Look at these people. They are getting aid from Taiwan. See, their clothes are different. Ours is real refugee aid, theirs is from Taiwan" (Topgyal).

<sup>294</sup> The same is said to have happened to the Bon group under Pon Sangye Namgyal and to Namkha Dorje's group.

jungle in Bylakuppe and the first Tibetan settlement was set up in December 1960. When Tibetans first saw the jungle at Bylakuppe, “many of [them] broke down and cried” (Dalai Lama, *Freedom* 159). It was not possible to settle Tibetans in “large homogenous communities” as the exile government desired, due to the Indian government’s “own security reasons” (Roemer 69). Instead, the Indian government established “a series of permanent agricultural settlements throughout India” (Kharat 289). This would serve a double purpose of providing rehabilitation to Tibetans and at the same time help “India’s food needs by bringing unused land under cultivation” (289).

Tibetans from the transit road camps in Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Kalimpong, and Sikkim were among the first to be resettled in Bylakuppe.<sup>295</sup> Most Tibetans went willingly to the settlements, but Namkha Dorje, Neten Chokling Rinpoche, Kamtrul Rinpoche, and the Bonpo community under Pon Sangye Tenzin refused to leave for South India (Tenzing, K).

There is much written about the travails of the first refugees who settled in Bylakuppe after the difficult task of clearing the vast jungle. A group of individuals from Dege settled in Bylakuppe in 1961. Camp No 1 had already been settled when this group had arrived, and Camps 2, 3, and 4 were in the process of being cleared of the surrounding jungles. All Tibetans lived in tents. The Dege community members requested Ayang Rinpoche and Penor Rinpoche to live with them in their camp. However, the exile government wanted to station these lamas in Buxa, West Bengal.

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<sup>295</sup> Not long after other settlements were set up: Chandragiri in Orissa, Mainpat in Madhya Pradesh, and Dehra Dun and Mussoorie in Uttar Pradesh (now Uttarakhand)

The community argued that the lamas would not be able to endure the heat in Buxa.

Located near Bhutan's border, Buxa was a transit camp for refugees who entered India through Bhutan. It became a temporary school for 1,500 monks to resume their education. This number fluctuated as monks came and left. By March 1968, there were 927 monks: many moved to Sarnath in 1968 where a school was set up ("Buxa" 10). Buxa was predominantly run by scholars and monks of the Gelug institutions of Sera, Drepung, and Ganden (10). It is possible that many Kagyu, Sakya, and Nyingma monks and lamas had chosen to be resettled elsewhere. Gyalwa Karmapa, the head of the Kagyu sect had established a monastery in Sikkim and Nyingma lamas had established a monastery in Rewalshar in Himachal Pradesh (11). The community refused the camp officer's order that the lamas be sent away to Buxa. Instead, all members of the group offered two rupees from their earnings each month towards supporting the lamas. Most able-bodied Tibetans worked on constructing homes, building roads, and drilling wells for a wage of two rupees per day.

Tibetan refugees received free rations of rice, flour, sugar, oil, milk powder, and grain each month, and the camp officer refused to give any portion to the lamas (Dorje, P). The community once again shared their ration with the lamas. There were many men in the community who had been Chushi Gangdruk warriors in Tibet and they were not easily intimidated by the bureaucrats sent from Dharamsala. They did not welcome the idea that the only lama allowed in the entire settlement to serve as their spiritual teacher was to be a Gelug lama appointed by Dharamsala officials. Fortuitously for them, Penor Rinpoche met a man in Bangalore who petitioned the



King of Mysore for land. The King of Mysore gave Penor Rinpoche five acres of land and on this land the community helped Rinpoche build a monastery; the construction took about thirteen years (Dorjee, P).

It was such acts of self-reliance and defiance against the exile government's representatives that earned these discrete groups the reputation of being difficult. The TUA's indirect reference to their activities in the document with seven resolutions in 1965 turned them from recalcitrant members into anti-nationals. Tibetans from other settlements in Bylakuppe avoided coming to the Khampa camp. Rumors abounded that the individuals were all getting money from Taiwan and that they were anti-government (Dorje, P.). The Khampas in the camp felt excluded and they protested by refusing to pay dues to the Tibetan government. They refused to get the Green Book for as long as 14 years. There was a long period when the Khampas were afraid to leave the camp and walk to the nearby markets, and Tibetans from other camps hesitated to visit the Khampa camp. It took almost two decades for relations between the Khampa camp and the other camps in Bylakuppe to be smoothed over. All settlements run by the TWA were marked, similarly, as controversial spaces within the refugee community.

The status of Tibetans of the Bon religion was even more difficult because in addition to older historical prejudices, they had to combat new exclusion policies of the dominant group in exile. Many settlements were not in favor of having a Bonpo monastery and while the four religious schools had a representative in the Tibetan

Parliament, Bonpos were not recognized and represented in the political community for almost two decades as discussed in Chapter 3.

### **Expelled in Exile**

The formal establishment of the TWA signaled an informal divorce from the exile government. The disapproval of the TWA was never made public nor did the exile government commend the thirteen leaders for their accomplishment in building their settlements without burdening the exile government. Instead it maintained a silence when the TUA and community members spread rumors that the settlements had been established with funding from the Taiwanese or the Communist agents or both, even though the exile government was working with the TIRS to build the settlements. The TWA settlements began to feel like outposts in exile.<sup>296</sup>

The exile government's opinion of Tsultrim and the TWA is illustrated quite clearly in a letter to the Editor in the *Times of India (ToI)* on 12 June 1971, written by Ven. Jigme Rinpoche, Phagpa Tshering, and Mrs. Gha Yondon, all Parliament members of The Tibetan People's Deputies of the Tibetan exile government. The letter's main purpose was to challenge a news report that introduced Tsultrim as a leader of the Amdo province in a story about a split in the Tibetan community. These exile parliamentarians contested Tsultrim's alleged importance by pointing out that he was not even a "village headman" in Tibet. It portrayed Tsultrim as an undesirable citizen, who, since his arrival to India, had "been indulging in various activities to undermine the unity of the Tibetan community in exile" ("Tibetans," 8). The fact that

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<sup>296</sup> It is also very possible that certain members of the TWA got financial help from the Mongolian-Tibetan Affairs Commission (MTAC).

the “people of Amdo,” no less, had sent a 5-point memorandum to the Tibetan People’s Deputies in 1965 repudiating Tsultrim’s “harmful activities” was used by the exile officials to point to Tsultrim’s political impotence even within the Amdo community. Tsultrim, the letter explained, “was disowned and expelled from the Tibetan community” (8).

If Tsultrim was depicted as an unworthy member of the Tibetan community, and a traitor, Thondup was presented as the exemplary Tibetan patriot. The same letter claimed that Thondup was not a leader of any particular group, and worked to plead Tibet’s case to the world. Unlike Tsultrim, Thondup enjoyed “the full confidence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan government and the Tibetan people” (8). It is ironical that the government relied on examples of censure from “regional” communities to support its repudiation of Tsultrim’s regionalism. It is also revealing that members of the Tibetan parliament felt it was necessary to respond publicly to the *Times of India* to denigrate and disown Tsultrim. This act of banishment highlights that Tsultrim was, in fact, a significant member of the Tibetan community, albeit as a threat to the establishment. The letter also reveals the importance that was accorded to the idea of being united.

The different values assigned to Thondup and Tsultrim helped to establish the model for a “good citizen/patriot” from the “bad citizen/traitor.” Thus, while inclusion into the Tibetan polity was informal and private and might have consisted of an oath of loyalty to the Dalai Lama, the act of exclusion was public. The tactics included house arrest, imprisonment, and expulsion from the community (Yujay).

Unlike citizens who are “definable by their exemption from expulsion,” (Anderson, *Us* 129), subjects within a community even in a state of statelessness found they could be doubly exiled.

To what state is a refugee, already living in a condition defined by indeterminacy, precarity, and non-recognition expelled to and how is this accomplished? While geographical territory comes with borders, and banishment from the territory takes the individual outside the borders of the physical land, the emotional and imagined space of belonging is internal. In such a space, banishment is limitless alienation and accomplished with public shaming, defamation of character, and repeated campaigns of exclusion. There were small and big consequences to setting up the TWA settlements according to its members: the settlements did not receive the aid that other Tibetan refugees received; Tibetan children in the TWA camp in Mainpat, for example, were not permitted to attend the government-run Tibetan school and were refused medical assistance in the government Tibetan clinics;<sup>297</sup> and several of the TWA leaders received traveling bans or house arrest orders from the Government of India without any warning or explanation. For example, Namkha Dorje and his aide Yujay were restricted from leaving Mainpat for five years (Tenzing, K; Yujay). TWA members believed it was the exile government who made them outcasts. “It was the government that did not keep in touch with us” (Sangpo). However, there was no policy established by the exile government

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<sup>297</sup> Children from Namkha Dorje’s camp in Mainpat Camp no 2 were not able to attend the Tibetan school in the Tibetan camp nearby (Yujay). There is no evidence for such allegations other than testimonies from individuals.

restricting children from the 13 camps from attending its school. Some exile officials argue that TWA leaders exercised their power over their communities by refusing to send their children to the schools run by the exile government.

While the TWA could be studied as the “oppressed,” they were not victims. Ashis Nandy proposes that the oppressed is “never a pure victim” because one part of them “collaborates, compromises and adjusts; another part defies, ‘non-cooperates’, subverts or destroys” (*Bonfires* 459). This is evident from the actions of the TWA members who resisted giving up control over their religious beliefs and their tribal affinities. For example, Tsultrim took the rejections and repudiations from the Tibetan community as an opportunity to petition the Indian Government for Indian citizenship for 9 of the 13 settlements in 1971. It is possible that by this time some settlements such as the Bonpo settlement in Dolanji were drifting from the politics of the TWA and might not have been part of the group seeking citizenship.

In the article “Tibetan refugees seek Indian citizenship” on 5 August 1971, the *Times of India* reported that a group of Tibetan refugees was seeking Indian citizenship because they seemed “to have lost all hope of being able to return to their homeland.” The article explained that the refugees were split into two groups, one led by Gyalo Thondup and the other by Gungthang Tsultrim and that these groups had been “indulging in mutual recriminations which sometimes culminate in violence, creating a law and order problem.”<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> It is unclear why the TWA abandoned the project to seek Indian citizenship, although correspondences to the exile government and in newspapers indicate that many Tibetans held TWA members in deeper contempt for this. A press release issued by the exile government after Tsultrim’s death mentions that while the government did not prevent Tibetans from taking Indian citizenship, it

The appeal for Indian citizenship was interpreted by the exile officials as confirmation of the Khampas not wanting to belong to the Tibetan nation. The act of taking the citizenship of another nation was considered by Tibetans to be an “act of self-exclusion” and as an “act of treason” (Brox 5). Accepting citizenship of another nation meant a disavowal of the Tibetan nation as symbolized by the exile government. Tsultrim and his allies were caught in an unfamiliar predicament: they were not desired by the majority of exile Tibetans who found them to be un-Tibetan, and yet they were still expected to be faithful to their nation. Even within the condition of statelessness, there existed a cause and a symptom that divided those who belonged and those who did not.

The TWA members felt that having Indian citizenship would protect them from being discriminated against and marginalized within the exile community. In short, they felt that their best option for equality as Tibetans was to become Indian nationals. Their attempts to do so, however, were thwarted. The TWA members found themselves doubly exiled and lived their lives mostly circumscribed within the borders of their settlements. They emerged only when controversy dragged out intermittently over the years, and these usually related to their alleged relations with the Communist Chinese government and with Taiwan.

Popular Tibetan organizations such as the Tibetan Youth Congress and the Tibetan Women’s Organization, both established through association with the TUA,

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did oppose earlier the attempt (by unnamed) to “force en masse” a large number of Tibetans from becoming Indian citizens. Such an act was “tantamount to killing the Tibetan issue” which the document states is “sacred” (Press Release Aug 1978).

led campaigns over the years condemning the TWA of various anti-national activities. Two maelstroms took place over publications linking the TWA with Taiwan. The first was an article in the *Young Army Journal*, a newspaper in Taiwan, on 18 May 1977 alleging that Tsui Shi Yan, the head of the Mongolian-Tibetan Affairs Commission had commented that Khampas were the founders of the Tibetan resistance movement, and that Khampas and Amdos were in the majority in India. He had indicated that the Mongolian-Tibetan Affairs Commission was working closely with the “13 Group” (*Dedon* 32, 41). The second uproar came over a newspaper publication of a greeting offered to the Mongolian-Tibetan Affairs Commission and attributed to the TWA on the occasion of the Tibetan New Year in February 1978.<sup>299</sup>

The comments made by Tsui Shi Yan were understood by the exile government as a ploy to confuse Tibetans on Tibetan history and to misrepresent Tibetan unity to the international community. The secretary of the Information Office, Namgyal Dorjee, was sent to the TWA settlements of Bir, Tashi Jong, Satauan, Munduwala, and Clementown in the summer of 1977 with the copy of the article from *Young Army Journal* along with its translated version from Chinese into Tibetan. The government expressed that they suspected Taiwan to be behind the publication of the article and not the TWA, and they requested each of the TWA settlements to

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<sup>299</sup> A source indicated it was possible that Gungthang Tsultrim might have sent a card but it is unclear if he told any of the other TWA members; members did not always work in consensus with each other. Another source indicated anyone could have sent a card under Tsultrim’s name.

respond stating the allegations were baseless.<sup>300</sup> Tsultrim responded that he would provide a clear response after an investigation into the matter.

While the exile government did not accuse the TWA regarding Yan's comments, the Amdos of Hunsur addressed a letter to "Mr. Tsulti Yen," head of the Tibet-Mongol Bureau of Taiwan, on 28 October 1977, stating they were speaking on behalf of all Amdo people living in India. The letter is mentioned in the October 1977 issue of the *Tibetan Review* and a copy of the letter is also in the files of the Tibetan Cabinet. The Amdos of Hunsur charged the Taiwanese Government with creating discord among Tibetans by suggesting all Amdos and Khampas had ties with the Taiwan Government (*Tibetan Review*, Oct 1977 6; Letter 32, 41). Such statements, the letter pointed out were made to promote "false impression among our people" (32, 41). It stated that "as for Mr. Tsultrim, we have always regarded him as a shameful element within our community right from the time we came as refugees in Indian in 1959" (32, 41). Tsultrim's activities made him "nothing more than a traitor to our cause for which we express our continued intolerance" (32, 41). The group sought to stress their disassociation from the TWA.

"We would like to make it very clear that we strongly deny the accusation of our having maintained any relationship and taking aid from Taiwan and the so-called Mongol Organisation. We have neither wish nor reason to place ourselves into such harmful acts of betrayal. Leave aside taking any aid, it is something we cannot even think of. Any association with this very name is detrimental to our cause and makes us shamefully mad" (32, 41).

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<sup>300</sup> Minutes of a Meeting in the Cabinet on May 18, 1977 mention that Namgyal Dorje, the secretary to the Department of Information had visited the camps.



The letter reveals the general position of Tibetans towards Taiwan and the People's Republic of China.

On 14 February 1978, Tsultrim wrote to the exile government stating that the allegations about the TWA's ties with Taiwan were bogus. He asked the Cabinet to distribute his letter to the other ministers as well as to communicate the contents to the community. Unfortunately, the contents of another Taiwan-related document, the New Year greeting to the Tibet-Mongol office came out during this interim. The Department of Information of the exile government sent a letter to the TWA on 7 March 1978, with a copy of the advertisement. Tsultrim responded with a letter on 17 March 1978, acknowledging the letter from the Department of Information and pointed out that the TWA was not responsible for the advertisement. He suggested it would be easy to find out who had produced it. The government never publicly cleared the organization of these (now two) allegations as requested by the TWA. And just as the TWA feared, the government's silence paved the way for the Tibetan public to focus on the Taiwan issue. The article was the heated topic during the annual gathering of Tibetan administrators (*Longkhor Leydon Tsokchen*) on 19-22 March 1978.<sup>301</sup> Individuals had declared that the members of the TWA were not following the Dalai Lama's leadership and were harmful to the struggle for Tibetan freedom. There had been a suppurating intimation in that room that if Communist China was the external enemy of Tibet, then the TWA was the internal enemy

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<sup>301</sup> In the minutes of the meeting, TWA members are not clear on the occasion for Jetsun Pema's alleged outburst. Orgyan Topgyal says, *Gyalyong Tsoghen*, Zongnang Rinpoche says it was either the *Gyayum Tsogchen* and Dozong Rinpoche says *Laydom tsogchen*.

(Topgyal; Drawupon). In that room of rising emotion, a prominent civic leader is alleged to have asked the public in attendance “Who is *Tsho khag bcu gsum* (Organization of 13?)” “Who is its head?” She followed the two questions with the remark that the head of the organization should be identified, banished from the society, and done away with (TWA “Statement” 5).<sup>302</sup>

On 10 April 1978, the TWA wrote to the Tibetan Cabinet expressing their disappointment that the Cabinet had not made their clarifications known to the assembly. The Department of Information of the Tibetan exile government asked to hold a meeting with leaders of the TWA on 9 July 1978.<sup>303</sup> This meeting never took place on July 9 because Tsultrim was murdered in his backyard on the night of 16 June 1978.

In spite of the denouncements from fellow Tibetans, TWA communities felt they had been successful in maintaining their regional communities, cultures, and religious practices (Sodam). Even Tsultrim’s ambitions had softened over time. In the months before his death, Tsultrim had remarked to some of the younger men like Sonam Damdul (Sodam) and Jimba that the organization had accomplished what it had set out to do. The young men had championed for regular meetings and Tsultrim had explained to them that the organization had reached a new phase: that of peaceful coexistence with the exile government. Tsultrim had even contemplated requesting the Dalai Lama to inaugurate the monastery he was building. He was at peace. For the

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<sup>302</sup> Letters from the TWA to the Cabinet (1978). This thread is also recorded in the document published by Tibetan Welfare Association in “Statement of the Real Truth” (7 Dec 1978). Jetsun Pema, the Dalai Lama’s sister was alleged to have posed the questions.

<sup>303</sup> The TWA “Statement of the Real Truth” mentions the Kashag stated 20 July 1978.

first time in many years, those around him too began to feel that nobody would attempt to kill him (Damdul; Jinba).

Tsultrim's murder was personal for young men like Ludo Chime who looked up to him. "Killing Tsultrim meant killing all of us. Each person felt the gunshot aimed at him" (Chime). Tsultrim's death brought all the old wounds to the surface intensifying the rift between the government and the members of the TWA. His death also left the group without a strong leader and signaled the beginning of the fragmentation of the TWA.

The TWA sought to meet the Cabinet of the exile government to speak about their place in the Tibetan exile society. All the evidence from the government and the society thus far made them realize that they were unwanted, all they had sought for years was to have the chance to present their point of view, if not to the Dalai Lama, then to those close to him (Yujay). The proceedings of the meeting between Tibetan exile officials and TWA members is the focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### **The Pain of Belonging: Tibetan Exilic Nationalism in the Wake of “The Black Friday”**

We all need to be needed.... Many are confused and frightened to see anger and frustration sweeping like wildfire across societies that enjoy historic safety and prosperity. But their refusal to be content with physical and material security actually reveals something beautiful: a universal human hunger to be *needed*. Let us work together to build a society that feeds this hunger” (Dalai Lama and Arthur C. Brooks. *New York Times*, 2016).

#### **The Black Friday: The Assassination of Gungthang Tsultrim**

Gungthang Tsultrim was shot in the back while he was walking in his backyard in Clementown, India, on the night of 16 June 1978. Tsultrim’s wife, Khamo, who was in the house, and Jinba, who lived next door, rushed towards the sound of four gunshots that punctured the evening’s stillness. They found Tsultrim on the floor and they stated they saw the outline of a man running into the jungle that surrounded their homes (TWA, “Black Friday” 2). Tsultrim was taken to Peshin Hospital in Dehra Dun and was pronounced dead early morning on June 18.

The details of Tsultrim’s death were printed in English and Tibetan in a pamphlet titled, *The Assasination [sic] of Gungthang Tsultrim* written by “Members” of the “Tibetan Welfare Association, a confederation of 13 Amdo and Khampa settlements in India,” and distributed in Clementown a few days after his death. He had served as General Secretary to the association known to Tibetans as the infamous *Tsho khag bcu gsum*, “Organization of 13.” This document, referred to in this chapter as “The Black Friday,” stated that Tsultrim had made a declaration to the

Superintendent of Police and the District Magistrate of the area before his death in which he named three individuals “responsible for hatching and executing the plan to murder him”: Mr. Wangdu Dorjee, Mr. Phakte and Mr. Gyeme Thondup (4). All three alleged suspects were Tibetan, and like Tsultrim, came from the region of Amdo.<sup>304</sup> Mr. Wangdu Dorjee was serving then as the Minister of Home Affairs of the exile government of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and he was also the Representative of the Dalai Lama in New Delhi; Mr. Thondup was a Senior Army Officer stationed at the 22 unit, an elite commando of Tibetan resistance fighters in Chakrata, India,<sup>305</sup> and Mr. Phakte was a businessman who lived in Rajpur, India.<sup>306</sup> Tsultrim alleged in his dying declaration that the three men had contested his success in getting funds to build 50 new housing units in Clementown and that the men had “wanted these new houses to be built at Rajpur” (4-5).<sup>307</sup>

At the time of his death Tsultrim had been buoyant with ambition for the success of the feature film he had directed and produced. *Roof of the World* depicted the culture and people of Amdo and was the first film by a Tibetan refugee.<sup>308</sup> The film had enjoyed a successful screening in Dehra Dun and Tsultrim had dreams to

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<sup>304</sup> Tibetans lived in the three areas of Amdo, Kham and U-Tsang (also known as Domed, Dotud and U Tsang) or *Chol-ka-sum* (the three regions) of Tibet.

<sup>305</sup> 22 Unit refers to an elite commando unit made up of Tibetan resistance fighters. The Chushi Gangdruk (and Gyalo Thondup, brother to the Dalai Lama) helped in recruiting for this unit. About 5,000 men, mostly Khampas, joined this unit in 1962 after the Sino-Indian war. CIA and RAW aided in establishing it (Thondup; Knaus).

<sup>306</sup> One of my sources wondered why Gungthang Tsultrim had not named Gyalo Thondup as one of those who wanted him dead. The men named by Tsultrim as responsible for his death, worked closely with Thondup.

<sup>307</sup> “The Black Friday” (*The Assassination of Gungthang Tsultrim*) was attributed to the Tibetan Welfare Association, 1978. (Mr. Kesang was identified as the suspected murderer and was caught in Nepal and brought back to be tried in Lucknow.)

<sup>308</sup> The film was shot in Himachal Pradesh, India

show it in theatres throughout India.<sup>309</sup> As mentioned earlier, he had also been promised funding to build more homes in Clementown, but the project had been momentarily stalled after fierce objections from many individuals in the Tibetan community in the area, as well as officials in the Tibetan exile government (Togyal).<sup>310</sup> For much of his life in exile, Tsultrim had fought numerous allegations by the TUA and other Tibetan organizations claiming his responsibility for activities that led to misunderstanding among Tibetans, and also between the exile administration and the Government of India. The most serious charge against him was that he was receiving money from the Guomintang in his alleged role as leader of an anti-Communist organization started by the Mongolian-Tibetan Affairs Commission in 1964. The TUA believed that the organization's aim was to "create obstacles" and disrupt the leadership of the Dalai Lama and that Tsultrim used his position as the leader of the TWA to "carry out ideas and work assigned by the Guomintang's Mongolian-Tibetan Affairs Commission" (*Truthful History* 102). In the year of his death, a Taiwanese newspaper, the *Young Army Journal*, indicated that Tsultrim had connections with the Mongolian-Tibetan Affairs Commission. This bolstered existing allegations, and Tsultrim had been trying to schedule a meeting between exile government officials and members of the TWA to clarify the allegations. In a letter to the exile Cabinet marked as having been received on 3 March 1978, the TWA (signed by Tsultrim) attempted to deny the accusations. He

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<sup>309</sup> The film was screened for the President of India, Mr. Reddy, on 23 June 1978 at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, Residence of the Prime Minister of India according to a promotional flyer on the film distributed in 1978.

<sup>310</sup> Correspondence from Tibetans in Mussoorie and Rajpur indicate disagreement over the resettlement of Tibetans and the building project.

wrote that as an organization, the TWA had no interest in forging relations with any organization that harmed Tibetan culture (Dedon 37, 121). He stated, however, that TWA could not protest or control personal decisions made by individuals and their relations to outside organizations (121). This leaves open the possibility of interpretation of there being individuals who had relations with Taiwan or Communist China, or both, as alleged by the TUA.

“The Black Friday,” written in English and translated into Tibetan, hailed Tsultrim as a beloved Tibetan leader who “died as a martyr” for “his Amdo and Khampa brethren [sic]” (cover). The pamphlet was directed not so much at fellow Tibetan refugees as it was at the Indian establishment. It made a direct appeal to the Government of India for protection and to the “press in India for their valuable support in this matter” (7). It indicated that Tsultrim’s death provided sufficient reason to fear that those who shared the same “ideals” could also be “eliminated under similar circumstances” (7). It was one of the first texts written by Tibetans in exile directly critiquing the integrity of the Tibetan exile government under the leadership of the Dalai Lama. The pamphlet took four controversial positions: it linked elite members of the exile administration to Tsultrim’s murder; it described the Dalai Lama as a “prisoner” of the machination of exile administrators; it pointed to deep structural prejudices and discriminatory practices within the higher levels of the

exile government against the people of Kham and Amdo; and it addressed Kham and Amdo's political "freedom" from the Lhasa government prior to 1959 (5-6).<sup>311</sup>

Unlike the texts produced in the 1960s and the 1970s, which sought to gain support for Tibet's cause, "The Black Friday" drew attention to the problems of living within the margins of the Tibetan exile community. Although the pamphlet does not pass muster as a reliable historical source, it raises questions about governance, sovereignty, and belonging, and for these reasons the pamphlet can be read as a political testament, one of the first of its kind in Tibetan exile history. It attempted to speak about the pain of belonging in a polity where certain groups (Amdo in this context) expressed concern that they could not speak about their history for fear of violating the narrative sanctioned, selected, and normalized by the exile government and community.<sup>312</sup>

Tsultrim had been an inspiring political and civic leader and his untimely death confirmed his identity as a patriot in the view of his admirers. In writing his story describing the relationship between Tsultrim and the TUA (and Gyalo Thondup, the Dalai Lama's older brother) who had dogged him for most of his life in exile, the pamphlet indicated that Tsultrim was disliked because he was from Amdo. It described Amdo as a region that had operated outside the jurisprudence of the Tibetan administration in Lhasa prior to 1959, and a region where people had "considered themselves FREE" (5). Tsultrim had held fast to the belief that people should not be

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<sup>311</sup> "The Black Friday" pamphlet was printed in Tibetan and in English. Alo Chonzed wrote an article in the *Tibetan Review* that blames the officials working in the offices of the Dalai Lama for hypocrisy.

<sup>312</sup> Veena Das writes about how societies hide their pain of belonging in *Critical Events*.



made to suppress their histories and he had objected to, and opposed, the administrators of the exile government for their prejudices and discriminatory practices towards Amdos and Khampas. He had believed exile bureaucrats had no “love or regard” for Khampas (5). According to the pamphlet, this had been the reason for establishing the Tibetan Welfare Association and this was also the reason that Tsultrim had turned into a “menace” for the “Tibetan High-ups at Dharamsala” (6).

Rather than continuing to view the pamphlet solely as a manifesto for regionalism, or as a dissident Tibetan text that is in conflict with Tibetan unity and national identity—both feasible positions given its furtive circulation and content—I think it is productive to analyze the pamphlet for what it says about the Tibetan subject and Tibetan society at a crucial juncture of the reconstruction of the Tibetan society in exile. The text articulates the complex relations between belonging and the practice of (Tibetan) democracy. It also questions the place of individual freedom in a movement committed towards the independence of a people. Speaking as future citizens of a reformed Tibetan nation to come, the text can be interpreted as attempting to understand the rights and responsibilities of membership, the question of representation, such as, who gets to speak, as well as the place of minorities and their histories within an exile polity. This is possible, of course, if the perspectives of the ruled are kept in conversation with the democratization of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. The exile government’s response to alternate and dissenting

desires is equally instructive in understanding how majority and minority are often not commensurate even as they are contemporaneous and share the same goals.

The vilification of the “Ministers” of the Dalai Lama’s government, although not entirely unique in Tibetan history, was significant because this was a critique of a reformed polity that was put in place by the fourteenth Dalai Lama and was presented as being different from that of the old establishment.<sup>313</sup> The pamphlet also did what no other text had done thus far for Tibetan exiles, by challenging the national narrative of the new united Tibet that stressed the primacy of the three regions of Tibet over the Chinese assertions of suzerainty and sovereignty over regions of Kham and Amdo. Speaking of the historical truth of Kham and Amdo’s independence— inconsequential to a large extent today— was anathema during that period of reconstructing national belonging and courting recognition.

The heart of the tension between the exile officials and members of the TWA lay in the latter’s resuscitation of histories and a past that they were being asked to hold in abeyance. In awakening suppressed histories that only served to help the Chinese, the TWA had betrayed the unspoken belief among Tibetans that belonging entailed unity, and unity depended on consent to the Dalai Lama’s exile government as the sole authority capable of achieving Tibet’s future. The people’s consent to unite in fighting the Chinese and to be ruled was shaped in part by the hegemonic authority of the Dalai Lama himself. That is to say, as suggested by Carole

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<sup>313</sup> Gyalo Thondup describes the old system in the following way: “No words can describe how cruel and barbaric those power struggles were or what kind of people were ruling Tibet. There was no law, no justice” (87)

McGranahan, that his power and authority came “paired with consent consciously rooted in belief and faith” (*Arrested Histories* 4). The Dalai Lama’s political authority emanates from his religious position. To challenge the Dalai Lama is to break a religious bond, and to lose both social and political subjectivity.

Furthermore, in talking about Kham and Amdo’s autonomy, the pamphlet indicated a new political subject and a newly configured minority. It also pointed to the incommensurability between the decentralized and flexible features of Eastern Tibetan polities, built over generations of relations between tightly knitted tribes, and the modern future Tibetan state, cobbled together through concepts of democracy and unity. The transformation of the Amdo or Khampa nomad into a modern subject in exile had been possible because of the consent of the people to belong to the new unified Tibet. The TWA leaders sought to challenge the antimonies of Tibetan democracy, but to also use it to their advantage, that is, they were using democracy as a way to prolong their traditional hegemonic positions as chiefs and lamas according to TUA supporters (Tenpa; Yujay). So, on the one hand, they were suggesting that under the new polity it was the people who were the source of the exile government’s authority, and on the other hand they were also seeking to use democracy to protect their traditional hereditary powers: powers that had been held in place by the belief that authority emanated from the tribal chiefs and lamas, not from the people.

### **Response to the Pamphlet**

The pamphlet “The Black Friday” came to the notice of the Tibetan public a month after the target event when a Bombay weekly, *The Current*, cited the pamphlet

under the sensational headline “Dalai Lama Aide Strikes to Kill” on 22 July 1978.<sup>314</sup> The article reported that Tsultrim’s death was “rocking” the Tibetan community. At the heart of the “cloak and dagger story of intrigue and death” the article stated, was Tsultrim’s opposition to the “Dalai Lama’s Golden Horle” (“Dalai Aide” 22).<sup>315</sup> Tsultrim had also angered the “Horle” because of his effort to “Indianise the Tibetans” by petitioning the Indian government for Indian citizenship for Tibetans in 1971 (22).<sup>316</sup>

Such incriminating and devastating details of Tibetan internal strife had never been made public before, and the publication of “The Black Friday” set off a chain of recriminations and counter-charges that have caused discomfort up until the present moment. On 26 July 1978, the *Deccan Herald* reported that over 400 Tibetans in Bangalore “protested against what they called a ‘slanderous and malicious’ report published in a Bombay weekly against the Dalai Lama” (“Tibetan Leader”; Dedon 32, 142).<sup>317</sup> The protest march was organized by the Tibetan Youth Congress who accused the TWA’s pamphlet and the article by the *Current* magazine of “defaming the Dalai Lama” and of “disintegrating the solidarity of six million Tibetans” under

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<sup>314</sup> It is possible that the *Current* brought attention to the event that Tibetan officials had been keeping on the quiet. It has to be kept in mind too that there were very few Tibetans at this point who could read in English. How the *Current* article came to the attention of Tibetans in the settlements is worth analyzing. Was it the regional offices of the TUA or exile representatives in the camps who alerted Tibetans? How did the *Current* learn about the incident, did TWA members send them the pamphlet?

<sup>315</sup> Not sure what “horle” refers to.

<sup>316</sup> Also reprinted in *Rangzen* Summer Issue 1978. The *Current*’s editor issued an apology stating it had published its article in good faith.

<sup>317</sup> *Deccan Herald*, 26 July 1978. The newsweekly *Vanguard* ran its story on the event introducing the 53-year-old Tsultrim as a man who was “respected in all Tibetan circles” (“Tibetan Leader”; Dedon 176)). The paper stated that Tsultrim’s view on the importance of assimilating in India was “not looked upon favorably by the Dalai Lama’s lieutenants, who wanted Tibetans to retain their Tibetan nationality” (176). Likewise, it claimed that Tsultrim’s influence with foreign donors who worked with Tibetan refugees was “another cause of the rift between him and other Tibetan leaders” (176).

the Dalai Lama's leadership (142). Similarly, numerous letters to the Editor published in the *Tibetan Review* attempted to rule out any official conspiracy in Tsultrim's death and to rectify the supposedly slanderous historical untruths in the pamphlet. One letter stated that although Dokham (Amdo and Kham) was far from the Tibetan capital, the pamphlet's assertion that "Dokham people considered themselves always free is misleading which at the moment can only be called a historical myth" (Gyatsho 6). The Regional Working Committee of the Tibetan Youth Congress in Bangalore wrote "There is no account in the Tibetan History, where Dokham people enjoyed independent status" ("Blasphemy" 4-5). The letters indicate that Tibetans equated any criticism of the exile government as criticism against the Dalai Lama.

The day of Tsultrim's assassination is denoted as the "Black Friday" in the pamphlet signaling to the multiple losses felt by Tibetans in Clementown who mourned their new status as orphans. The meeting between the TWA and the exile government set up for an earlier date had to be rescheduled. In addition to discussing the allegations written in the Taiwanese *Young Army Journal*, TWA leaders now intended to seek justice for Tsultrim's murder and clarify a list of seven agenda items with the exile government.<sup>318</sup> A meeting between the TWA and the exile government represented by the Standing Committee of Assembly, a few members of Parliament, and Cabinet Ministers was scheduled and held in Dharamsala for eight days from 25

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<sup>318</sup> The seven agendas appear "petty" today according to one of TWA members I interviewed. On the whole they seem to seek recognition and acceptance from the exile government.

July-1 August, 1978.<sup>319</sup> This was the first face-to-face meeting between the two groups. The *Tibetan Review* reported that the government had invited one representative from each of the 13 settlements and instead 150 individuals had shown up to “discuss their complaints with the Tibetan Government-in-exile” (“Gungthang” 7).<sup>320</sup>

### **Failed Citizens And Their Aspirations**

The meeting between the exile officials and the TWA provides an important glimpse into the negotiations by both parties in understanding the rights and duties of Tibetan refugee-citizens. The meeting is also a demonstration of the model of democracy adopted by the exile government. Many of the TWA members did not have the Green Book— a document that proved the payment of a voluntary tax and membership to the Tibetan exile community— because they felt they had been ostracized long before the Green Book was introduced. Not taking a Green Book had been a way for them to resist what they thought was a policy meant formally to exclude them. The TWA’s stance as a minority group, who insisted they were expelled because of the moral policing of the dominant group and the general public, and their insistence that the government hear them out (Yujay), also speaks a great deal not just about the accommodations made by ordinary Tibetans in the early stages of Tibetan democracy but also the accommodations made by the Tibetan exile state in

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<sup>319</sup> Minutes of a meeting indicate all the members of the Cabinet were not in Dharamsala and they told TWA they would confirm with a different date but TWA members showed up and the meeting had to take place. TWA members’ stories corroborate this detail.

<sup>320</sup> A note from the TWA confirms the participation of eleven TWA members from its settlements (Khashag, “List” kha 32, 122).

its unusual position of having to control its people, and of having to build a community of value in place of territory.

On the first day of the meeting, recorded in minutes kept by the Kashag (the Cabinet) of the exile government, the members of the Tibetan Cabinet reassured attendees that the government had full trust that the TWA had no relations with Taiwan. They explained, however, the importance of clearing the matter officially because the story published in the *Young Army Journal* had caused a great deal of anxiety among the exile community (Kashag, “During the Meeting” 533, 1). Zongnang Rinpoche, the elder and a respected member of the TWA, remarked that the meeting was not an outcome “based on some happy occasion” but rather was born out of “sadness and hopelessness” (trans. 531, 3).<sup>321</sup> He explained that the members of the TWA did not have an anti-Dalai Lama stand and had worked for the benefit of the government as well as the TWA. Although the exile government had many accomplished and dedicated employees, in Zongnang Rinpoche’s opinion there was nobody who surpassed Gungthang Tsultrim’s capabilities. He admitted to thinking and speaking like “a frog in a small pond” (trans. 530, 4). There was further elucidation of the TWA’s disappointment with Jetsun Pema, a well-loved public figure and the Dalai Lama’s younger sister, for her denouncing the TWA during an annual general meeting of Tibetan officials and lay people. She had allegedly cried out that “*Tsho khag bcu gsum* is the internal enemy and we need to get rid of it” (trans. 528, 6). Zongnang Rinpoche was disheartened by the fact that “the man

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<sup>321</sup> All direct quotes marked as translations in this chapter are done by Bhuchung D. Sonam.

[Tsultrim] among us [them] is killed and now only the ones like dogs are left” (trans. 529-7, 5-7) who have nothing to hold onto.

Dorzong Rinpoche, who was the new general secretary of the TWA, agreed on the meeting’s significance. He assured the exile representatives that members of the TWA were present “to work out things so that there is no problem with the government” and that they hoped to “find a way to live without any discrimination” (trans. 527, 7). In his view, the Cabinet and the Parliament should have taken the public excoriations against the TWA as seriously as their concern over the gossip written in negligible newspapers (526, 8).

Dorzong Rinpoche explained that the TWA had been established to protect Kham and Amdo language and culture and not to create disharmony in the community, an accusation made by several Tibetans and apparently agreed with by the government. He demanded clarity from the government. “In a nutshell, whether we are needed or whether the exile government needs us,” or “whether we are to be abandoned” and “set aside” from the 80,000 Tibetans (trans. 524, 10).

Orgyen Topgyal, the son of Chokling Rinpoche, one of the founders of the TWA, reiterated his fear over meeting the same fate as Tsultrim and suggested that it could be the *yabshi* (the Dalai Lama’s family) who were not following the Dalai Lama’s wishes for Tibetans’ unity by calling for a split of the TWA from the rest of the Tibetan community. He affirmed that the Dalai Lama was the TWA’s leader, and explained that even when they were “guiltless and not black [guilty]” they were made to look so (trans. 524-521, 10-13). He would accept the government’s decision to



banish the TWA, but, like his other colleagues, expressed disappointment with the rumors spread about TWA members and sought clarification regarding the same from the exile officials.

Other TWA leaders also insisted the Cabinet needed to prove how TWA members were *not* living under the Dalai Lama's leadership. Amdo Tenpa Gyamtso from Clementown revealed that he had been told by the Home Minister, Wangdi Dorje: "If you stay in Clementown you have gone against the Dalai Lama. If you stay in Rajpur then you're under the Dalai Lama" (trans. 520-519, 14-15). He pleaded that either the Cabinet—the only authority to which the TWA could appeal in their grief—must take care of them, or let them remain in Clementown where they felt cared for (519, 15).

Another TWA member named Jamyang asked: "What is the main reason for the TWA to be so maligned and crushed? Did we take money [salary] from Taiwan? Who gave us money? Tell us clearly... We gave our blood and flesh to bring the Dalai Lama to India" (trans. 516-515, 17-18). The "we" here most likely refers to Chushi Gangdruk members, as they had played a significant role in the Dalai Lama's safe exit from Tibet to India.

The Cabinet minister Tsering Dorjee encouraged TWA members to speak their mind, as was befitting in the democratic system adopted for the exiled community by the Dalai Lama. He stated that if people in the government had made mistakes then the government would be happy to respond to clear the confusion. The two parties continued with similar discussions through the second day of the meeting.

The talks regarding the *Young Army Journal* article ended on a conciliatory note by the second day. The TWA asked all exile government officials to raise their hands if they found the TWA to have no fault. All officials present raised their hands. Likewise, the officials asked if TWA members present would raise their hands if they agreed to produce a press release voicing their objections to the allegations in the *Young Army Journal* on relations between TWA and the Mongolian-Tibetan Affairs Commission, and the members did so. TWA members requested the Cabinet to clear their names by making a public announcement at the next annual gathering of Tibetan administrators. They reiterated that the exile government's silence on rumors about TWA's affiliation with China served to condone and concede to their detractors' allegations on TWA (Topgyal; Damdul; Drawutsang).<sup>322</sup>

In the coverage of the meeting in the *Tibetan Review*, TWA members were reported to have behaved in an unruly way. The journal stated that TWA men and women reported to have attended the meeting, "showed animosity and contempt for the Tibetan government" ("Gungthang" 7).<sup>323</sup> The TWA representatives who had

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<sup>322</sup> The quotes that were significant to the exile officials are handwritten on a sheet of paper marked with the date of the meeting, 27 July 1978 (290-289). They include:

Zongnang Rinpoche's response to agenda 7: "The killer is here amongst us."

Orgyen Topgyal: "This is not a people's Tibetan government, this is *yabshi* government."

Dorzong Rinpoche: "If any of you from the Cabinet and Parliament feel that we have not take money from Taiwan and we are to be trusted, then raise your hands."

Zongnang Rinpoche: "It is important for all of us to be united. But who is the one who split us and who killed the man?" "I think you, your people or your group, are probably stuffing the intestines and so now we can't tie up the ends of the intestines"

Gelek Namgyal: "The man we are fighting is Gyalo Thondup..."

Chokling Rinpoche: "Is the exile government going to select *yabshi* or the people of DoKham?"

Dorzong: "I have not been able to figure out whether this is the people's government or the *yabshi* government" (trans. Kashag, "Important Points" 390-389, 1-2).

<sup>323</sup> Details of this discussion and notes from the cabinet meetings are discussed in chapter 3.

attended the meeting admit that some of their members gave long impassioned speeches, some burst into angry outbursts, and some even threatened the exile government officials. In the minutes of the meetings there is no explicit record of the unruly behavior of the speakers except a few references, such as Jinchong Tulku's banging on the table keeping the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament from speaking.

On the third day of the meeting on 3 August, the TWA leaders returned to discussions on their status in the Tibetan exile society. They asked to be permitted to be relieved from participating in the politics of the exiled Tibetan community, for they did not wish to continue to be seen as troublemakers. Dorzong Rinpoche explained that the TWA wished for unity and peace just as much as the exile government did. A Cabinet Minister stated that the Tibetan government was a people's government and so it was difficult to respond to a request by the people to opt out of being members of the Tibetan community (Kashag, "Minutes of Meeting" 448-443, 1-6). Zongnang Rinpoche pointed out that exile leaders had already expelled the TWA from exile society by dismissing them publicly at a formal gathering.

Drawupon, who was a member of the Tibetan parliament and a TWA member, added that the TWA should be permitted to express its grief and the Cabinet should be able to listen to the complaints. He pointed to the status quo of the situation: the TWA was asking to leave the community and the Cabinet didn't know how to respond. He said the people needed the government and the government needed its people.

Dorzong Rinpoche persisted to ask more pointedly: “Are we needed in the community or not?” “Are we needed in the fight for Tibet’s freedom? Thus far, if you think we have done anything for Tibet’s freedom, will you acknowledge this, will you let the community know?” (Kashag, “During the Meeting” 524, 10).<sup>324</sup> The discussions had moved back to the concerns expressed on the first day of wanting to know if the TWA had done anything useful for Tibet’s freedom, and if the government would declare it to the community.

On the question of whether the TWA was “needed” by the exile government, a government official responded that it was not a democratic practice to abandon members of a community because it found fault with them. He clarified that the government did not support the denouncements individual Tibetans made towards the TWA. He stated that all Tibetans were needed to achieve the goal of Tibetan independence and it was not possible to permit the TWA to leave the community. The members of the TWA reflected on the answers and admitted they were in a quandary. Zongnang Rinpoche explained that the TWA didn’t have anyone they could speak to in the government regarding their status. He asked how it was that the TWA could not get the government’s permission to leave the community, and yet certain elected officials and civic leaders had the authority to banish the TWA from the community. He pointed out that their hope of finding someone who would listen to them had been dashed.

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<sup>324</sup> Dorzong Rinpoche asked: “Are we needed...or are we to be abandoned?” (Kashag, “During the Meeting” 524, 10). Orgyen Topyal asked the Cabinet to make clear what their responsibilities were (as Tibetan citizens).

The TWA members' attempt to get the Cabinet members and exile officials to respond to the TWA's public exclusion by Jetsun Pema is related to understanding who has the right to speak in Tibetan society. It was also an attempt to know what the exile government really thought of the TWA. The question of need or being needed in this context can be interpreted as a question of value. Bridget Anderson proposes that the modern nation is not an "arbitrary collections of people" tied by a common legal status but that it is a "community of value" (Anderson, *Us* 2). The community of value is one of the ways that the state claims legitimacy and thus "overlaps with ideas of the nation" (3). She points out that the community of values does not just exhibit values, but that the community itself is valued and protected. Thus, those who are seen as breaking with the values, or who fail in holding the values, are excluded in a variety of ways. Anderson shows how the categories of "failed citizens" or (not-quite-) good-enough citizens are "tolerated citizens" who must "endlessly prove themselves," that they have the right values (6).<sup>325</sup> In other words, the "Failed Citizen" lacks values and value (5).

The TWA's concerns about being needed echo poignantly Anderson's remarkable assertion that tolerated citizens struggle to be accepted into the community of value and citizenship. The TWA were dubious about the sincerity of government officials' assurances that TWA members were valued. They had waited long to be publicly and officially acknowledged for their contributions to the

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<sup>325</sup> The "Good Citizen" is the law-abiding and hard-working citizen who is a liberal sovereign self. The "Failed Citizen" is seen as incapable of living up to the liberal ideals—the rioter, criminal and often also the poor are put in this category. They, like the non-citizen, do not have rights because they are seen to lack the values and do not have values because they lack rights (For more see Anderson's *Us*)

community. They wanted the Cabinet to declare it officially; they were not willing to be simply tolerated as problems. A close reading of the minutes from the meetings indicates that the exile officials were making an effort to reach out to TWA members, but that changed suddenly.

### **Limitations of Democracy**

On July 30, government representatives dropped a bombshell as they announced that the Dalai Lama had expressed his concern over “The Black Friday” pamphlet published after Tsultrim’s death. They explained that the Dalai Lama believed the pamphlet to have challenged the government’s twenty-years effort to create a Tibetan nation in exile (Kashag, “Minutes of Meeting” 417-414, 18-21). On the night of 2 August 1978, the leaders of the TWA were called to an urgent meeting with members of the Cabinet in an informal restaurant setting in lower Dharamsala to discuss this new development. The exile officials elaborated on the following problems in the text of “The Black Friday”:

- 1) The pamphlet obstructed and went against the Dalai Lama’s work to unite all Tibetans. The regional focus implied that one region didn’t like the other.
- 2) The pamphlet carried a statement about the Dalai Lama as an ornamental head, which was a faulty assumption. This statement provided the kind of material the Chinese delighted in and also had the potential to hurt Tibetans inside Tibet (“Minutes of Meeting” 417, 18).

Exile officials also remarked that the TWA had no right to speak or to take responsibility on behalf of the people of Kham and Amdo in India. They remarked

that the TWA was a welfare organization, and its job was not to decide on larger political matters pertaining to Amdo and Kham. The tenor of the meeting had shifted and the knowledge of the Dalai Lama's displeasure weakened the resolve of TWA members. They agreed that if the Dalai Lama felt the pamphlet was problematic and harmful to the community, they would issue a statement of clarification. Ten representatives of the exile government and a few members of the TWA formed a smaller conclave to discuss the language of this statement of clarification.<sup>326</sup> The first draft of the clarification and its revision was found to be inadequate by exile officials, and TWA members were asked to rewrite it. They were instructed that the approved clarification was to contain signatures from representatives from every TWA settlement. This clarification had to be made available to the public.

The TWA leaders requested the Cabinet to make a public announcement of support for the TWA and credit their act of clarification of the pamphlet at the next annual gathering of Tibetan administrators and citizens. The officials agreed to do so (417-414, 18-21). The TWA published a statement on 20 September 1978 under the title "Declaration of the Association of 13 Groups" signed by twenty members stating that the "assassination of Mr. Gungthang Tsultrim" was "not written by a Tibetan" and that it contained "certain inaccuracies" (*Tibetan Bulletin* 24). The statement stated, first, that "Lhasa is the capital city of Tibet"; second, that the Dalai Lama had

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<sup>326</sup> A meeting between ten representatives from the exile government, including Tenzin Geshe, the assistant to the Kalon for Information Office, Lobsang Dhargyal, Vice-Speaker of the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputy, Sonam Topgyal, the secretary of Kashag secretariat, and secretary of Home Department and deputy secretary of the Information Office and the representatives from the TWA, that included Dorzong Rinpoche, Jagoe Sey Dhonyoe and Amdo Lophun was held on July 30 to discuss the pamphlet and to produce a revision.

always enjoyed the “full authority and decision-making powers”; and third, that the Dalai Lama-led government was the only “legitimate government” of Tibetans (24). It ended with an affirmation that “all three provinces of Tibet are under one government; His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the spiritual and temporal leader; and the current exile government is moving towards a democratic system” (24). The statement issued by the TWA is important because what it attempts to correct is historically controversial. The twenty men who signed the document were aware of the political relationships they did or did not have with the Lhasa Government.<sup>327</sup>

The TWA members returned to their settlements, filled with a sense of hopeless despondence. They felt they had received their answer to the questions: “Are we needed by the Government? Are we needed in the fight for Tibet’s freedom?” (Yujay).<sup>328</sup> This despair is evident in the letter the TWA sent to the Kashag, the exile Tibetan Cabinet, on 2 August 1978. The TWA’s letter raised the concern about not having had a response from the government on the seven points the former had attempted to raise over the course of the year and during the meeting held in Dharamsala, and that instead they had discussed “other things” (trans. Letter to Kashag). It pointed out that the exile government’s understanding was “upside down” and that nothing came of their exchanges (trans.). The TWA members compared their hope for a dialogue with the government with “going to the spring or tap and coming

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<sup>327</sup> The press release also acknowledged that the only true and legitimate Government of Tibet was the one headed by the Dalai Lama. “All the people of the three Provinces of Tibet recognize this Government and they all enjoy equal rights,” the text concluded. Interviews with those who signed the document

<sup>328</sup> A press release was sent to the *Current* to amend its reporting on Tsultrim’s death in September 20, 1978.



back empty handed without water” (trans.). They concluded the letter with the resignation that the people did not have the power to tell the government what to say or do.<sup>329</sup>

The exile government never publicly exonerated the TWA of their charges as promised during the meeting between the two parties. Instead, interestingly, the exile government released a press release titled, “In reply to Allegations Contained in the Pamphlet ‘The Assassination of Gungthang Tsultrim’” a few days after the meeting, without mentioning the meeting and the soon-to-come press release from the TWA regarding the same pamphlet. The official document was released from the “Information and Publicity Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama” on 9 August 1978. It is a remarkable document that seeks to contest the pamphlet’s accusations and to offer the truth on Tibetan history and polity. In its attempts to disprove the contents of the pamphlet, the exile government reveals the truth about history is, as Carole McGranahan wrote in the context of Chushi Gangdruk, “as much about organizing the present and working to secure certain futures as it is about the past” (McGranahan, *Arrested Histories* 3).

The press release by the exile government took issue with three declarations made in the pamphlet: Amdo and Kham’s autonomy from the Tibetan government; the Dalai Lama’s status as an ornamental head; and the accusations of systemic discrimination against minority Khampas and Amdowas. The exile government’s press release pointed out the following: first, discussions about Kham and Amdo’s

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<sup>329</sup> “Our hope is emptied. We are very disappointed,” the TWA laments in the letter to the Kashag (letter [2 Aug]).

autonomy from the Tibetan government was “a very un-Tibetan notion, first invented by the Chinese with the aim of dividing the Tibetans so that when the Tibetan fight for independence is won, the Chinese will have to give up only one or two regions of Tibet. All Tibetans are aware of the Chinese policy of Divide and Rule” (2).

Then, the press release stated that the allegations that the Dalai Lama was a “prisoner” and “ornamental head,” were objectionable because they attempted to “belittle the sacred person of His Holiness the Dalai Lama” (2). Lastly, the press release explained that all Tibetans enjoyed “equal rights” under the Constitution of Tibet written in exile.<sup>330</sup> “In our own office, six out of nine are from Kham and Amdo,” (7) the document stated, as though to indicate the government’s diversity policy.

The official statement attempted to set the record straight on the baseless allegations,<sup>331</sup> but it provided no facts of its own. It also set out to explain the “self-contradictory” statements in the pamphlet (which do exist), with contradictory remarks of its own (7). In doing so, the official statement revealed the exile government’s own positions in the following spheres:

- 1) It established the ideological constitution of Tibetan identity and nationalism as one that was constituted to oppose Communist China.
- 2) It outlined history’s task to serve the project of unity.

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<sup>330</sup> Article 9 and 10 of the Charter: Equality before the Law and Religious Freedom states that all Tibetan citizens are equal before the law and enjoy rights and freedoms without discrimination on grounds of birth sex, race, religion, language, lay or ordained status, social origin, rich or poor. Article 10 states all religious denominations are equal before the law.

<sup>331</sup> Press Release, Information and Publicity Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 9 August 1978.

3) It demonstrated that the core dimension of Tibetan political responsibility was to be compliant and maintain deference to the exile government under the Dalai Lama.

4) Most of all, it stated the “obvious fact,” which was that the Dalai Lama, “as the head of the Tibetan Government-in-exile, is the indisputable temporal and religious leader of the Tibetan people and His decisions are final and binding and His pronouncements are the final authority on any question” (3). The press release confirmed what most Tibetans accepted willingly that fealty to the Dalai Lama was the single most valued duty of being a Tibetan. It was the whetstone determining when and what constituted as truth in Tibetan matters and what could be accused of being a “provocative, baseless and malignant allegation” (6).

The signification of “un Tibetan” is unstable in the exile government’s press release. While it is uncontestedly aligned with the Chinese, it is also linked to speech acts that oppose or contradict the Dalai Lama or the exile government. For example, the TWA members were “un Tibetan” for writing that Kham and Amdo were not “somehow part of Tibet” (2). While the TWA was simply pointing to a political reality, it was seen to have served Chinese claims to sovereignty more robustly than the Tibetan struggle for independence. As Tibetans in a political struggle it was considered unpatriotic to include controversial history or to allow divergent political views. Likewise, belittling the “sacred person” of the Dalai Lama by labeling him as a mere ornamental head of the Tibetans, or alleging that Kham and Amdo people were neglected by the exile government, were considered “non-Tibetan” because they

showed Tibetans in a negative light. These acts were deemed “false and fratricidal” and not the work of “patriotic Tibetans” (6).

National consciousness, whether it is defined as the recognition of shared characteristics among members of a nation, (and also different from people who belong to other nations) or as a recognition of their being products of a shared history, is an important force in nationality (Bauer, *Question of Nationalities* 120). National consciousness “becomes a determinant basis of human action” in its linkage to the national sentiment (121). In other words, national consciousness is accompanied by the ability to see the “specificity of one’s own nation,” and its difference from others. Bauer calls this a “national sentiment” (121). Such sentiments can give rise to peculiar “nationally based evaluation of things,” whereby things associated with one’s nation in a positive light become pleasurable and good while criticism is seen as a reproach (121). Thus, the very act of speaking against the Dalai Lama or the Tibetan government could be tantamount to being un-Tibetan and un-patriotic.

The Tibetan government’s decision to publish the press release after the meetings had taken place and after there had supposedly been some form of rapprochement between the two parties, showed TWA members that protecting the TWA was not among the government’s chief concerns (Yujay; Damdul). The press release served to throw the TWA back into the lion’s den. The August 1978 issue of the *Tibetan Review*— the only journal in English at that time devoted to Tibetan affairs— printed the press release in its issue. In the editorial titled “Politics of Sorrow” Tsering Wangyal, the editor, exclaimed, “Never before has the suppressed

grievances of various Tibetan groups against each other been voiced so openly; never before has the existence of factions with divergent interests in the Tibetan community been made so widely known”(1). Wangyal asked, “If Gungthang Tsultrim was murdered because of his independent views, it was indeed a deplorable act, not entirely dissimilar to the practices of a regime from which we have fled in exile” (1). The editorial also noted that the pamphlet distributed by the Tibetan Welfare Association “is critical of the Tibetan Government—both past and present” and that the allegations offered no evidence and “have not been done in a proper and dignified manner” (1). The underlining message of the TWA’s pamphlet—that dissent against the Tibetan Government was not tolerated—was demonstrated spectacularly through the ensuing public denouncements, both by the Government-in-Exile and fellow Tibetans.

### **Orphans of Democracy: The Benign Neglect of Dissenters**

According to Eric Hobsbawm, national consciousness cannot be verified as having developed evenly or even synchronously among a people. He states that it is difficult to know how the nation is viewed “from below” in reasonably stable and experienced democratic systems (*Nation* 11). By that he means it is harder to know how ordinary people, “who are the objects” of the “actions and propaganda” of governments, the spokesmen and activists of nationalist (or non-nationalist) movements, see the nation. While opinions expressed by political organizations such as the TUA and later their sibling organizations Tibetan Youth Congress and Tibetan Women’s Association indicated that they voiced the will of the people, these

organizations were closely aligned to the exile government. As such, their primary goals can be read as vocalizing government policies and desires. At the same time, the passionate movement of the people to vilify the TWA makes it difficult to argue with certainty that the official ideologies of the Tibetan government and its functionaries were misinterpreting what its members felt. The majority of Tibetans showed themselves to have embraced unity as an inviolable national project, indeed as a national value, and voices of dissent, small in number, did not gain traction as being representative of ordinary people. The TWA's desire to protect their particular cultures and ways of life was viewed by exile officials as a kind of regionalism inspired by the leaders to protect their histories and privileges. Likewise, the majority of exiled Tibetans described the TWA's dissent as being divisive and hurtful to all Tibetans and their response after reading Tibetan government's press release to the TWA's "The Black Friday" pamphlet reveals the extent of their anger towards the TWA.

On 13 August 1978, a letter signed by 107 Khampas from Dharamsala was addressed to the Indian Prime Minister Moraji Desai. The letter questioned the TWA's authority to speak on behalf of all Khampas and Amdos in exile. It stated, "We are Khampas and we do not belong to the Tibetan Welfare Association. Ours is not an organization" ("Stop Press" 9). The letter pointed out that the Khampas in the "13 Association" represented a small portion of the total Khampas in exile. The 150, in contrast to individuals in the TWA, lived amicably with "our brothers from U Tsang and Amdo provinces of Tibet," and regarded the Tibetan Government-in-Exile

as the “only true and legitimate” government (9). In the letter the group expressed that the exile government had never discriminated against them.

Likewise, Amdowas of Dharamsala sent a letter to the Cabinet on 18 August 1978, insisting that they did not identify with the regional and divisive politics of the TWA. On 20 August 1978, the Kham Amdo Youth Organization (*Dotoemey Shon Tsok*) from Bylakuppe wrote directly to the TWA denouncing them as followers of the Chinese Communist Party. TWA members were called “wolves in lamb’s clothing” whose work was interpreted to split the community and obstruct Tibetan freedom (trans. Dedon 498).<sup>332</sup> The letter stated that it was “shameful” to claim that Kham and Amdo were independent of U-Tsang. No Tibetan, the letter argued, accepted the views of the TWA. It stressed that the three regions of Tibet were one nation, one race and one people. They threatened the TWA to stay silent. “If you don’t, then we have decided that there is nothing left to do but kill you” (trans. 498). These letters did not mention or respond to the murder of a Tibetan. Their goal was to express their loyalty to the Dalai Lama. Such repeated acts that simultaneously showed loyalty and reproached dissenters are rooted in deeply entrenched beliefs that “if to defend the Dalai Lama is one of the highest forms of religious service, to transgress him is one of the most serious charges one Tibetan refugee came make against another” (McGranahan, *Arrested Histories* 19).

The TWA wrote to the Cabinet in September 1978 letting them know that the TWA had received a letter from Tibetans in Bylakuppe threatening to kill TWA

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<sup>332</sup> Interesting that they use the very metaphor that the Chinese employ to describe the Dalai Lama.

members. The TWA explained that the letter accused some TWA members of being Chinese spies ([25 Sep] 501 1). On 20 September 1978, Dorzong Rinpoche, who had replaced Tsultrim as the General Secretary to the TWA, issued a press release (which was published in the *Tibetan Review*) refuting the “false claims” (“Press” 510; “Gungthang” 6). In the press release, the TWA emphasized that it was a non-political organization registered under the Charitable Societies Act and that its members “unitedly” followed the Dalai Lama “who is the supreme religious and temporal head of all the people of Tibet and who is vested with the fullest authority and decision making power by the people of Tibet” (“Press” 510; “Gungthang” 6).

On 28 September 1978, representatives of the Amdo community in Dharamsala sought an audience with the Dalai Lama to perhaps present their position on the matter. The Dalai Lama pointed out that independence for a united Tibet was a Tibetan objective and it was not to be given up even at the cost of lives (Dalai Lama, “Speech to Representatives” 1-49). He insisted that it was not the time for Kham and Amdo people to speak as if their regions were not under the Ganden Phodrang government. China had persecuted all Tibetans equally. Everyone, he reminded, had suffered and all Tibetans had protested equally against the Chinese.

He also believed that with regard to Tsultrim’s death the government intended no harm, but that “some people” might have felt “negatively affected” due to their own lack of “focus and attention” (trans. 9). He believed that these conflicts could be resolved if both parties had a reasonable conversation (9). He expressed his doubts that people with “crooked horns” existed in the Tibetan community but if they did, he



stated “we will draw a clear line to separate and talk about ‘us’ and ‘them’” (trans. 9). Such a response, he explained, held to both Buddhist karma and civil law (11).

By the conclusion of the Dalai Lama’s address, Tsultrim became the example of deplorable behavior “for Tibet in general and particularly for Amdo people and for Gelugpa” (trans. 10). The tolerance of difference that is invoked as a feature of democratic societies at the beginning of the Dalai Lama’s address to the group of Amdowas does not extend to Tsultrim. The Dalai Lama stated “we are” disappointed with the whole episode in his closing remarks (trans.). It is not certain whom the “we” stands for - the Amdos in the room, the whole of the Tibetan community, the “we” as Tibetan policy makers. If the Tibetan nation was a soul or a spiritual community whose existence depended on the past’s “rich legacy of memories” and the present’s consent and desire “to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form” (Renan 19), then Tsultrim may have betrayed both its past and its present. The Tibetan nation’s consent to continue was built on the solidarity of shared suffering. By this logic, Tsultrim had, for the Tibetan community, sullied the past and broken with the present; and in doing so, he was no longer a member of the future Tibet.

The ambiguity around Tsultrim’s offenses makes it difficult to theorize the relations drawn between “enemy” and “traitor” in the Dalai Lama’s address to the Amdowas. Was Tsultrim a traitor because the government was convinced he had relations with Taiwan? Or was he a traitor because he challenged the Tibetan exile government? What were the “deplorable” activities he had been involved with?

Tsultrim was established as an “enemy” through cryptic references lacking in substantial details of his crime. The references served, however, to confirm any or all suspicions and rumors people might have been harboring about Tsultrim.

The TWA had been stating all along that they were not provided the opportunity to have the Dalai Lama’s “ear,” and that they did not have the chance to speak to him directly of their pain of not belonging (Drawupon; Yuyay; Damdul). They also repeatedly questioned why the government remained silent and didn’t support them publicly. They felt they did not have hope that these questions would be answered if they were not given a chance to speak with the Dalai Lama. It is worthwhile to ask why TWA members were not given access to an audience with the Dalai Lama. Was it because the Dalai Lama refused to grant an audience or was it because their petitions or requests for an audience never made it beyond the Private Office to the Dalai Lama as they suggested in the “The Black Friday”? These questions are important because of the Dalai Lama’s centrality in exile. It is this lack of transparency and the difficulty of accessing the Dalai Lama that the “Black Friday” pamphlet was highlighting in referring to the “ornamental” aspect of the Dalai Lama’s position.

The campaigns against the TWA continued to build up after a group from Dharamsala (*Cholsum Mimang*) submitted a letter to the Tibetan Cabinet on 13 November 1978. The letter, which was also distributed to refugee camps in India, stated that the TWA’s criticism of the exile administration’s officials was disrespectful and had angered the Dalai Lama. It also suggested that Palyul Zongnor

Rinpoche in Clementtown was “selling” his country and was “harmful to the Government of India, and a petition should be sent to the Government of India to put him under observation” (trans. Dedon 37, 265). As though to make amends, they suggested in the same letter that Gyalo Thondup be endowed with a title for all his achievements.<sup>333</sup> This was followed by a letter from Tibetans in Shillong on 26 November 1978 who accused Zongnor Rinpoche of trying to separate the head (exile government) from the body (people of Tibet) (Topgyal). Similarly, Tibetans from the settlement in Walung, Nepal, sent a letter to the Cabinet on 9 December 1978, stating that men like Zongnon Rinpoche were “thorns to the heart” (trans. Dedon 63, 539). Tibetans from Kollegal sent a letter directly to the TWA in Clementtown and to other TWA settlements warning them of the consequences of continuing their work (Dedon, 32, 257).<sup>334</sup> The letter expressed their happiness in Tsultrim’s death and suggested TWA members to “think carefully,” because if they continued to take money from the Guomindang, then they would suffer the same end as Tsultrim. The letter stressed that Tsultrim was not a “clean” Tibetan (257).<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Zongnang Rinpoche and many members of the TWA from Clementtown were no longer able to live in India not soon after and many of them left for Tibet (Jinba).

<sup>334</sup> A former settlement officer in Dorpattan admitted to receiving a letter from the exile government asking Tibetans to send letters to the exile government renouncing Tsultrim.

<sup>335</sup> The only supporting letter for the TWA came from the Dege group in Nepal on 3 November 1979. They asked the exile government to curb rumors. The letter’s ire is targeted towards a Cabinet member Alak Jigme, and it suggested Jigme is responsible for spreading rumors and creating discord between Khampas and Amdos. The letter also suggested that in writing to the Indian Government and suggesting Zongnang Rinpoche was a threat to India, Jigme’s followers were also causing a rift between Indians and Tibetans. It ended with a threat that if Jigme and his followers went unpunished and didn’t change their ways then the Dege people also would resort to the same tactics to malign Jigme and there would be an unrepairable rift between the community and the government (Dedon 303).

It is possible the exile government had evidence that put the loyalty of TWA members into question. TWA members received the letters from community members as acts defending the exile government and serving to simultaneously mark them of acts of transgression. Tsultrim had lived most of his life in exile as a critic of the Tibetan government, but according to his close friends, he had never wavered in his spiritual devotion to the Dalai Lama (Jinba). Tsultrim had been the fulcrum for the TWA; he had helped the settlements accomplish their wish to build a community. For the TWA, Tsultrim was a patriot who valued Tibet's past and its future. In having turned Tsultrim into a traitor, those sympathetic to him felt they were not able to grieve properly for Tsultrim. Even their grief had been turned into an act of treason (Yujay).

These repeated acts of denouncement and banishment performed by the community are pertinent because they reveal the collective consciousness among the Tibetan exile community but more significantly, they reveal the violence necessary to maintain unity for the sake of the collective interest.<sup>336</sup> The TWA members felt that the government did not come forward to protect them. Regimes, Shain explains, tend to regard “attempts to challenge its ‘national mission’ as acts of ‘national disloyalty’” and will “derogate political opponents as being linked to alien interests” (*Frontiers* 20). Regimes also “impose a psychological” and “material penalty on citizens who reject the regime’s authority” (20). In other words, groups in power identify “loyalty

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<sup>336</sup> Even Tsepon Shakabpa ends his book on Tibetan history with a plea to Tibetans to “not be conscious of whether they come from U, Tsang, Kham or Amdo; they must be conscious only of the fact that they are all Tibetans. They must be well organized and united to defend their rights; and they must strive to live and function under the leadership of the Dalai Lama in their struggle for a free, democratic state” (325).

to itself with loyalty to the nation-state” (20). TWA members felt that the Tibetan national consciousness, which was governed by the ideology of the establishment, as evident from the letters written against the “13” had room neither for diversity in its model of unity, nor dissent, nor constructive criticism, in its appropriated model of democracy.

### **A Statement of Lost Hope**

The TWA released a booklet called *Statement on the Real Truth* on 7 December 1978 to present their experience of the eight-day-long meeting with the exile government and to address the injury caused by letters they received from the community. The TWA had hoped that the exile government would be sympathetic to their loss following Tsultrim’s assassination. The text of the booklet explained that while the Tibetan Cabinet members had expressed their satisfaction that there had been no relations between the TWA and the Taiwanese agents during the meeting, they had not made these admissions known to the Tibetan people. The booklet reminded the audience that the Tibetan society in exile had been established with a goal “to preserve and protect [Tibet’s] ancient culture and religion” (trans.1) and asserted that the TWA collective, known as the 13 Group had been formed on their “mutual belief and ideas” (trans.1).<sup>337</sup> The *Statement on the Real Truth* explained that rumors were spread to malign the group and that campaigns were organized to “collect false signatures” to be used against the collective (trans. 2). It focused on the following details of the eight-day-long meeting: TWA members had asked for

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<sup>337</sup> The text is translated from the Tibetan by Bhuchung D. Sonam.

permission to separate themselves from the Tibetan government and politics because they did not want to burden the government any more than they had; the Cabinet ministers had repeatedly assured them that the government did not suspect the TWA of any acts of betrayal; the TWA had requested the Cabinet members to make a public announcement stating thus; that the Cabinet members had agreed to do so, and in return, the TWA had agreed to write a Press Release signed by representatives from each of its settlements.

The statement expressed the TWA members' pain of being unjustifiably viewed as harmful to the cause of Tibet and causing disharmony within the community. It called attention to the harm caused to the Tibetan society by the letter sent by the "so-called people's meeting of Amdo Province" to the Tibetan Cabinet (trans. 4-5). *Statement on the Real Truth*, as the title suggests, sought to clear the allegations made against the TWA by the government officials and various quarters of the community in tandem. It also stated that the TWA's critique of some five odd Tibetans did not mean to extend to the entire exile government (5).<sup>338</sup>

The TWA characterized the allegations against them as "the lies and deceitful actions of the few people under the material influence of Gyalo Thondup," and as such, the allegations needed to be investigated or they would "bring discords and bring disharmony thus bringing obstacles in fulfilling [their] heartfelt cause" (trans. 9). The TWA explained that the booklet was written to use "the freedom of expression

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<sup>338</sup> In their letter of 7 agendas as well as during the meeting the TWA's main critiques or points to be clarified were regarding the following individuals: Wangdor (Kalon for Home Dept.) Alak Jigme, Amdo Dhondup, Gyalo Thondup and Jetsun Pema of TCV

and equality of everyone before the law” and to put an end to the rumors about the TWA (trans. 5). It called for Tibetans to change with the times. It suggested that denouncing and criticizing individuals who hold “different opinions” and writing letters without seeking to first know the facts will only reveal how Tibetans had returned back on the orthodoxy of the seventh century. Such actions didn’t exhibit even a “faint” whiff of democracy, it stated (trans.10).

The letters and the pamphlets written and distributed by the TWA point to a simple desire to be heard and to be recognized by the Dalai Lama. The *Statement on the Real Truth* was the last public document produced by the collective. The government did not offer any support for the TWA nor rebuke the public for the persecuting campaigns against the TWA. With Tsultrim gone, the TWA was never the same. Shunned by majority of exile Tibetans, the group slowly unraveled under the younger leaders. Jingchong Rinpoche, for example, dragged the organization into more controversy and helped to further establish unity and regionalism as two opposing paths in all political discussions.<sup>339</sup> The tension lingered within the community for over a decade and in those years, the most reasonable commentary came from an editorial in the *Tibetan Review*. The editor Tsering Wangyal agreed “regionalism” was a problem in the Tibetan community but suggested that the government “should make renewed efforts to bring the dissident groups in its fold” instead of “regarding them with guarded hostility and benign neglect” (“Enemy” 1).

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<sup>339</sup> Jinchong Rinpoche was accused of misusing the settlement funds by many members of the community at Satuan, one of the TWA settlements established. He also led a group of 22 Tibetans to Tibet and was accused of presenting the group as a fifth-fact-finding delegation of the exile government. They were arrested in Nepal upon their return but released on 4 January 1984 (“Bogus ‘Fifth’” 5).

Wangyal suggested that the dissidents should be spoken to in “an atmosphere of friendship and understanding” and that calling them “unpatriotic” just because they didn’t “obey the Tibetan government and leaving it there” would only cause more animosity (1).

Wangyal suggested that regionalism would not threaten internal peace too much because Tibetans were guests in India and thus were limited in what they could accomplish. He felt that regionalism existed only within “one or two small groups which form a negligible percentage of the exiled population” and he doubted these groups took up regionalism because they disapproved of the Tibetan Government as a “continuation of a former Lhasa Government” (1). He suggested their dissent was caused by something other than “regionalistic differences” and thought the government ought to get to the bottom of the matter in a “civilized and sympathetic manner” (2). Wangyal’s assessment of the conflict provides a glimpse into the general view of regionalism as being accepted as a problem even by progressive Tibetans. His suggestion that individuals with a proclivity towards “forming organizations which stress regionalism” should curb themselves, (2) echoes the official consensus that Tibetans think of themselves as Tibetan first. Regionalism was not just thought to be divisive, but there was a sense that it was also considered a conservative form of control and belonging. Even Wangyal’s opinion favors a unity that is more assimilative, that is, it suggests that minorities move towards the center.



After the 1980s, the TWA ceased to exist as an organization; the individual settlements became self-sufficient or else joined the fold of the exile government.<sup>340</sup> Today, very few Tibetans born after 1980 know about the TWA. The TWA is mentioned merely as a footnote to illustrate the problems caused by regionalism in the larger success story of the Tibetan refugee society. The elders in these settlements, however, who were among the members of the TWA, define their former struggle as one made to protect their religious practices and their regional traditions. They point out that they were successful in achieving their goal to be self-sufficient for a length of time and in preserving their diverse languages, customs, and religious practices despite the ill-reputation of the TWA as an organization. They argue that the young Tibetans in the settlements, unlike Tibetans in most other settlements speak fluently in their regional languages; their monasteries are flourishing under the guidance of their reincarnate lamas; and the land they live on belongs to them and is not leased to them by the Government of India in contrast to the other Tibetan settlements.

### **Conclusion**

In his statement on the second anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising against the Chinese on 10 March 1959, the Dalai Lama asserted that it “was not autonomy but independence” that Tibetans had been deprived of (DIIR *Tibet* 1). Today, it is autonomy, not independence that the exile government seeks in its adoption of the Middle Way policy.

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<sup>340</sup> Lingsang settlement in Puruwalla and Tashijong settlement in India maintain some distance still from the exile government.

The national uprising inside Tibet in 2008 and the self-immolation of Tibetans mostly born after 1950 have raised new questions on the strategies, tactics, and goals of the nonviolent discourse for freedom in exile. Tenzin Dorjee, activist and political analyst, explains that the Tibetan national discourse on “nonviolent action” has traditionally been “framed in a moral dimension” with an emphasis on the moral “acceptability of the method rather than its practical effectiveness” (*Tibetan* 13). He suggests Tibetans believe resistance is “an act of commission rather than one of omission” (12).<sup>341</sup> Dorjee reminds us that contrary to the popular belief that nonviolence is part of Tibetan culture or tradition, it is, in fact, a new import. He explains that nonviolence became a “chief marker of Tibetan Buddhist identity” largely due to the Dalai Lama’s influence (25).<sup>342</sup> Indeed, the establishment of Tibet as a peaceful nation is such a successful narrative that many Tibetans forget that warfare was one of the very methods that had established Tibet’s “union of religion and politics” after subordinating the “secular sphere to the religious sphere” (Schwieger, *Dalai* 65).<sup>343</sup> Gelug hegemony in Central Tibetan history was possible precisely due to its alliance with the Khoshud Mongol Gushri Khan (1582-1655) who

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<sup>341</sup> Acts of commission would include visible acts such as protest demonstrations, vigils etc. while omission would include noncooperation acts such as boycotting Chinese-owned businesses, rejection of social institutions (Dorjee, *Tibetan* 12)

<sup>342</sup> Tenzin Dorjee explains that the Dalai Lama was influenced by Gandhi’s idea of nonviolence (*Tibetan* 26).

<sup>343</sup> Monks serving in the military might have been a practice during the Tibetan Empire, keeping in mind that serving in the military was viewed as an act of service to the Kings and valued greatly (Walter 5)

successfully defeated the enemies of the Gelugpa tradition (Schwieger, *Dalai* 60-170; Schwieger, “History” 531-532; Karmay “Historical Overview” 76).<sup>344</sup>

The prominence of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibetan society is viewed by some as a great impediment to the normative nationalism and democracy.<sup>345</sup> The decline of national consciousness of the Tibetan people is seen to take place after the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet mainly because, as Samten Karmay explains, “Nationalism requires will, self-assertion, self-identification and self-determination and these notions have no place and receive no respect in Buddhist education as we know it...” (*Arrow*, 1, 424). Warren Smith writes that the ecclesiastical influence was “ideologically anti-nationalistic due to the universalist nature of Buddhist doctrine and politically anti-nationalist because of the church’s inherent dependence upon foreign political patronage” (659).

Tenzin Dorjee uses the term “principled nonviolence” to describe the Dalai Lama’s “moral and ethical commitment” to nonviolent dialogue, and he employs the term “nonviolent resistance” to describe the “improvised and spontaneous activities”

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<sup>344</sup> Samten Karmay explains that although Gushri Khan (who supported the fifth Dalai Lama) vanquished the king of Beri in Kham, who was Bon and an ally of the King of Tsang the “arch-enemy” of the Gelug movement, the fifth Dalai Lama in private maintained contact with Bonpo lamas and even received Bon teachings (“Historical Overview” 76).

<sup>345</sup>The Ganden Phodrang government under the Dalai Lama has been often described as theocratic. R.A. Stein points to the dominance of religion over the secular. Ghanshyam Pardesi points out that in the Draft Constitution, the State and Church were separated but that both converged in the “person of the Dalai Lama” as the political and religious guardian of the Tibetans. He suggests that the duality was maintained through the Ecclesiastical Council (Article 37) of which the Dalai Lama was head, and had the power to administer religious affairs. Pardesi points to other provisions in the Draft Constitution which ultimately does not suggest that the “National Assembly and therefore the people shall have enough legislative authority to check the Dalai Lama’s executive powers” (68). On the contrary, he points out that the Draft Constitution concentrated “both the executive and legislative powers in the hands of the Dalai Lama and the members of his ka-shag” (69). He summarizes that although the Draft Constitution has a vision of a Tibetan government based on the separation of powers, the legislative, executive and judicial powers were held in the hands of one figure which might result in “an impotent, powerless, and at times passive Tibetan Assembly” (69).

during the uprisings, and “strategic nonviolent struggle” of nonviolent civil resistance (*Tibetan* 10). Differentiation of these activities opens up the movement to include and acknowledge that there is more than the dominant national position or effort being undertaken. Dorjee points out that the older “principled approach to nonviolent resistance” is being replaced by Tibetan grassroots approach that takes a more “strategic” approach and that views nonviolent “action rather than an ideal” (16). In this mode of action, culture is a weapon to “pursue political change” (17). Culture does not need to be rescued or preserved. He also points out that the resistance after 1989 inside Tibet has shown a focus on strengthening and mobilizing Tibetans in recognition that the movement’s strength is its “own bottom-up force.” In other words, Tibetans are realizing the limits of external aid for obtaining their goals (18).

While it is beyond the scope of this project to attempt the life-trajectory of Tibetan nationalistic thought as it stands in the present, Dorjee’s analysis is important for its acknowledgement of the peoples’ powerful bottom-up initiatives that are often overlooked in discussions of the Tibetan movement, which is still largely dictated by the leaders in the exile administration, and by the Dalai Lama’s vision. Both the concept of democracy and the national movement (Middle-Way Approach) have over time deepened their ideology of universal compassion and duty. The “Buddhicization” and sacralization of democracy has in mind a democracy that is an ideal moral state that the people can aspire to.

Dorjee is also pointing to the reality that despite the Chinese government’s efforts in Tibet since 1950, it has not been able to win Tibetans’ hearts and minds.

This ferocious capaciousness of the inner life of Tibetans inside Tibet offers rich imaginations in the discourse on sovereignty, truth, nonviolence, and democracy in the ongoing Tibetan nationalist thought and movement.

The Dalai Lama's vision and influence on the democratization of the Tibetan exile polity cannot be underplayed; he inspires the goodwill of international agents and international assistance. He is also at the helm of preserving and continuing Tibetan Buddhism, which is important to Tibetans (*Freedom* 167). Without his leadership, Tibetans would possibly be fragmented and adrift. The all-encompassing presence and role of the Dalai Lama's authority in providing meaning to everything, however, means that any alternative vision is in danger of being seen as disruptive and anti-Dalai Lama and therefore anti-national. The devotion that Tibetans have towards the Dalai Lama is a powerful tool but the community's self-policing tendencies have a mitigating effect on innovation and creativity, as illustrated in this dissertation.

Dawa Norbu wrote of his concern more than two decades earlier that modern educated Tibetans and "free thinking young Tibetans" were ignored in the vision of a "future Tibet" (*Road* 337). He stated that while the Chinese Communists prohibited the emergence of alternative leaders as a matter of policy, it was also true that the Dalai Lama in exile "has tended to discourage the emergence of alternate leaders, unless officially approved by him" (337). Norbu's comments were made decades before the Dalai Lama's move to divest himself of his political powers.<sup>346</sup> But the

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<sup>346</sup> In an address to Cabinet ministers and parliament members on 20 March 1971

point is that Norbu recognized the need for enriching and developing the social and political consciousness of the Tibetan people.

Today's official exile leaders are attempting to lead a still colonized people to dream of a future of integrated communities based on love and cooperation, and not on ideas of nationhood.<sup>347</sup> Tibetan democracy, such as the one hoped for by Samdhong Rinpoche, recasts political rights, citizenship, freedom, and the arena of democracy in a Buddhist register in which duty and sacrifice appear to have greater significance than organized popular power and social solidarities. What it advances is the sacrifice of the Tibetan nation-state in favor of propounding the principles of the inner science of Buddhism that can lead the world out of its present crisis.

Given that the normative model of Western democracy is under scrutiny by many postcolonial scholars it might be that the genuine democracy aspired to by Tibetans might offer alternate ways of living in relation to other human beings. Indeed, the value of Tibetan democracy is that it attempts to be something other than the modular democracy, it aspires to a view of humanity as humans and on the development of basic human qualities and not the development of goods. A rich conceptualization of Tibetan democracy might offer potent and creative enrichment to both prevailing hegemonic concepts and practices and Buddhist universal utopias.

The reformulation as exists presently, however, has the potential to enhance Tibet's idyllic representations and enshrine the image of Tibetans as peace-loving and

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<sup>347</sup> In interviews recorded in *Samdhong Rinpoche: Uncompromising Truth for a Compromised World* (2006), Samdhong Rinpoche defines nations as "thought creations" that are not needed (15). He expresses that "Nationhood, nationalism divides the community" (14).

predisposed to harmony, thus placing Tibetans in a “series of moral hierarchies: Tibet as utopia, as virtuous, as victim” (McConnell, *Rehearsing the State* 15). The danger of such representations is seen to have the potential of establishing “unachievable expectations” that deny Tibetans agency and silence “violent pasts and presents” (15).

The Tibet that exists under China bears little resemblance to the Tibet that Tibetans exiles left in 1959, nor is the Tibet created in exile the homeland that Tibetans carried with them in 1959. The story of the TWA illustrates just that, and also reveals that peripheral histories and narratives matter for people in the struggle for a nation.

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