Literature Review

2a Displacement Reconsidered: From Refugees to Diaspora

2a.1 Displacement and the Category of Refugee

According to Roger Zetter, “Within the repertoire of humanitarian concern, refugee now constitutes one of the most powerful labels. From the first procedure of status determination – who is a refugee? – to the structural determinants of life chances which this identity then engenders, labels infuse the world of refugees” (1991: 39). In everyday speech, the word “refugee” is used to describe a person who is forced to flee his or her home for any reason for which the individual is not responsible be it persecution, public disorder, civil war, famine, earthquake or environmental degradation. The most widely accepted definition of a “refugee” is that contained in the 1951 Convention. The mandate of the Convention extends to any person who “as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of this nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

The refugee problem is first and foremost one of categorization, of making distinctions. None of the discussions in the field – among politicians, policy makers or academics - can proceed without an idea of who exactly we are talking about when we use the label “refugee”. It seems obvious that “refugees” are forced migrants who are afforded “an internationally recognized legal status, given credibility by an international agency specifically charged to safeguard their interests, endorsed most powerfully of all by spontaneous philanthropy” (Zetter 1991: 40). In a field linked to human suffering how

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1 As Hathaway (1991: 5) puts it: “The Convention refugee definition is of singular importance because it has been subscribed to by more than one hundred nations is the only refugee accords of global scope.” It is important to mention here that India is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention.
can we avoid making the refugee simply an instrument of academic enquiry and instead ensure that the defining process serves the refugee? (Haddad 2004: 2). In an attempt to infiltrate the “impenetrable jungle” of semantics that surrounds the refugee, Tabori looks first at the concept of exile which, he says, started off the chronology of linguistic terms used to denote the act of forced separation from one’s native country. Synonyms, notes Tabori, include “displace, send out, exclude with dislodgement, eviction, ejectment, deportation, expatriation, extradition and excommunication” (Tabori 1972: 23). Admitting that the semantic problem is not just a question of etymological or legal definitions, but also involves the historical, psychological and the ideological, he defines an exile as, “A person compelled to leave or remain outside his country of origin on account of well founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion; a person who considers his exile temporary (even though it may last a lifetime), hoping to return to his fatherland when circumstances permit – but unable or unwilling to do so as long as the factors that made him an exile persist” (Tabori 1972: 27).² According to Harrell-Bond and Voutira, the issue is not helped by “the conceptual confusion surrounding our perceptions of displacement and the lack of rigorous classification for the different conditions, causes and patterns of refugee movements in time and space” (1992: 6). Zolberg writes, “language serves to mystify rather than clarify the social processes it depicts,” a tendency which is unusually pronounced in the refugee field since “the standard refugee lexicon is highly normative and thus self-evidently legitimizing (1989: 274). The difficulty is further complicated by the abundance of words and labels used in everyday parlance and in the media to discuss “refugees” and associated issues of asylum, words that have become so intertwined and conflated that it becomes continually harder to distinguish between them: economic migrants, illegal immigrants, asylum seekers, displaced persons, political refugees, stateless persons, de facto refugees. According to Shacknove, “the current persistence of the ‘refugee problem’ in international politics and unsuccessful attempts to respond to it is only partly attributable to politics or questions of resources: conceptual confusion – about the

² Haddad (2004) in her paper contests the assumption of the refugee as a contemporary cousin of the pre-modern exile, arguing instead that refugees are a creation of modern territorial states bounded by clear political borders. Refugees rely for their existence on clearly defined ideas of inside and outside and as such are only fully intelligible within the pluralist system of separate sovereign states.
meaning of refugeehood, its causes and its management – also contributes to the misery of both refugee and host and to the inflammation of international tension” (1985: 276). The meaning of the term also involves manipulation of its definition according to the actor wishing to define the concept. The granting of refugee status has come to mean that asylum is more an “entitlement” than “a discretionary bestowed of political grace” (Martin 1991: 33). The entitlement of “refugee status” has been somewhat weak from the outset: the right to seek asylum is laid down in international law while the right to be granted asylum remains the prerogative of the state. However it is evident that access to the international protection regime has become more and more restrictive in recent years with Western States erecting greater physical and bureaucratic barriers. Asylum is a scarce resource whose scarcity is political and not physical. Therefore increasing the definitional circle of who is included in the refugee category eliminates the “conceptual assurance that the entitlement will remain within reasonable limits, a factor that States see as a threat (Martin 1991: 36).

The refugee is not a simple migrant even though there are now “larger and more complex migratory flows blurring facile distinction between refugees and migrants.” A migrant has chosen to and there has been nothing forced about this decision. “It is the reluctance to uproot oneself and the absence of positive original motivations to settle elsewhere which characterizes all refugee decisions and distinguishes the refugee from the voluntary migrant” (Kunz 1973: 130). Joly further notes that immigrants can be distinguished by their having been influenced by the hope for a better life while refugees are merely trying to rebuild the life they have lost (Joly 2002: 6). In search for a sociological definition, Kuhlman proposes labeling refugees as “involuntary international migrants” (Kuhlman 1991: 6). Kuhlman states that “the spatial and temporal aspects of migration are less important in relation to the refugee than the classification or type of migration, since spatially the refugee is assumed to be international and temporarily refugee status is indefinite pending a change in circumstances back home” (1991: 6). Refugees therefore fall into the category of forced or impelled migration with the

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underlying compulsion for flight coming from a breakdown in relations between the state and the individual. Kuhlman points to the fact that the distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration can be blurred, since voluntary migration can sometimes be so heavily influenced by external forces that the individual has been left with little choice but to move. Is the answer then, asks Kuhlman to look at the push and pull factors involved in any movement? Migrants would perhaps take both into consideration while refugees are influenced primarily by the push factors. As Kuhlman notes, “It is not some paradise at the other end which they seek but merely an escape from hell in which they live” (1991: 8).

Since the formulation of the 1951 Convention, “considerable terminological or conceptual flora has grown up within which refugee realities confront the language of the Convention” (Sztucki 1999: 64). The array of terms that has been added to the legal literature acts to confuse the concept of ‘refugee’ yet further. From the time of the Convention’s inception, ‘mandate refugees’ individuals fleeing generalized conflict were agreed to fall under UNHCR’s concern due to their need for international conflict were agreed to fall under UNHCR’s concern due to their need for international protection despite the absence of a persecutor as such. Since 1957 the UNHCR has come to incorporate ‘refugees who do not come within the competence of the Untied Nations.’ In 1975 the UN added ‘displaced persons’ to its list although this was to be applied at the time to externally displaced persons who failed to qualify as Convention Refugees (Sztucki 1999: 64-65). National legislation relating specifically to ‘refugees’ began to occur as early as the seventeenth century alongside the growing field of nationality laws. The 1951 Convention definition is the culmination of a series of different attempts at defining and categorizing various groups of specific ‘refugees’ in the inter-war period. Hathaway has divided the pre-1951 definitions into three groups according to which he claims it is possible to identify three distinct approaches to defining ‘refugees’: the ‘juridical’ approach of 1920-35 whereby the international community recognized that membership of a certain group deprived the refugee of governmental protection; the

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4 For a detailed account of the history of legislation concerning refugees, see Grahl-Madsen 1966-72.
5 For a comprehensive analysis of refugee legislation leading up to the 1951 Refugee Convention see Skran 1995.
‘social’ approach of 1935-39 which concentrated on providing international assistance to ensure safety of the refugee – in the majority of cases those fleeing Nazi persecution and the ‘individualist’ approach of 1938-50 which abandoned a determination procedure based on political or social categories in favour of an examination of the merits of each applicant’s case on the basis of a perceived injustice or fundamental incompatibility with the home state (Hathaway 1991: 2-5). Hathaway’s three approaches reveal much about what the concept of the refugee has meant to states and the international community as a whole at different times. The application of specific definitions relating to specific groups of refugees hints at the idea that states initially perceived the ‘refugee problem’ as one that affected very identifiable groups of people for particular reasons in certain places at certain times. Responding to such refugee flows on a case-by-case basis would it was thought resolve the problem. Yet when numbers reached hitherto unimaginable heights, something had to change – one refugee is an individual in need who should be let in, a thousand refugees are a threat and a burden and must be kept out. Thus different approaches to defining the refugee in different periods can be linked to prevailing debates relating to nation-states and their interests, concerns and identities. Underlying all three approaches however was the idea that the ‘refugee was a temporary problem a concept brought about by specific transformations in international society which could be resolved as soon as international conditions stabilized.

Nevzat Soguk asserts that the paradox of the “refugee discourse” is that it has no place for its very subject, “When the refugee seemed to exhibit any sign of agency in the discourse, either as some kind of threat or as someone whose agency was manifested in her will to drag her body between distances, she hardly ever figured as a person but was part of an amorphous mass, faceless and speechless” (Soguk 1999: 242). However in the humanitarian regime the refugee is both the means and the end: it is the image of the refugee herself that will bring in the money for the relief programmes that will then assist and protect her (Harell-Bond and Voutira 1992: 205). Having a refugee label for a diverse group of individuals can be difficult to justify. As Lammers notes, “far too often the label of ‘refugee’ artificially constructs and degrades people into a one-dimensional, homogeneous category yet except for their common experience of flight, they are an
extremely heterogeneous category of people” (1999: 22). In most writings on refugees, the figure of a helpless victim is upheld. As a result “an individual identity is replaced by a stereotyped identity with a categorical prescription of assumed needs” (Zetter 1991: 44). Malkki elsewhere points out that the term “refugee” does not constitute a “naturally self-delimiting domain.”

Studying refugees has an appealing potential to challenge notions of bounded, pure and authentic cultures that have so naturalized the links between peoples and places (Malkki 1998). The heuristic value of understanding refugee lives lie in the manner in which it complicates easy explanations of cultural change provided by the popular idea of global flow, because individuals cut loose from their roots are not necessarily free to borrow cultural elements from here and there and arrange them as they please. As people living on the wrong side of the borders, refugees are actually likely to be less free to innovate than others (a fact that further problematizes the celebratory view of multiculturalism and hybridity held by many outsiders and some innovative community members). Even though refugees are on the move they still live in communities that largely strive to keep their members in place; they are not in Gupta and Ferguson’s words “free-floating monads” (1992:19). Forced population movements have extraordinarily diverse historical and political causes and involve people who while all displaced, find themselves in qualitatively different situations and predicaments. As Malkki observed, “it would seem that the term refugee has analytical usefulness not as a label for a special, generalizable kind or type of person or situation but only as a broad legal or descriptive rubric that includes within it a world of different socioeconomic statuses, personal histories and psychological or spiritual situations. Involuntary or forced movements of people are always only one aspect of much larger constellations of sociopolitical and cultural processes and practices” (1995: 496).

The generalized category of refugees as an object of anthropological knowledge is still in the incipient stages of construction. Malkki situated the emergence of “the refugee” in two ways: one, historically by looking at the management of displacement in Europe in the wake of World War II; and second, by tracing an array of different discursive and
institutional domains within which “the refugee” and/or being “in exile” have been constituted (Malkki 1995: 497). These domains include international law, international studies, documentary production by the United Nations and other international refugee agencies, development studies and literary studies. Malkki resisted positing an evolution of the phenomena of the refugee. According to Malkki, “There is no “proto-refugee” of which the modern refugee is a direct descendant, any more than there is a proto-nation of which the contemporary nation form is a logical, inevitable outgrowth. Instead of constructing such false continuities, we might do better to locate historical moments of reconfiguration at which whole new objects can appear. In the genealogy of the refugee one such moment can be located in post-World War II Europe (1995: 497). It is in Europe emerging from World War II that certain key techniques for managing mass displacements of people first became standardized and then globalized.6

People have always sought refuge and sanctuary. However “the refugee” as a specific social category and legal problem of global dimensions did not exist in its full modern form before this period. There were specific displaced populations and specific treaties but not a more encompassing apparatus of administrative procedures. It was towards the end of World War II that the refugee camp became emplaced as a standardized technology of power in the management of mass displacement.7 The spatial concentration and ordering of people that it enabled as well as the administrative and bureaucratic processes it facilitated within its boundaries had far reaching consequences. “The segregation of nationalities; the orderly organization of repatriation or third country resettlement; medical and hygienic programs and quarantining; “perpetual screening” and the accumulation of documentation on inhabitants of the camps; control of movement and black marketing; law enforcement and public discipline; and schooling and rehabilitation were some of the operations that the spatial concentration and ordering of people enabled or facilitated. Through these processes, the modern, postwar refugee emerged as a knowable and nameable figure and as an object of social-scientific knowledge” (Malkki 1995: 498). In the last years of World War II and the immediate postwar years, displaced

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6 The emergence of such techniques was not the result of careful and considered planning. Rather, the unprecedented scale of displacement seems to have impelled the improvisation of new techniques (Malkki 1995: 497)
7 These practices have connections to earlier forms of confinement, e.g. quarantine and concentration camps.
people in Europe were classified as a military problem and they were under the jurisdiction of the Displaced Persons Branch of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF). Throughout much of the war, the control of civilians and refugees had already been widely considered as a combat problem and the benefits of organizing refugees “for useful service behind the combat lines” had been recognized by the military forces (Malkki 1995: 499). In spatial terms, this military model was important. The basic blueprint of the military camp and many of its characteristic techniques were appropriated by those new spatial and disciplinary practices that were emerging in the 1940s refugee camp in Europe. By 1951, refugees began to appear more clearly as an international social or humanitarian problem than as a primarily military one. The refugee camps made people accessible to a whole gamut of interventions, including study and documentation.

Refugee lives are inherently experimental and thoroughly modern (Diehl 2002: 7). As informants, refugees are uniquely able to discuss the ways in which the cold, hard issues of politics and economics inform their personal and communal experiences, explicitly tied as these are to global forces. It would seem that these characteristics make refugee populations particularly well poised to receive attention from anthropologists and anthropologically minded sociologists seeking to meet the challenge of moving beyond symbol and meaning ethnography and figuring out how to “represent the embedding of richly described local cultural worlds in larger impersonal systems of political economy” (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 77). Marcus and Fischer go on to explain that “this would not be such a problematic task if the local cultural unit was portrayed as it usually has been in ethnography as an isolate with outside forces of market and state impinging upon it. What makes representation challenging and a focus of experimentation is the perception that the ‘outside forces’ in fact are an integral part of the construction and constitution of the ‘inside’” (Marcus and Fischer 1986:77). As evidenced by the few fine anthropological studies of refugees that do exist, one is immediately obligated when working with displaced populations to put aside presumed inside/outside\(^8\) or traditional/modern

\(^8\) Inside/Outside distinction is discussed by Samaddar 2000: 200-214.
distinctions and focus instead on the ways in which the local and the global are experienced by refugees.

There are many ways in which refugees challenge pre-existing understanding of culture as well as traditional anthropological expectations and methodological assumptions. For example, their communities lack the real or imagined social or cultural integrity of stable communities, often harbouring together individuals of shared ethnic backgrounds but great linguistic and cultural diversity; their populations can ebb and flow daily and they expect visitors to become advocates for their cause (Diehl 2002: 9). Interest in theorizing space and place has at times provided an allegorical language for post-modern souls who seek to nourish their own feelings of alienation and in turn, to express their suspicion of those who are still somehow, or desire to be “in place” (Diehl 2002: 9). Anticipating this kind of appropriation of misfortune, Caren Kaplan cautions against a form of theoretical tourism on the part of the first world critic, where the margin becomes a linguistic or critical vacation, a new poetics of the exotic (1987: 191). Similarly Edward Said warns that to dwell on exile, “as beneficial, as a spur to humanism or to creativity, is to belittle its mutilations” (1984: 50). Importantly, it is not only western scholars who valorize the marginal position of their research subjects. Complicating the picture is the fact that many Tibetan refugees often objectify their own marginal cultures for specific often strategic ends (Lopez 1998).

The figure of the refugee conjures up a mélange of images: a teeming boat adrift on the South China Sea, a bloated child in Bangladesh, a shantytown reduced to rubble in Beirut (Shacknove 1985). Determining conceptually who is or who is not a refugee would appear to be a relatively simple matter. The view that a refugee is a person whose social world has been disturbed can contribute to our understanding in at least two ways. First, it offers a meaningful classification of refugees, on a continuum that runs from total destruction of the refugee’s social world to its persistence even as he or she moves. At one extreme there are refugees whose social world almost collapses in flight who lost relatives and livelihood. Such were the survivors of Nazi concentration camps who had no one left in the world and no home to return to. Then there are those refugees whose
social world became more circumscribed as a result of flight but were able to maintain some links or establish new ones. At the other extreme are refugees who maintained or quickly established full-fledged networks in a new environment (Marx 1990: 196-98). Where a social world is constructed around a person, the entire person’s movements and all the changes in his or her condition can be attended to. One can dispense altogether with a territorial base.  

Notions of nativeness and native places become more complex as more and more people identify themselves or are categorized in reference to deterritorialized “homelands,” “cultures,” and origins. There has emerged a new awareness of the global social fact that now more than perhaps ever before people are chronically mobile and routinely displaced and invent homes and homelands in the absence of territorial, national bases not in situ but through memories of and claims on places that they can or will no longer corporeally inhabit (Anderson 1983; Malkki 1992: 24). What is interesting is that now particular theoretical shifts have arranged themselves into new conjunctures that give these phenomena greater analytic visibility than ever before. The recognition that people are increasingly “moving targets” of anthropological enquiry is associated with the placing of boundaries and borderlands and other liminal zones at the center of our analytical frameworks, as opposed to relegating them to invisible peripheries or anomalous danger zones (Malkki 1992; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Douglas 1923). The concern with boundaries and their transgression is not limited to corporeal movements of specific groups of people.  

Rather what the present study seeks to reveal is the “cultural displacement” of people, things and cultural products (Malkki 1992; Clifford 1988). Thus what Said (1984) for example calls a “generalized condition of homelessness” is seen to characterize contemporary life everywhere. In this new theoretical crossroads, Malkki’s examination of the place of refugees in the national order of things has been illuminating. On the one hand trying to understand the circumstances of particular groups of refugees reveals the complexity of the ways in which people construct, remember and lay claim to particular places as “homelands” or “nations” (Malkki 1992: 25). On the other hand, examining how refugees become an

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9 For a critique of the notion of territorialized identity, see Appadurai 1990; Said 1979, 1986; Clifford 1988: 10-11, 275; Rosaldo 1989: 196. The challenge is to chart the movement of refugees and the transformation of their social worlds.

10 Writing about the maintenance of ethnic identity, Fredrik Barth realized that we could no longer simply justify studying the cultural stuff enclosed within boundaries (1969: 90).
object of knowledge and management suggests that the displacement of refugees is constituted differently from other kinds of deterritorialization by those states, organizations and scholars who are concerned with refugees. Here the contemporary category of refugees is a particularly informative one in the study of the socio-political construction of space and place.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{2a.1.1 "The Refugee" as an Object of Knowledge}

Population displacement and the control of movement have long been objects of attention in international relations, the study of international security, peace studies and related fields. As Loescher points out, “Refugee movements already figure prominently on the post-Cold war political and security agenda…Mass migrations are frequently employed as foreign policy tools and refugees have become instruments of warfare and military strategy… Too often refugees are perceived as a matter for international charity organizations and not as a political and security problem. Yet refugee problems are in fact intensely political: mass migrations create domestic instability, generate interstate tension and threaten international security” (1992: 4-5). International relations as a field tends to assume a vantage point that anthropologists and sociologists are unaccustomed to taking. Seeing large worldwide patterns and adopting in many cases an administrator’s gaze on the phenomena under study, international relations produces a very different kind of knowledge than ethnography. Yet any ethnographic research on refugees ought to consider work in this field for a number of reasons. First, there is an insistence in the work of Loescher, Zolberg on viewing refugee movements as inescapably political phenomena. Second, a critical, anthropological engagement with the questions and topics conventionally groupable under “international relations” might open up new theoretical spaces for conducting ethnographic research on the social imagination of peace and world order and on the impact of aid on displaced populations.

The influence of the international refugee regime on scholarship has been specially marked in the linked figures of “refugees” and “development.” The settlement of

\textsuperscript{11} For elaboration of this issue see also Malkki 1996.
refugees and other displaced people especially in the Third World has shown a marked tendency to be absorbed into well-established forms of development discourse (Malkki 1995: 506). Development programs targeted at refugees are often established in conjunction with the UNHCR and these programs have offered points of entry for many social scientists. But the refugee-development link is far more far-reaching than that. Hein has argued, “Economic Development and assistance to refugees are inseparable issues and …because the ‘refugee’ is an indicator of world system dynamics” (1993: 45). The world system perspective cannot explain how the historical process of state formation and breakdown creates refugees in particular countries (Zolberg 1983).

The history of refugees in the twentieth century began with the replacement of the old multi-ethnic European empires by the new world order of sovereign nation states. Hundreds of thousands of people were forced to flee their homes because they did not belong, they did not fit the nationalist principle of ‘one state, one culture’ (Gellner 1983) and thus could not be accommodated within the European national state borders. Unlike such movements in the previous century, which in proportional terms were much larger, in this century there have been far fewer places for these extra or surplus people to go. The world population is increasingly divided into citizens protected by the state and people who are not members of a functioning nation-state (Hein 1993). Responding to the need for a coordinated international response, the League of Nations and later the United nations (Skran 1988) labeled them “refugees” (Zetter 1991) and introduced humanitarian law intended to ensure the protection of their rights. The United Nations organizations have played a decisive, instrumental role in consolidating “the international refugee system” (Gallagher 1989) and what has developed is a network of national, international and relief agencies. Hein has observed that “It is no coincidence that an organization functioning as a global state is forming to manage refugee problems,” (Hein 1993: 47) and that the very “concept of migration emerged from the growth of national bureaucracies” (Dowty 1987). This is the reason why Hein reiterates the need to bring in the state in order to explain the origins of refugee crisis (Hein 1993: 47).

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12 For more on the connection between refugees and development discourse see Harrell-Bond 1986.
Many have called for development-oriented strategies in the management of mass displacement in the Third World. The argument has often been made that rather than just providing immediate emergency relief in the face of new refugee crises, the agencies involved should also concentrate on setting up mechanisms for long term development aid to improve conditions of life for everyone in impoverished regions of the Third World. It is in the arena of refugees and development that anthropology has been particularly visible (Malkki 1995). Malkki traces precisely how the discourse of development has colonized refugee issues and what other intellectual or political connections have been erased and rendered unthinkable in the process. “If nothing else, the development discourse on refugees has sometimes facilitated the continued depoliticization of refugee movements; for instead of foregrounding the political, historical processes that generated a given group of refugees and that reach far beyond the country of asylum and the refugee camp, development projects tend to see a whole world in a refugee camp” (Malkki 1995: 507).

During the 1980s the study of forced migration has gained greater recognition as a legitimate academic field for research and instruction. Important milestones in the consolidation and institutionalization of this discursive domain occurred with the establishment in 1982 of the influential Refugee Studies programme at the University of Oxford and with the appearance in 1988 of the Journal of Refugee Studies. Also in 1988, the Committee on Refugee Issues was established as a committee of the General Anthropological Association. More generally, although forced displacement, uprooting and other refugee related phenomena including events which gave rise to them are a standard feature of human social experience, relatively little attention has been paid to it by the academic establishment. In 1982, at a conference on the psychological problems faced by refugees Ron Baker criticized academia in general for its neglect of the subject: “It has been estimated that up to 140 million people have been forcibly uprooted in this

13 Another interesting view into the development-displacement link in the African context is provided by the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). According to Article 22 of this Charter (known as Banjul Charter) “1. All Peoples shall have the right to their economic, social and cultural development with due regard to their freedom and identity and in the equal enjoyment of the common heritage of mankind. 2. States shall have the duty, individually and collectively, to ensure the exercise of the right to development.”
century alone! In view of his it is remarkable that social scientists have generally neglected refugee studies and research. Further, no ‘Department for Refugee Studies’ exists in any university or other higher education institution. It is pertinent to ask why? May it be that in many minds…refugees are seen as immigrants with little distinction drawn between them? Or could it be too difficult an area to research, involving a multidisciplinary approach, which academics tend to dislike? Or maybe it has little kudos attached to it and attracts few research grants, hence not useful for promotion purposes? Perhaps it is also painful a subject for social scientists to get close to?” (1983). Harrell-Bond and Voutira (1992) single out three related issues. The first is the conceptual confusion surrounding our perceptions of displacement and lack of rigorous classification for the different conditions, causes and patterns of refugee movements in time and space. The second it the limitation of our institutional arrangements, the culture of academia which does not get beyond rendering lip service to the need for an interdisciplinary understanding of society. The third is the need for reconsideration of the expertise and subject matter which are regarded as defining anthropology or sociology (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992: 6).

The very newness of the discursive domain of refugee studies makes difficult any attempt to give a comprehensive synopsis of its intellectual agenda. Case studies of specific refugee situations have grown, yet it seems to be generally agreed that a broader theoretical framework has been lacking. Malkki is of the view that it seems not so much that “refugee studies” has lacked theory as that it has uncritically imported its main theoretical ideas from often on an adhoc basis from other scholarly domains (Malkki 1995: 507). The functionalist model has been in vogue in “refugee studies” and is evident in many works that deal with questions of identity, culture, ethnicity and tradition. One finds in this literature the assumption that to become uprooted and removed from a national community is automatically to lose one’s identity, traditions and culture. Malkki stresses that the theoretical apparatus of anthropology has been biased in favour of studying “indigenous peoples,” “local contexts,” and “closed systems,” instead of studying the movement and traffic of people. This kind of sedentarist analytical bias is not unique to anthropology as the interdisciplinary literature in “refugee studies” attests.
Common notions of culture are biased as Clifford has observed, “towards rooting rather than travel.” The bare fact of movement or displacement across nation-state borders is often assumed a priori to entail not a transformation but a loss of culture and identity. Stein’s work offers a particularly clear illustration of this sedentarist norm. He proposes that there is a generalizable phenomenon that can be called “the refugee experience” and that this experience has characteristic “stages,” which are “perception of a threat; decision to flee; the period of extreme danger and flight; reaching safety; camp behaviour; repatriation, settlement or resettlement; the early and late stages of resettlement; adjustment and acculturation; and finally residual states and changes in behaviour caused by the experience.”\textsuperscript{14} Talking about the initial “stage” of exile for refugees in general, Stein predicts, “The refugees will be confronted by the reality of what has been lost. From a high occupational and social status at home they will plunge downward in their land. They will confront the loss of their culture-their identity, their habits. Every action that used to be habitual or routine will require careful examination and consideration…” (1981: 325). Malkki differs from Stein as regards the basic assumptions of place, culture and identity one in which the latter displays a bias towards sedentariness. Malkki stresses the fact that “it is doubtful that most people’s social universe stops abruptly at the border of their own country or that the lifeworlds just across the border could be as axiomatically alien as Stein suggests” (1995: 509). Further one would imagine that mass displacements occur precisely when one’s own, accustomed society has become “strange and frightening” because of war, massacres, political terror or other forms of violence and uncertainty.\textsuperscript{15} In the sedentarist scheme, then according to Malkki (1995), “going home involves only the most minor cultural adjustment problems. To go home is to go where one belongs.”

Another aspect is the uncritical use of the concepts of adaptation and acculturation to analyze processes of transformation in identity, culture and cultural tradition. This complex of ideas is strongly associated with another tendency in refugee studies, that is, the prominence of psychological interpretations of displacement. It would be unrealistic

\textsuperscript{14} For an outline of the “stages” of the refugee experience see Keller 1975.

\textsuperscript{15} This realization is the starting point for Daniel &Knudsen’s essay on refugeeeness and breach of trust (1995).
to claim that displacement does not cause distress of many kinds but when considering the question of psychological disorders among refugees, it is necessary according to Malkki to keep in mind a set of empirical questions. “We cannot assume psychological disorder or mental illness a priori, as an axiom nor can we claim we know from the mere fact of refugeeness, the actual sources of a person’s suffering” (Malkki 1995: 510). Arguing that refugee problems are too often viewed by refugees and refugee agencies as “temporary and unique events,” Stein has proposed, “If we are to move toward a comprehensive professional refugee assistance system then research must be encouraged and supported. The research should focus not only on the most recent arrivals or specific policy questions but general research, looking at refugees everywhere from a broad historical perspective that views them as recurring phenomena with identifiable and often identical patterns of behaviour and sets of causalities…We must investigate broadly all of the stages of the refugee experience” (Stein 1981:321). An obvious problem with the intellectual project of defining “the refugee experience” is that it posits a single, essential, transhistorical refugee condition (Malkki 1995: 511). The enquiry into the refugee experience reflects a wider tendency to seize upon political or historical processes and then to inscribe aspects of those processes in the bodies or psyches of the people who are undergoing them. In this way, every mobile, unstable social phenomena maybe imagined as essential traits and characteristics attached to or emanating from individual persons. Almost like any essentialized anthropological “tribe,” refugees thus become “a culture,” “an identity,” (Stein 1981: 323) “a social world,”(E. Marx 1990: 144) or “a community” (Gold 1992). There is a tendency to proceed as if refugees all shared a common condition or nature (Malkki 1995: 511). If the category “refugee” becomes another “culture,” the refugees and the places where they are found come to appear as natural sites for anthropological field research. It is at this point that Malkki finds it useful to posit some relevant questions: “What does it mean to be an expert or specialist on refugees? What does it mean to do ‘policy-oriented’ research? What is the proper object of ‘refugee studies’? What are the observable effects of a regime of practices thus labeled?” (Malkki 1995: 512).

16 Positing a transhistorical refugee condition or experience becomes especially problematic when we think about displacement in relation to children, childhood and questions of memory and witnessing, asserts Malkki.
2a.1.2 Category of the Refugee and the Institutional Framework

The definition of a “refugee” in international law is of critical importance for it can mean the difference between life and death for an individual seeking asylum. Definitions in international law, depart from the ordinary meaning of the word “refugee”.\(^{17}\) A realist versus nominalist debate within the field of international migration questions whether refugees are fundamentally distinct from immigrants or whether the category is a social construction masking similarities with immigrants. Contemporary refugee and immigrant flows conform to patterns of the world system.\(^{18}\) However migrations are caused by changes in the nation-state (Hein 1993: 43, 49). Refugees do share some migratory experiences with immigrants particularly prior migration and reliance on social network. Internal migration prior to international migration is common among refugees and immigrants. Refugees also use kin and friendship networks to navigate their passage to a host society just as immigrants do. Immigrants constitute an economic form of migration, whereas refugees a political form. This simple dichotomy coupled with the media coverage of refugee crisis, sheltered refugee studies for some time. Soon, however the literature faced the charge that ‘refugee’ is simply a bureaucratic label applied by states for political motives rather than a sociological category demarcating discrete groups and behaviour. As a result of this criticism, the two perspectives lead an uneasy coexistence within the field of international migration. One perspective views violence, flight and exile as definitive of the refugee experience, the other considers the “refugee” as a social construction (Hein 1993: 44). The partial convergence of the two migration forms once presumed opposite reveals general patterns in international migration and adaptation.

The predominant conception advanced by international instruments, municipal statutes identifies the refugee as, in essence, a person who has crossed an international frontier because of a well-founded fear of persecution. As Hathaway puts it, “The Convention refugee definition is of singular importance because is has been subscribed to by more

\(^{17}\) A “refugee” can be defined in three ways: legally (as stipulated in national and international law); politically (as interpreted to meet political exigencies); sociologically (as reflected in empirical reality).

\(^{18}\) The push-pull theory of international migration, which distinguishes between planned immigration and spontaneous refugee movements is the oldest of the realist perspectives on refugee migrations.
than one hundred nations in the only refugee accords of global scope. Many nations have also chosen to import this standard into their domestic immigration legislation as the basis upon which asylum and other protection decisions are made” (Hathaway 1991: 5). The mandate of the Convention extends to “a person who as a result of the events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or-owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.” A conception of ‘refugee’ is not, strictly speaking, a definition. There are in fact several definitions in effect within their various jurisdictions.19 Most states have their own municipal definitions, the majority of which follow the construction of the 1951 Convention. The definition of a refugee in the Convention is predicated on an implicit argument that a bond of trust, loyalty, protection and assistance between the citizen and the state constitutes the normal basis of society,20 in the case of the refugee, this bond has been severed; persecution and alienage are always the physical manifestation of this severed bond21 and these manifestations are the necessary and sufficient conditions for determining refugeehood (Shacknove 1985). Thus the conception supplies the theoretical basis for the definition. It stipulates what is essential and universal about refugeehood. It asserts both a moral and an empirical claim. Moral because it posits the existence of a normal minimal relation of rights and duties between the citizen and the state, the negation of which engenders refugees. Empirical because is asserts that the actual consequences of this severed bond are always persecution and alienage. Shacknove, however, objects to the conclusion that persecution and alienage are the necessary and sufficient indices of this dissolved union. The negation of society takes many forms and is frequently altogether unrelated to persecution and alienage. In order to view the negation of society in all its manifestations, we must first identify the normal, positive

19 For an elaboration of the meaning of “refugee” in various Western European and North American statutes see Grahl-Madsen 1966-72: Chapter 1.
20 Grahl-Madsen uses this language explicitly see Grahl-Madsen 1966-72: 73-100.
relation between the citizen and the state. A political commonwealth is formed on the premise that people experience a generalized condition of insecurity when outside the protective confines of society. In exchange for their allegiance, citizens can minimally expect that their government will guarantee physical security, vital subsistence and liberty of political participation and physical movement. Thus refugees must be persons whose home state has failed to secure their basic needs. There is no justification for granting refugee status to individuals who do not suffer from the absence of one or more of these needs. “The international regime attending to the needs of refugees is fragile and can be shattered by premature cosmopolitanism as by enduring primordial sentiments. A broader conception of refugeehood has utility only if strategies of response to refugee emergencies are similarly broad, where transnational procedures and institutions replace the current, predominantly unilateral ones” (Shacknove 1985: 281).

Analysis of the international refugee accords entered into between 1920 and 1950 reveals three distinct approaches to refugee definition. Each of these perspectives was dominant during a part of the initial decades of refugee law. “First, from 1920 until 1935, refugees were defined in largely juridical terms, which meant that they were treated as refugees because of their membership in a group of persons effectively deprived of the formal protection of the government of its state of origin. The purpose of refugee status conceived in juridical terms is to facilitate the international movement of persons who find themselves abroad and unable to resettle because no nation is prepared to assume responsibility for them. In contrast to the initial juridical focus, the refugee agreements adopted between 1935 and 1939 embodied a social approach to refugee definition. Refugees defined from the social perspective are the helpless casualties of broadly based social or political occurrences, which separate them from their home society. Assistance in migration is afforded to refugees in order to ensure the refugees’ safety and well-being. Third phase of international refugee protection, comprising the accords of the 1938-1950 era was revolutionary in its rejection of group determination of refugee status”

22 “Hobbes and to lesser extent Locke and Rousseau addressed the problem of the minimally legitimate state, crucial to an understanding of refugees. They identified that point at which anyone in their senses would quit society, if indeed, society can any longer be meaningfully said to exist. Hobbes himself an exiled victim of the English revolution in his worst nightmares dreaded the chaos of the refugee” (Shacknove 1985: 278).
This individualist approach first affected the determination procedure: the decision as to whether or not a person was a refugee was no longer made strictly on the basis of political and social categories. Rather the accords of the immediate post-war era prescribed an examination of the merits of each applicant’s case. The essence of refugee status came to be discord between the individual refugee applicant’s personal characteristics and the tenets of the political system in the country of origin.

2a.2 Theorizing Diaspora

Diaspora, Paul Gilroy reminds us, “is an ancient word” (Gilroy 1994: 207), its new currencies in globalist discourses confound the once clearly demarcated parameters of geography, national identity and belonging. Etymologically derived from the Greek term “diasperien,” from dia – “across” and “sperien” – “to sow or scatter seeds,” diaspora can perhaps be seen as a naming of the ‘other’ which has historically referred to displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration or exile. First used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures explicitly intended for the Hellenic Jewish communities in Alexandria (3rd century B.C.) to describe the Jews living in exile from the homeland of Palestine, diaspora suggests a dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and a relocation in one or more nation-states, territories or countries (Durham 1999: 23). The term diaspora then has religious significance and pervaded medieval rabbinical writings on the Jewish diaspora, to describe the plight of Jews living outside Palestine.

Once conceptualized as an exilic or nostalgic dislocation from homeland, diaspora has attained new epistemological, political and identitarian resonances as its points of reference proliferate. The term “diaspora” has been increasingly used by anthropologists, literary theorists and cultural critics to describe mass migrations and displacements of the second half of the 20th century, particularly in reference to independence movements in formerly colonized areas, waves of refugees fleeing war-torn states. More recent theorizations of diaspora have been marked by ambiguities of the term diaspora itself, a
term which has been a catch-all phrase to speak of and for all movements, however privileged and for all dislocations, even symbolic ones. Paul Gilroy remains critical of earlier critical formations of the African diaspora that see all African diasporic individuals everywhere as scattered across several continents as linked by a common heritage, history and racial descent. For Gilroy, such African diasporic conceptions homogenize difference and form the kind of “ethnic absolutism” of which he is so critical.

Exile, diaspora and nomadism are concepts with important differences. “Exile” suggests a painful or punitive banishment from one’s homeland. Though it can be either voluntary or involuntary, internal or external, exile generally implies a fact of trauma, an imminent danger, usually political that makes the home no longer safely habitable. The shock, disruption or loss accompanying exile together with the distance from the home’s mundane realities can invite the project of restoring the “original” – the original home, the original state of being. Diaspora, like exile, is a concept suggesting displacement from the center. The paradigm case of a diaspora is the successive scattering and reconstitution-in-dispersion of the Jews after Assyrian, Babylonian and Roman conquests. In Jewish thinking, exile and diaspora are sometimes synonymous. Much in the Jewish historical experience of diaspora suggests the yearnings of exile: next years in Jerusalem! Like exile, diaspora can be elective or imposed; perhaps the historical lack of zeal for returning to Jerusalem on the part of some Jews, grown comfortable in the diaspora, lifts the burden of homesickness from the notion of diaspora. The key contrast with exile lies in diaspora’s emphasis on lateral and decentred relationship among the dispersed. Exile suggests pining for home; diaspora suggests networks among compatriots. Exile may be solitary but diaspora is always collective. Diaspora suggests real or imagined relationships among scattered fellows whose sense of community is sustained by forms of communication and contact such as kinship, pilgrimage, trade, travel and shared culture. Quite in contrast to both exile and diaspora, nomadism dispenses altogether with the idea of a fixed home or center. For nomads, home is always

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23 For more on this see Gilroy 1993.
24 The Hebrew terms “galut” and “golah” can be translated as both.
mobile. Hence there is a subtle doubleness here: being at home everywhere but lacking any fixed ground (Durham 1999: 25). If diaspora suggests a geographically dispersed network, the concept of nomadism suggests a face-to-face community, usually linked by ties of kinship stemming from a real or imagined common ancestor that travels as a unit.

It is when one leaves home that the imaginary as well as political contributions to the semantic range of home – homeland, native, aboriginal, settler, pilgrim, colonist and so on become clearer. The degree of naturalness in relation to locale, the degree of desire or compulsion in being where one is, the degree of permanence in that place and of the acceptance of the population in it all inflect ‘home’ as in homeless, runaway, stranger, foreigner, exile, nomad, wanderer, migrant, traveler and refugee. An important issue involved in the temporal dimensions and of specific diasporas is the distinction that should be made between diasporas and other ethnic groups residing outside their national states. Bearing in mind certain historical and recent migration order and crises and the ensuing actual migratory trends, it is evident that ethnic diasporas constitute the most enduring outcomes of both voluntary and forced international migrations of ethnic groups and their settlement in host countries. The conceptual and definitional borderlines between individuals and groups of tourists, guest-workers, asylum seekers and refugees, some of whom reside in host countries for extended periods on the one hand and members of permanent ethno-national diasporas on the other are still blurred. Thus second, third and even fourth generation citizens of many host countries (US, Australia, Germany and Britain) are still formally and informally considered and widely referred to as immigrants or migrants. This ambiguity is due to the fact that the time periods during which transient individuals and groups are allowed to remain or choose to remain in host countries before they finally decide to settle there permanently or migrate to a secondary or tertiary host country or return to their homeland are highly variable. Like other sensitive issues pertaining to migration and settlement in host countries, especially where the rate of unemployment is high and anti-foreigner feelings are prevalent, the aspect why

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25 Nomad is of Greek origin. It comes from “nomas,” a word for feeding or pasturing and is related to nomos (low) and nemesis, the root “nem” – having to do with allotment or sharing.

26 For more on immigrant adaptation of the second generation see Zhou 1997: 975-1008.
and when migrants form new diasporic entities or join existing ones involves practical ramifications as well as controversial theoretical implications that must be clarified.

Those adhering to the instrumentalist and constructionist approaches to ethnic origins consider the advent of organized ethno-national diasporas to be a modern phenomena. They hold the view that the attributes that characterize the current diaspora phenomena can be traced back only to the middle of the 19th century. To an extent, the development of certain ethno-national diasporas such as Italian and German diasporas was decisively accelerated by the failure of the national revolutions in Europe which caused disillusioned revolutionaries to seek refuge in more liberal host countries. It is similarly held that additional European diasporas such as the Polish, Irish and Russian arose out of the subsequent worsening political and economic situation in their homelands. The waves of migrants and their early experiences in their host countries since the middle of the 19th century have been relatively well recorded both in official documents and in various forms of art, literature, journalism, paintings and photography and cinematography. It is well known that upon leaving their homelands, the migrants themselves, their families and most of the sending societies were aware that because of the more attractive economic and political conditions in host countries on the one hand and the difficulties of transportation on the other any return by such migrants would be difficult. Despite the hostile new environments prevailing in many host countries most migrants were determined to settle there permanently. In antiquity, the diaspora phenomena was not connected solely to forced or voluntary migration out of rural areas and eventual settlement of migrants in similar surroundings. The emergence of ancient fortified settlements, walled cities and small city-states did not preclude emigration and the establishment of concentrated ethnic diasporas in foreign territories (Sheffer 2003: 10). The feeling that those were permanent settlements that migrants could return to and the sense that such settlements and cities could provide a measure of security for the families left behind, simplified the migration decision for some of their dwellers. Such feelings also fostered their permanent settlement in territories, their survival there and their contact with relatives remaining in the homelands. As long as individuals and

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27 For a detailed discussion on the two approaches see Hobsbawm 1990 and Anderson 1991.
nuclear families were living a nomadic life and had no prolonged attachment to any particular tract of land, any practices having to do with migration from a certain territorial base, but keeping in contact with those remained behind were nonexistent. Hence, the first dispersions of somewhat more cohesive nomadic ethnic groups could occur after the earliest differentiated ethnies and ethnic communities had been established and had acquired some durable features. That observation is significant for understanding the entire diaspora phenomena. It means that although throughout history some diasporas became established and lingered on without explicitly elaborating on ethnic identity that element had to be present for such entities to become well established (Sheffer 2003: 49).

One of the main characteristics of the more coherent ethnies that appeared during the late Neolithic period was their recurrent involvement in wars and conflict aimed at gaining control over territory. Whenever such groups succeeded in conquering or acquiring sufficient land and in preventing foreigners from settling in their acquired territories, they could begin to nurture notions of a homeland. In addition to a shared language and a sense of group solidarity which were elements essential for sustaining their differentiated existence, an exclusionary outlook and rejection of strangers had the effect that over time some of the those groups began to take on distinguishing physical characteristics. Moreover the families that permanently settled down in what would become their homelands developed regular agrarian rites, nurtured local folkloristic habits and religious beliefs. The particular environmental conditions in the territories that such families, rural communities and tribal coalitions occupied and defended further influenced their history, culture and behaviour patterns.28

Migrations that would result in relatively coherent social formation in foreign lands and eventually in the establishment of organized entities could take place only after the emergence of some shared features of an identity and the crystallization of notions about “home”29 and “homeland”. Some large ethnic groups that coalesced during the nomadic stage of their development and then expanded to adjacent territories can hardly be regarded as diasporas. That was the case in antiquity and it is the reason why ethnic

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28 For more on this see Smith 1986.
29 Home in the literal sense, “Heim” is essentially private. Home in the wider sense, “Heimat” is essentially public.
groups such as Tutsi, Hutu, Ibo, Yoruba and North American Indians are not included among the diasporas. Only when members of such groups migrate to and settle in territories that are not immediately adjacent to their original homelands do they form diasporas. The same applies to large tribes that “naturally expanded over large territories that were later divided into separate states by colonial powers. On the other hand, ethnic groups that experienced secondary or tertiary migration from one host country to another and still maintained contact with their relatives at home are included in the category of diaspora” (Sheffer 2003: 50-51).

Taking into account the necessity to migrate because of chronic or temporary shortages of food and other resources and because of internal social and political conflicts, it is not surprising that such population movements recurred and that diasporas have continually emerged since earliest times. In antiquity and later during the Middle Ages, voluntary migrations and consequent settlements in host countries were feasible primarily because of the inherent weakness of rulers and their inability to maintain effective control over the borders of their realms. Even during the height of the great empires, their rulers could not effectively prevent adventurous groups of both free persons and slaves from migrating elsewhere. Such factors facilitated the establishment of some of the earliest diasporas (Sheffer 2003: 50). Among the significant factors that led to the emergence of the relatively more cohesive ethnic diasporas, such as the memories of their homeland and sentiments concerning their families and the communities that they left behind perhaps the most influential was the fact that ethnic identity became more clearly defined and solidified. The ethnic identity of a diaspora was not a given. It had to be adapted in reaction to changing conditions in the host countries. Hence, diasporas sometimes experienced processes of hybridization (Werbner 1997). Prevailing notions about historical roots of ethnic diasporas still tend to relate them to expulsion and exile, rather than to acknowledge that migration from a territory of origin was frequently caused by individuals and groups’ adventurous inclinations.

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30 Catastrophic origin of a diaspora has strong biblical support but the origin of the Greek diaspora lies in their colonizing experience.
2a.3 General profile of a Diaspora

Most migrants make the critical decision whether or not to settle permanently in a host country and join an existing diaspora or help establish one, only after arriving in the host country. Survey and polls have shown that upon their arrival in host countries, very few migrants are emotionally or cognitively in a position to make a firm decision whether or not they intend to live away from their homelands permanently (Gold 1997; Sheffer 1998; Van Hear 1998). Pinpointing that juncture in the personal history and collective history of migrants is critical not only for a proper understanding of development of particular diasporas but also for distinguishing among the various types of transient migrants and diasporans. Such distinctions can be useful because those who from the outset do not intend to settle in their first host country and those who later consider it unfriendly and therefore migrate to another host country and those who are determined to return to their homelands will not be interested in joining or establishing diaspora communities (Sheffer 2003: 77-78). The readiness and capability of migrants to maintain their ethno-national identities in their host societies and to openly nurture their communities and support their homelands are two crucial features of the ethno-national diasporas. Most scholars have stressed how the structural, social and political environments can affect migrant’s abilities to maintain their identities in their host countries.31

The notion of diaspora used first in the classical world has acquired renewed importance in the late twentieth century. Until a few years ago most characterizations of diasporas emphasized their catastrophic origins and uncomfortable outcomes. The idea that “diaspora” implied forcible dispersion was found in “Deuteronomy” with the addition of the Old Testament warning that “a scattering to other lands” constituted the punishment for a people who had forsaken the righteous paths and abandoned the old ways. So closely had the diaspora become associated with the Jewish tradition that the origins of the word have virtually been lost. It is important to note that the Jewish diasporic experiences have been much more diverse and complex than the negative tradition

31 For more on this see Gold 1992.
allows. It is well-nigh impossible to understand notions of “diaspora” without coming to grips with some central aspects of the Jewish experience. James Clifford avers “We should be able to recognize the strong entailment of Jewish history on the language of diaspora without making that history a definitive model. Jewish and Greek diasporas can be taken as non-normative starting points for a discourse that is traveling in new global conditions” (1994: 306). Clifford’s essay “Diasporas’ explores the political ambivalence of diaspora visions that are always entangled in powerful global histories. It argues that contemporary diasporic practices cannot be reduced to epiphenomena of the nation-state or of global capitalism. While defined and constrained by these structures, they also exceed and criticize them. In his editorial preface to the first issue of Diaspora, Kachig Tololyan writes, “Diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment. He adds that diasporas will not be privileged in the new Journal of transnational Studies and that the “term once described Jewish, Greek and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-workers, exile community, overseas community and ethnic community” (Tololyan 1991: 4-5).

Drawing on research in the kinked Mexican communities of Aquililla and Redwood City. Rouse argues as follows, “It has become inadequate to see Aquililla migration as a movement between distinct communities understood as the loci of distinct set of social relationships. Today, Aquilillons find that their most important kin and friends are as likely to be living hundreds or thousands of miles away as immediately around them. More significantly, they are often able to maintain these spatially extended relationships as actively and affectively as the tie that links them to their neighbours. In this regard, growing access to the telephone has been particularly significant, allowing people not just to keep in touch periodically but to contribute to decision-making and participate in familial events from a considerable distance. Separate places become effectively a single community through the continuous circulation of people, money, goods and information” (Rouse 1991: 14). “Transnational migrant circuits” as Rouse calls them, exemplify the kinds of cultural formations that intercultural studies describe and theorize.
Diasporas have to be contrasted from border theorists. Borderlands are distinct in that they presuppose a territory defined by a geo-political line: to sides arbitrarily separated and policed but also joined by legal and illegal practices of crossing and communication. Diasporas usually presuppose longer distances and a separation more like exile: a constitutive taboo on return or its postponement to a remote future (Clifford 1994). Diasporas also connect multiple communities of a dispersed population. Systematic border crossings may be part of this inter-connection but multi-locale diaspora cultures are not necessarily defined by a specific geopolitical boundary. William Safran’s essay in the first issue of Diaspora, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” discusses a variety of collective experiences in terms of their similarity and difference from a defining model. He defines diasporas as follows: expatriate minority communities, 1) that are dispersed from an original center to at least two peripheral places; 2) that maintain ‘memory, vision or myth about their original homeland, 3) that believe they are not and perhaps cannot be fully accepted by their host country; 4) that see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right; 5) that are committed to the maintenance or restoration of their homeland and 6) of which group’s consciousness and solidarity are ‘importantly defined by this continuing relationship with the homeland (Safran 1991: 83-84). A large segment of Jewish historical experiences do not meet the test of Safran’s last three criteria: a strong attachment to and literal return to a well-preserved homeland. Safran notes that the notion of return for Jews is often an eschatological or utopian projection in response to a present dystopia (Clifford 1994). And there is little room in his definition for the principled ambivalence about physical return and attachment to land, which has characterized much Jewish diasporic consciousness from biblical times on.

Whatever the working lists of diasporic features, no society can be expected to qualify on all counts, throughout its history. Rather than locating essential features, Clifford’s focus was on diaspora’s borders, on what it defines itself against. Clifford stressed that the relational positing at issue here is not a process of absolute othering but rather of entangled tension. Diasporas are caught up with and defined against (1) the norms of nation-states and (2) indigenous and especially autochthonous claims by tribal peoples.
(Clifford 1994). Whatever their ideologies of purity, diasporic cultural forms can never, in practice be exclusively nationalist.32

Diasporas are different from travel, though it works through travel practices in that it is not temporary. It involves dwelling, maintaining communities, having collective homes away from homes and it is different from exile with its frequently individualistic focus. According to Clifford, “Diaspora discourse articulates or bends together both roots and routes to construct what Gilroy describes as alternate public spheres, forms of community consciousness and solidarity that maintain identifications outside the national time-space in order to live inside, with a difference” (1994: 308). The black diaspora culture currently articulated in postcolonial Britain is concerned to struggle for different ways to be British – ways to stay and be different. According to Clifford, “The term diaspora is a signifier not simply of transnationality and movement but of political struggles to define the local as distinctive community in historical contexts of displacement. The specific cosmopolitanisms articulated by diaspora discourses are in constitutive tension with nation-state/assimilative ideologies. They are also in tension with indigenous and autochthonous claims. It exists in practical and at times principled tension with nativist identity formations” (1994: 308). The language of diaspora is increasingly invoked by displaced peoples who feel a connection with a prior home. This sense of connection has to be strong enough to resist erasure through normalizing processes of forgetting, assimilating and distancing. The phrase “diasporic community” conveys a stronger sense of difference than ethnic neighbourhood in the language of pluralist nationalism. This strong difference, this sense of being a people with historical roots and destinies outside time/space of the host nation, is not separatist. Diaspora cultures thus mediate, in “a lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place”.33

32 Clifford raises the question: Are diaspora cultures antinationalist? He makes a distinction between nationalist critical longing and nostalgic or eschatological visions from actual nation-building with the help of armies, schools, police and mass media.

Diaspora consciousness is constituted both negatively and positively. It is constituted negatively by experiences of discrimination and exclusion. It is worth adding that a negative experience of social and economic marginalization can also lead to new coalitions and skills of survival: strength in adaptive distinction, discrepant cosmopolitanism and stubborn visions of renewal (Clifford 1994). Diaspora communities constituted by displacement are sustained in hybrid historical conjunctures.

In diaspora experience, the copresence of “here” and “there” is articulated with an antiteleological (sometimes messianic) temporality. Linear history is broken, the present constantly shadowed by a past that is also a desired, but obstructed future: a renewed, painful yearning (Clifford 1994: 318). Diaspora cultures are to varying degrees produced by regimes of political domination and economic inequality. But these violent processes of displacement do not strip people of their ability to sustain distinctive political communities and cultures of resistance. Kobena Mercer works with this constitutive entanglement in a penetrating essay, “Diaspora Culture and the Dialogic Imagination”. “There is no escape from the fact that as a diaspora people, blasted out of one history into another by the commercial deportation of slavery and its enforced displacement, our blackness is thoroughly imbricated in Western modes and codes to which we arrived as the disseminated masses of migrant dispersal. What is in question is not the expression of some lost origin or some uncontaminated essence in black film language but the adoption of a critical ‘voice’ that promotes consciousness of the collision of cultures and histories that constitute our very conditions of existence” (Mercer 1988: 56). Gilroy notes that, because the signifier diasporic denotes a predicament of multiple locations, it slips easily into theoretical discourses informed by poststructuralism and notions of the multiply-positioned subjects. Diasporic subjects are thus distinct versions of modern, transnational, intercultural experience. He attempts to conceive the continuity of a people without recourse to land, race, kinship as primary grounds of continuity. In attempting to discern how Black peoples construct their own identities, Gilroy’s work serves as an inspiration by providing fresh insights into how processes of travel, communication and cultural exchange create forms of community and consciousness that subvert the norms of race, nation and capitalism. However, Gilroy himself tends to collapse the two notions of
diaspora: conceptual tool and identity formation, in the sense that he privileges those aspects of diasporic practice and identification that support his political project against nationalism and ethnic absolutism. In his polemic against Afrocentrism, Gilroy fails to explore the power that imaginings of Africa hold within various constructions of diasporic identity.

Clifford was wary of Safran’s constitution of a comparative field, the question of the extent to which diaspora can be defined as dispersal, presupposed a center. The centering of diaspora around an axis of origin and return overrides the specific local interactions necessary for the maintenance of diasporic social forms. According to Clifford, “The empowering paradox of diaspora is that dwelling here assumes a solidarity and connection there. But there is not necessarily a single place or an exclusivist nation” (Clifford 1994: 322). In a forcefully argued essay, “Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity,” Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin offer sustained polemics against two potent alternatives to diasporism; Pauline universalist humanism (we are all one in the spiritual body of Christ) and autochthonous nationalism (we are all one in the place that belongs, from the beginning to us alone). The former attains a love for humanity at the price of imperialist inclusion/conversion. The latter gains a feeling of rootedness at the expense of excluding others with old and new claims in the land. Diaspora ideology, for the Boyarins involves a principled renunciation of both universalism and sovereignty and an embrace of the arts of exile and coexistence, aptitudes for maintaining distinction as a people in relations of daily converse with others (Clifford 1994:322). The Boyarins stress the ambivalence in Jewish tradition from biblical times to the present regarding claims for a territorial basis of identity. Against the national/ethnic absolutism of contemporary Zionism, Jonathan Boyarin writes, “we Jews should recognize that the copresence of those others is not a threat but rather the condition of our lives” (Boyarin 1992: 129). The Boyarins’s account of diaspora aspires to be both a model of historical Jewish experience and a model for (contemporary hybrid identities). This aim is apparent in the following passage:

34 Gilroy’s concept of the Black Atlantic remains confined to the Anglophone world of the English speaking Caribbean, Great Britain and the United States excluding numerous Black Spanish and Portuguese speaking communities in Latin America and Brazil.
“Diasporic cultural identity teaches us that cultures are not preserved by being protected from mixing but probably can only continue to exist as a product of such mixing. Cultures, as well as identities are constantly being remade. While this is true of all cultures, diasporic Jewish culture lays it bare because of the impossibility of a natural association between this people and a particular land – thus the impossibility of seeing Jewish culture as a self-enclosed, bounded phenomenon. The critical force of this dissociation among people, language, culture and land has been an enormous threat to cultural nativism and integrisms, a threat that is one of the sources of anti-Semitism and perhaps one of the reasons that Europe has been much more a prey to this evil than the Middle East. In other words, diasporic identity is a disaggregated identity” (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993). The Boyarins ground their valorization of diaspora in two thousand years of rabbinic ideology, as well as in concrete historical experiences of dispersed community. They state: “We propose Diaspora as a theoretical and historical model to replace national self-determination. To be sure, this would be an idealized Diaspora generalized from those situations in Jewish history when the Jews were relatively free from persecution and yet constituted by strong identity – those situations, moreover, within which promethean Jewish creativity was not antithetical indeed was synergistic with a general cultural creativity” (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 711).

In recent years there has been a growing academic interest in the notion of diaspora. The idea is attractive in the sense that it offers a progressive possibility for a non-essentialized self and can break the supposed fixed relationship between place and identity. Within diasporic communities this can achieved through the maintenance of multiple connections between the present “here” and a past or future “there”. The problem with much of the diaspora literature however, is that it fails to acknowledge that diasporas can also reproduce the essentialized notions of place and identity. Clifford suggests that “there is not necessarily a single place or an exclusivist nation”; but this “there” is often a “single place” (Clifford 1997: 296). In his summary of current approaches to diaspora, Cohen suggests that “diasporas are positioned somewhere between nation-states and ‘travelling cultures’ in that they involve dwelling in a nation state in a physical sense but
traveling in an astral or spiritual sense that falls outside the nation states space/time zone” (Cohen 1997:135-6). In Between Camps (2000), Gilroy deals with the twin issues of territory and identity from a diasporic perspective. Gilroy begins by re-iterating the well-established point that identity is more often than not allied to territory – identities are normally bounded and particular and are thus revealed as a “critical element in the distinctive vocabulary used to voice the geo-political dilemmas of the late modern age” (Gilroy 2000:99). According to Gilroy, “As an alternative to the metaphysics of ‘race’, nation, and bounded culture coded into the body, diaspora is a concept that problematizes the cultural and historical mechanics of belonging. It disrupts the fundamental power of territory to determine identity by breaking the simple sequence of explanatory links between place, location and consciousness” (Gilroy 2000: 123). Gilroy does not want to suggest that place, location and territory are completely redundant in the formation of a diaspora consciousness but rather than understanding this relationship as a simple, straightforward, static mechanism, he argues that diaspora consciousness is focused on the “the social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration defined by a strong sense of the dangers involved in forgetting the location of origin and the tearful process of dispersal” (Gilroy 2000: 124). When seen as not just movement but as a relational network, diaspora is a way of creating a rift between places of belonging and places of residence.

Clifford’s most explicit treatment of the notion of diaspora can be found in a number of essays in “Routes: Travel and Translation in the late Twentieth Century”. Within these essays, Clifford develops a discourse on the relationship between diaspora and territory, not least through his discussion of what counts as diasporic. Clifford offers a diacritical definition; what does diaspora define itself against? Primarily, Clifford suggests that diasporas are defined against nation-states. This is not a clear, simple opposition (one of “absolute othering”) but rather a process of “entangled tension” (Clifford 1997). According to Clifford, “diaspora discourse articulates or bends tighter both roots and routes to construct…alternate public spheres, forms of community consciousness and solidarity that maintain identifications outside the national time/space in order to live inside, with a difference” (Clifford 1997: 251). A common thread that runs through the
discourse of diaspora is the perception that a diaspora consciousness coupled with “collective practices of displaced dwelling” (Clifford 1997) is capable of subverting the norms of the nation-state, both ideologically and spatially. Clifford endorses this view, describing diaspora as “ways of sustaining connections with more than one place while practicing non-absolutist forms of citizenship” (Clifford 1997: 9). However, Clifford does accept the possibility that diasporas might not always be so non-absolutist, acknowledging that there have been instances of nationalism and chauvinism (often violently purist) emanating from diasporas. In particular, Clifford acknowledges that the very definition of a diaspora presupposes a centre from which they have dispersed. Clifford views the existence of such centers as one way in which absolutism can sneak back in, but argues more forcefully that this need not be the case. Non-absolutisms remain possibilities, not inevitabilities but very little emphasis is given to those occasions when absolutism does “sneak back in”. For example, Clifford argues “there is not necessarily a single place or an exclusivist nation”. The discourse of diaspora tends to afford little insight into such outcomes.

2a.4 The Roots of Diasporism

Laypeople and experts, especially those adhering to the instrumentalist and constructionist approaches to ethnic origins consider the advent of institutionalized and organised ethno-national diasporas to be a modern or even recent phenomenon. Thus these observers hold the view that the attributes that characterize the current diaspora phenomenon and specific diasporas can be traced back to the middle of the nineteenth century. To an extent, the development of certain ethno-national diasporas, such as the Italian and German diasporas was decisively accelerated by the failure of the national revolutions in Europe which caused disillusioned revolutionaries and other disgruntled persons to seek refuge in more liberal host countries. It is similarly held that additional European diasporas such as the Polish, Irish and Russian arose out of the subsequent

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35 Instrumentalists argue that affiliation into ethnic groups, including diasporas and maintenance of that collective identity are useful for achieving practical individual and group goals (Cohen 1989; Rogowski 1985). Advocates of the constructionist approach assume that nations essentially are modern social constructs, artifacts created by ‘cultural engineers’ and elites who invent traditions in order to organize newly enfranchised masses into new status systems and communities (Hobsbawn 1990; Anderson 1991).
worsening political and economic situations in their homelands. It has also been argued that there have been other no less significant factors contributing to migration, to permanent settlement in host countries and consequently to diasporas’s formation since the middle of the nineteenth century (Sheffer 2003: 32). It is certainly true that the past 150 years or so have seen a marked increase in the entire diaspora phenomenon, including the number, size and the range of activities of various diasporas. Those waves of migrants and their early experiences in their host countries since the middle of the nineteenth century have been relatively well recorded both in official documents and in various forms of art – literature and quality journalism, paintings, photography and cinematography (Sheffer 2003: 33). Consequently, relatively detailed accounts of the emergence of the newer diasporas are available. Thus for example, from such records it is known that upon leaving their homelands, the migrants themselves, their families and most of the sending societies were aware that because of the more attractive economic and political conditions in host countries on the one hand and because of the difficulties of transportation on the other any return by such migrants would be difficult, if not impossible (Sheffer 2003: 33).

In antiquity, the diaspora phenomenon was not connected solely to forced or voluntary migration out of rural areas and eventual settlement of migrants in similar surroundings. The emergence of ancient fortified settlements and villages did not preclude emigration and the establishment of concentrated ethnic diasporas in foreign territories. The feeling that those were permanent settlements that migrants could return to and the sense that such settlements and cities could provide a measure of security for the families left behind, simplifies the migration decision for some of their dwellers.

2a.5 Classifying Diasporas

Short, pithy definitions of social and political phenomena are elegant and easy to remember. Occasionally, therefore, such sharply crafted definitions will be adequate and will have an enduring impact on actual developments, on entire academic disciplines or on certain fields of study. When the available definitions of the relevant phenomena are
still partial and not fully adequate for developing useful theoretical and analytical perspectives, the need is not for short elegant generalizations but for more elaborate elucidations. The realities of diaspora existence are far more complex than those that have been depicted and analyzed in the available theoretical and analytical publications (Safran 1991, 1999; Tololyan 1991, 1996; Anderson 1992, 1994; Clifford 1994; Vertovec 1997). That is especially the case regarding the pioneering definitions that were based on examination of the roles of historical diasporas in various multiethnic empires (Armstrong 1976). That also applies to attempts to delineate “common features of diasporas” that focus on the undifferentiated reasons for migration, social features, main patterns of occupation and desiderata of such groups (Cohen 1997: 26). Sheffer provides for two meaningful criteria for distinguishing between the various existing ethno-national diasporas; first, the status of their respective homelands and second their “age”. First, distinction can be made between stateless diasporas and state-linked diasporas. The stateless diasporas are those dispersed segments of nations that have been unable to establish their own independent states. The state-linked diasporas are those groups that are in host countries but are connected to societies of their own ethnic origin that constitute a majority on established states. In the second, distinction can be made between classical diasporas, modern diasporas and incipient diasporas). This latter category includes the Pakistanis, Chinese and South Koreans in the Persian Gulf are (Weiner 1986; Van Hear 1998) and other groups that for various reasons are in only the initial stages of organisation such as the Palestinians in Europe and North America and Tibetans in India and Europe.

Contrary to a widely held view except for serving as a basis for assessment of whether or not first generation migrants would return to their countries of origin and for assessing the nature of their initial contacts with their kinfolk back in the homeland, identifying the reasons for migration from homelands is not crucial for an understanding of the nature of diasporas, their organisation and their behaviour in host countries (Sheffer 2003). This is especially true regarding the economic background of such migrants. That is, understanding diasporas and their behaviour does not depend on whether at the time of migration from their homelands migrants were rich or poor, for upon arrival in their host
countries both rich and poor migrants have to deal with similar problems and face similar dilemmas. Most migrants make the critical decision whether or not settle permanently in a host country and join an existing diaspora or help establish one, only after arriving in the host country and in view of the prevailing political and economic conditions there. Surveys and polls have shown that upon their arrival in host countries, very few migrants are emotionally or cognitively in a position to make a firm decision whether or not they intend to leave away from their homelands permanently and whether or not they wish to maintain their connections with the homelands (Gold 1997; Van Hear 1998). Furthermore, relatively few migrants or refugees who voluntarily decide to leave their homelands because of ideological and political reasons are driven by prior intentions to settle and integrate or assimilate into their host societies on the one hand or to join or organize diasporic entities on the other. Only when migrants reach welcoming host countries where they intend to reside permanently do they begin to consider assimilation, integration or joining or establishing diasporic entities. Few works have shown the juncture in the personal history and collective history of migrants that is crucial not only for a proper understanding of the development of particular diasporas but also for distinguishing among the various types of transient migrants and diasporans (Sheffer 2002: 77). The readiness and capability of migrants to maintain their ethno-national identities in their host countries and to openly nurture their communities and support their homelands are two additional crucial features of ethno-national diasporas which would be utilized in the forthcoming discussion. While some observers have stressed how the structural, social and political environments can affect migrants’s abilities to maintain their identities in their host countries (Gold 1992: 4-14), others emphasize on the migrant’s capabilities and readiness to make tough decisions that will affect their situations and their options in host countries (Sheffer 2003). The critical formative stage in the development of diasporas is reached only after migrants have overcome the initial shocks involved in leaving their homelands. Only afterward can they begin to cope with the difficult problems involved in settling in host countries: interacting with the culture prevailing there, confronting the daunting tasks of finding jobs and renting or buying suitable housing, establishing social relationships and finding sympathetic and effective support systems. When migrants consummate their initial adjustments and solve the
immediate problems involved in settling down in host countries, they face the main dilemma in their new lives: whether to opt for eventual assimilation or maintain one’s ethno-national identity. In addition to the need to resolve that crucial strategic dilemma, this phase requires many tactical decisions, especially in regard to the migrant’s expectations concerning better economic and political opportunities and the extent to which those expectations are met will impact their decisions regarding assimilation or full integration. In certain host societies, the social and political environments can be so hostile that even when there are no formal constraints, migrants may be unwilling even to entertain the idea of assimilation and integration into host societies or of establishing organized diasporas (Sheffer 2003; Van Hear 1998).

The menu of available strategies is large, beginning with assimilation, ranging through various modes of accommodation and ending with separation and in the case of stateless diasporas, including support for secession in an attempt to seize land from dominant societies and create their own nation-states in their own homelands. More specifically, this spectrum includes the following strategies: assimilation, integration, acculturation, isolationism, corporation, secession, separation and irredentism (Smith 1981, 1986; Weiner 1991; Sheffer 1994). Sheffer has noted some significant characteristics of diasporas, historical and modern, which are as follows:

- All diasporas have been created as a result of voluntary or imposed migration.
- In most cases, decisions to join or establish diasporic entities have been made only after migrants have settled in their host countries.
- Diasporans generally have been determined to maintain their ethnic identities. Those identities have been important bases for promoting solidarity within diasporic entities.
- Most diasporas have established intricate support organisations in their host countries.
- They have maintained contacts with their homelands and other dispersed segments of the same nation.
2a.6 Qualitative factors influencing the Diaspora Phenomena

Sheffer perceives the need to make a distinction between quantitative and qualitative factors both of which affect the status of those groups and entities. The quantitative factors are, for example, the dates of migration, the timing of migrants’ decisions to settle permanently in a host country, host countries’ citizenship laws, well-defined political activities on behalf of homelands. Qualitative factors are no less important. First and foremost, these are the psychological desire and considered determination of migrants to maintain their ethno-national identities in their host countries and to openly identify as such. According to Sheffer, “the current world climate, belonging to a diaspora depends primarily on one’s self-definition rather than on the way that host societies and governments define and perceive those formations. Thus ethnic migrants who opt to assimilate and who are publicly reticent to identify themselves as members of a specific diaspora will not become diasporans” (Sheffer 2003: 90).

The new consensual view that diasporas are made and unmade as a result of both voluntary and forced migration (Sheffer 1986: 9; Cohen 1997: 25-9; Van Hear 1998: 40-7) is a departure from the traditional view that diasporas had always been “exilic communities”. Because the Jewish diaspora was regarded as the archetypal diaspora, the notion that all diasporas were exilic communities was erroneously applied to most other diasporas. A departure from that explanatory model is important not only for understanding the making of diasporas but also for advancing our understanding of the assimilation and integration of those groups and their return, that is unmaking of diasporas (Sheffer 2003). The various earlier explanations offered for the proliferation of ethno-national diasporas shared one basic weakness. They presumed that the causes for migration were also the reasons for becoming members of diasporas on the one hand or for returning to the homeland on the other. The traditional explanations suggested for the making of diasporas can be divided into two groups: First, the push factors and the second emphasizes the pull factors. Those twin forces provided the main theoretical basis for numerous analyses of the emergence of the Jewish and Irish diasporas and for the
return of certain segments of those diasporas to their homelands.\textsuperscript{36} Besides the fact that the explanations were too abstract and generalized, their main weakness was their focus on systemic and environmental conditions in host countries as well as in homelands and their failure to focus on migrants themselves and on the roles of other actors. The second weakness noted by Sheffer was that when they were trying to explain various aspects of diaspora establishment, the emotional and rational considerations in the social, political and economic realms usually got lumped together. There is therefore a need for differentiated explanations. Some recently proposed explanations offer more differentiated interpretations. According to Sheffer (2003), they can be divided into four categories. Those in the first category emphasize the impact of the new and more favourable global conditions, especially the increasing ability of international migrants to move more freely and easily from on country to another. Purportedly, these new conditions and policies allow host countries to take advantage of the special attributes of diasporas – their wide reach, cosmopolitan attitudes, trans-state networks and ongoing contacts with homelands and other communities in other host countries – to promote the interests of the host countries (Cohen 1997: 158-62).\textsuperscript{37} In the second category of recently proposed explanations feature the ‘open-system perspective’ on migration. That school postulates that a migration system is a network of countries linked by migration flows and by the prior and consequent relationships among those countries. Those in the third category deal with change, transition and crises in “migration orders”. That approach emphasizes the impact of an admixture of rational economic and political “push” factors on migrants’ motivations to leave their homes and off to host countries where they can establish diasporic entities. Those in the fourth category stress that changes in the social atmosphere and attitudes in host societies can have the greatest impact on such decisions.

Sheffer has argued that we should digress from the traditional view about the close connection between (a) migrant’s backgrounds and their reasons for emigrating and (b) the nature of the diasporas they will establish. The traditional view about the establishment of new diasporas has a long academic tradition and was an element in the thesis about “mobilized” and “proletarian” diasporas (Armstrong 1976) which claim that

\textsuperscript{36} For more on this see Kunz 1973.
\textsuperscript{37} What is also noticeable is the emergence of what have been termed “deterritorialized social identities” (Faist 2000).
migrants’ reasons for migrating and the backgrounds of the migrants would determine their decisions about what kinds of diasporic entities they would form. Though it has been widely accepted and is reflected in the analyses of various writers in this field (Tololyan 1996; Cohen 1997; Van Hear 1998), the first element in that assertion is questionable. At the bottom of the uncertainty about their permanent settlement in their prospective host countries lie doubts about the actual conditions there and also about their basic attachments to relatives, nation and homeland. According to Sheffer, among that minority of emigrants who leave their homelands because of utter desperation, most have no intention of returning.38

2a.6.1 The Question of Loyalty

Both older and recent diasporas are having important inputs into the development of pluralism. More specifically, diasporas contribute to the emergence of new attitudinal and cultural patterns. Dealing with the question of loyalty is not an easy task. According to Sheffer (2003: 220) the reasons have to do with perceptions that prevail in host countries regarding sovereignty, the security concerns of host-country leaders and the interactions of host countries with the homelands of the diasporans residing within their boundaries. Scholars have ignored this subject partly because they share the inherent tendency to want to downplay the problems involved in such sensitive matters. It seems that political psychologists have been at the fore in this academic field (Bar-Tal 1993). The gist of their argument is that a diasporas’ loyalty to a host state on the one hand or to its ethnic group and nation on the other, is determined mainly by the psychological needs of members of the diaspora to forge and especially to maintain their particular identity. Those authors argue that, therefore, allegiance to an ethnic minority inevitably will come into conflict with loyalty to a host state that claims full sovereignty and control within its boundaries. Similar arguments have been advanced by what can be called the constructionist literature on ethnicity and ethno-nationalism (Anderson 1994). The main argument of the constructionists is that patriotism is an attitude that is artificially inculcated in citizens by the state, regardless of their ethnic origin. Proponents of that

38 On the various studies of such attitudes among Israeli emigrants see Gold 1997.
view add that by implication and as part of the creation and operation of modern states, that sentiment is drummed into members of the dominant ethnic group as well as ethnic minorities permanently residing there. In the case of diasporas that situation can also lead to clashes with their homelands. According to the constructionist view, in some cases that lead to “radically unaccountable politics” (Anderson 1994: 327). Proponents of the third approach observe that even Western liberal democracies that pride themselves on their enlightened tolerance show greater concern about the loyalty of “alien” groups. Those observers argue that, rather than introducing problems of ambiguous loyalties, diasporas challenge the democratic polities and push them to explore new forms of integration and multiculturalism and to work for global human rights. They believe that the renewal of activism in diaspora groups is part of a self-learning process, which is necessary for becoming politically effective communities. Those scholars conclude that in the long run, hosts should not be apprehensive or suspicious, because the presence of diasporas in their midst is potentially an enriching force, particularly so because those states will eventually become post-national and multicultural polities (Werbner 1997).

Sheffer (2003: 223) notes two contradictory trends that influence relationships within diaspora communities as well as the multiple relationships involving diasporas, their host countries, their homelands, other segments of the same diaspora and regional and global parties. The first trend is closely related to globalisation and includes loss of control over porous regional and state borders and increasing liberalization of economic, political and social systems. As noted in Western democracies those two developments encourage greater tolerance toward ethno-national diasporas. The second trend, which is partly, a consequence of the first, is ethnic diasporas’ new confident adherence to their traditional identities and their readiness to identify as such. Sheffer goes on to present an integrated approach to the study of ethnic revival and ascendance (Kellas 1991; Smith 1994). Generally, ethno-national diasporas demonstrate ambiguous, dual or divided loyalties to their host countries and homelands. Essentially the pattern of divided loyalties is one according to which members of diasporas demonstrate loyalty to their host countries in the domestic sphere and loyalty to their homelands in regard to homeland politics and trans-state politics. Under those circumstances, most diasporans will show loyalty to their
host countries and comply with the laws and norm prevailing in those countries. Members of incipient diasporas may have difficulty in clearly defining their identities, in making decisions about their identifications and therefore also in determining their loyalties.\(^{39}\) The adoption of particular form of loyalty is a matter of individual and collective choices.

Sheffer (2003: 230) attempted to apply the theoretical and analytical framework and observations presented earlier to the Jewish diaspora. He provided two preliminary points concerning the general situation of the Jewish diaspora. First, the Jewish diaspora’s strong and continuous primordial and psychological-symbolic attachment to the land of Israel posed and still poses political dilemmas for many diaspora members in their various host countries.\(^{40}\) During the long history of the Jewish diaspora, the intensity of the loyalty of different Jewish diaspora communities to their various host countries has never been constant. In some host countries such as the Soviet Union and Arab countries, Jews were denied the right to freely express their national identification and to translate their personal and collective sentiments toward their ancient homeland into meaningful action. That was enforced by extensive use of those regimes’ coercive mechanisms. The situation was different in democratic countries, where Jews were able to maintain their contacts with ancient homeland and their national movement. Certain segments in those communities especially those who were inclined towards assimilation demonstrated total loyalty to their host societies and governments. Those who preferred social and cultural integration in their host countries developed ambiguous loyalties toward hosts and homeland. And those who openly identified as supporters of the Zionist movement and of the Jewish community in Palestine and later of Israel developed dual loyalties. The more resolute Zionists adopted the divided loyalties stance; that is certain respects they were loyal to their host countries and in other respects to the homeland. As the world is changing, along with or conceptions of borders, sovereignty, citizenship and loyalty to

\(^{39}\) For greater discussion of the pattern of loyalty among the incipient diasporans see Sheffer 2003: 227.

\(^{40}\) In this connection, suffice it to recall two well-known historical events involving Jewish diaspora communities: first, the infamous Dreyfus affair in France toward the end of the 19th century and its multiple ramifications for Jewish diaspora communities and in fact for the development of Zionism (Marrus 1980); second, the myths connected to the forged Protocols of the elders of Zion and the ensuing allegations and accusations about Jewish loyalty to capitalism and to foreign states made since the early 20th century by racists and ultranationalists in various countries and especially by the Nazis.
nation-state and host countries, Jewish communities are modifying their attitudes. Those modifications are attributed mainly to new trends within the diaspora that are influencing its relations with Israel. In connection with this, Sheffer notes two most significant tendencies that have emerged in Jewish communities around the world: “entrenchment” and “revision” (Sheffer 2003: 233). The most significant development is the increasing opposition to unquestioning acceptance of Israel’s centrality in world Jewry. Israel has contributed more than a fair share to the deterioration of its central position in the eye of the diaspora and thus it has also contributed to a considerable decrease in diaspora Jews’ readiness to pledge their loyalty to Israel. Because it is difficult to assess the weight of each of the following inputs into that change, they are not ranked but appear in a random manner (for detailed analyses and references, see Sheffer 1988, 1993, 1996).

Sheffer makes some tentative theoretical conclusions regarding the loyalty patterns of diasporas. First, the loyalty patterns that diasporas adopt depend on to what extent their host states have a firm grip on power and to the extent to which increasing liberalization, democratization and pluralism lead to change in traditional concepts of sovereignty and citizenship. The weakening of the nation-state concept and the expanding processes of liberalization and democratization usually encourages renewal in ethnic and ethno-national diasporas, strengthen existing communities and their organisation. Those developments lead to changes in diasporas perceptions of the limitations on their activities and consequently lead them to reassess the allocations of their loyalties. Under such circumstances diasporans tend to feel more secure and consequently their loyalty to and support for their homelands may increase. On the other hand, the same trends that lead to greater tolerance and acceptance of diasporas may encourage their assimilation and integration into host societies. Whenever that scenario develops, activist core members of diasporas will first entrench to defend the integrity of the diaspora community but ultimately will develop increasing loyalties to their host countries to the detriment of their loyalties to their homelands (Sheffer 2003: 237). Viewed from the homeland perspective, it turns out that when the conditions of their diasporas in host countries are good and diasporans can freely pursue their wishes and inclinations, homeland governments cannot rely on either automatic loyalty or total loyalty from their
coethnics abroad. Diasporas’ loyalties to their homeland depend on numerous factors in the global and regional environments and the social, political and economic situations in host countries but no less is the fact that to a considerable extent diasporas’ loyalties to their homeland depend on the attitudes and actions of homeland societies and governments.

More involved observers were inclined to equate ethno-national diasporism with the Jewish diaspora and in line with the traditional Jewish self-perception, to regard diasporas as “exiles”. Within that conceptual framework they regarded the Jewish diaspora either sui generis or as a marginal and disappearing entity. Until the mid-1980s, scant attention was given to the idea that dispersed ethno-national communities constituted an undeniably enduring phenomenon. The late 1980s and especially the early 1990s saw a marked change in those skeptical attitudes. Observers of the general ethnic situation and the related ethno-national phenomena realized that, like other developments in those arenas, diasporism was not an evanescent phenomenon. Sheffer (2003: 240) notes that the changes in diasporas’ status and in the attitudes toward them have occurred not only because of some actual quantifiable developments, such is the striking growth in international migration that has resulted in the permanent settlement of more migrants in host countries. Furthermore the changes in the general attitudes toward diasporism have been influenced by the emergence mainly in Western societies of favourable conditions for pluralism, by the inability of host governments to exercise refoulement or curb migration and the development of new diasporas. The contradictory trends of globalization, localization and individuation accompanied by tremendous increases in cultural and social diversity, have influenced the emergence of highly complex structures and behaviour patterns among all ethnic groups and diasporas.

2a.7 The Identities of Diasporas

In analyzing the African diasporic identity, influential scholars have strongly emphasized the importance of certain traditional cultural assets such as music and dance in shaping
and maintaining that identity.\textsuperscript{41} According to that approach, ethnic identity is the historicla product of expressive rites and customs that individuals and groups follow and repeat. Development in too many directions can harm a diaspora’s chances for survival (Gilroy 1994). The need to keep a diaspora’s primeval roots and recent history constant and vivid in the member’s minds is particularly important in the case of stateless diasporas. As long as a struggle for independence is continuing in the homeland of a stateless diaspora, its members will be torn between memories of their homeland and the wish to recapture the post on the one hand and the need to comply with the norms of their host country on the other. For that reason, as is evident in the Tibetan case, diaspora leaders and their organizations invest considerable time, effort and resources in trying to convince younger members not to give up their identity and not to defect from the group. Attitudes will differ according to the extent to which identities in various segments of the diaspora have been hybridized.\textsuperscript{42} The existence of such competing narratives can lead to controversies within diasporas and occasionally to severe schism thus hampering any concerted action on behalf of homelands and national movements for liberation or independence of those homelands.

Kachig Tololyan wrote, “To affirm that diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment is not to write the premature obituary of the nation-state, which remains a privileged form of polity. In the past, diasporas communities have remained self-protectively silent about their own view of themselves; their self-presentations. These representations would inevitably blur difference, even while pointing to an endemic doubleness or multiplicity of identities and loyalties. Such silence long seemed necessary to the maintenance of the nation-state, whose frontiers were ideally absolute limits, crossed only in heavily regulated economic, cultural and demographic interactions. This vision of a homogeneous nation is how replaced by a vision of the world as a ‘space’ continually reshaped by forces – cultural, political, technological, demographic and above all economic whose varying intersections in real estate constitute

\textsuperscript{41} For an understanding of role of music in shaping diasporic attitudes among the Tibetan refugees see Diehl 2002.
\textsuperscript{42} For more on the concept and debate concerning “hybridity” of ethnic groups see Werbner 1997.
every place as a heterogeneous and disequilibrated site of production, a appropriation and consumption of negotiated identity and affect” (Tololyan 1991: 5; 6).

In trying to interrogate and transcend the Jewish experience, Cohen evokes the horticultural image and comes up with alternative taxonomies of the diaspora phenomena. Constructing taxonomy of diasporas is a highly inexact science. For instance, as circumstances altered, one paradigmatic case, the Jews can be regarded as a victim, labour, trade and cultural diaspora. Diasporas exhibit several of the following features: 1) dispersal from an original homeland often traumatically; 2) alternatively the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions; 3) a collective memory and myth about the homeland; 4) an idealization of the supposed ancestral home; 5) a return movement; 6) a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over time; 7) a troubled relationship with host societies; 8) a sense of solidarity with co-ethnics members in other countries and 9) the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life tolerant in host countries. Although many diasporas are seen to be born of flight rather than choice, in practice migration scholars often find it difficult to separate voluntary from involuntary migration. There are clearly a number of mass displacements that are occasioned by events wholly outside the individual’s control – wars, ethnic cleansing, natural disasters, pogroms and the like. Being dragged off in manacles (as were the Jews and African captives) or being coerced to leave by force of arms (as were the Armenians) appear to be a qualitatively different phenomena from the general pressures of overpopulation, hunger, poverty. The idea of a shared origin and birthplace is a common feature of diasporas. The Jews are the “chosen people,” all descended from Abraham. The myth of a common origin acts to root a diasporic consciousness and give it legitimacy (Skinner 1993). The myths of a common origin are territorialized while highly romantic fantasies of the “old country” are avowed.43 A strong attachment to the past or a block to assimilation in the present and future must exist in order to permit a diasporic consciousness to emerge.

43 The promised land of the Jews flowed with milk and honey... The impressive buildings of Zimbabwe stand as a testament to the notion that Africans once had superior civilizations and great empires. It is true that some homelands are more imagined than others but it is rare that a diaspora does not seek to maintain or restore a homeland to its former glory (Cohen 1997: 185).
The Armenian diaspora condition resembles that of the Jews most closely. Armenian ethnicity and the solidarity of the Armenian community are based on a common religion and language, a collective memory of national independence in a circumscribed territory and a remembrance of betrayal, persecution and genocide. Like the majority of Jews, most Armenians live outside the ancestral homeland and developed several external centres of religion and culture. Like Jews, Armenians have performed a middleman’ function in the host societies among which they live; they have been high achievers and have made contributions to science, culture and modernization of the host society. As in the case of Jews, there is among Armenians a continuum of ethnicity ranging from assimilationism to intense ethnopolitical mobilization.

Dislocation from one’s native land with its own ambience, traditions and local dialect does not automatically bring about a diaspora condition. Further the absence of political sovereignty does not constitute ipso facto a diaspora condition. In fact before the establishment of Israel, Palestinians in Jordan and in what since 1949 had been called the “West Bank” did not regard themselves as living in a diaspora. Some diasporas persist and their members do not go “home” because there is not homeland to which to return because although a homeland may exist, it is not a welcoming place with which they can identify politically, ideologically or socially because it would be too inconvenient and disruptive if not traumatic to leave the diaspora.

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44 Both the physical fact of a growing Palestinian diaspora and a collective diaspora consciousness cannot be denied and while that consciousness may be diluted in the case of a relatively prosperous Palestinians who have settled in Western countries, it is strongly perpetuated among the children of refugees and expellees.
2b The Tibetan Question: A Reflection

2b.1 Articulating Tibet

More than four decades have elapsed since the flight of the Dalai Lama from Tibet in March 1959, following the Chinese invasion of Tibet.\textsuperscript{45} The Tibetans who accompanied him in large numbers to India and its neighbouring countries have now lived a major part of their lives in exile. Their children have been born and educated in their adopted lands, depending solely on the memories (Nora 1984) of the older generation for their knowledge of the “Land of Snows”. Conway, who wrote in the mid 1970s (Conway 1975: 74) about the predicament of Tibetan refugees stated that “the Tibetans like other refugees have been confronted with two mutually contradictory pressures. If the Tibetan exiles seek to keep alive the idea of return, they must somehow prevent their thorough dispersion, in the hope that political conditions change in their favour. On the other hand, if refugees willingly accept the generous contributions of relief agencies and by their own endeavours, succeed in rehabilitating themselves in their host countries, they would inevitably be subject to pressures to assimilate with their host populations.” The Dalai Lama in the 70s had the hope and the belief that the political circumstances would change in favour of the Tibetans and it would not be long before he and his exile followers would be able to return to Tibet. As he told an audience at Bylakuppe, one of the Tibetan agricultural settlements in South India in South India, a year before Conway published his article: “It appears that within three to six years situations may be likely to change. We are now in a hopeful situation. Therefore, I urge you that everyone should struggle continuously for our common interest as we have done in the past and we should not lose our morale. In Tibet, not only the older people, but the younger people who accept communist ideology are opposed to Chinese aggression and thus have great moral strength to get Tibet back for the Tibetans. The whole Tibetan people have one common goal: the independence of Tibet.” However, the political events in the succeeding decades belied this hope and the Tibetans had to face squarely with the prospect of a protracted

\textsuperscript{45} After the Dalai Lama’s flight, the first report of an uprising in Lhasa was broadcast by Voice of America on 22\textsuperscript{nd} March 1959 see Sen 1960: 26.
exile that necessitated among other things, a reformulation of their strategy in exile centered around the idea of “return”.

From the middle to the end of the twentieth century, the Tibet Question has been one of the most controversial international political issues. This should not preclude our attention from the fact that Tibet had for long been the object of myth-making in many western texts in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. To study fantasies about Tibet is to understand often mystificatory and ideological processes. Also through these moments when an image of Tibet is mobilized, a window is opened onto Western fears, hopes and desires. Metaphor and fantasy are revealed at every level of any text’s construction. Indeed they and the participation in myth are inevitable aspects of any attempt to make meaning, to sustain belief and experience, irrespective of whether the perspective comes from scholarship, popular culture or personal experience. The notion of myth making must be deepened beyond simple notions of right or wrong. According to Lopez, “The selection of texts is crucial. To confine ourselves only to substantial accounts of Tibet in novels or in short stories would severely restrict our appreciation of the immense influence that Tibet has exerted on the western imagination. Why not undertake to examine the extraordinary range of references to Tibet found in the daily newspapers or glossy magazines of the world?” (Dodin and Rather 2001: 203). Portraits of Tibet in fiction with its inevitable correlation between knowledge and power are often exploitative projections, ideological manipulations within an orientalist milieu. However we should be careful not to paint Tibet as a “silent other” (Said 1979). With the turn of the twentieth century began a new kind of encounter between Tibet and the West, conjuring up new set of fantasies.

James Hilton’s classic of 1933, Lost Horizon, is the first Western novel to be mainly located in Tibet. At this time Western fantasies about Tibet and its religion had achieved their most coherent form (Bishop 1989). It was imagined as a land outside the grid of regulated space and time that seemed to be engulfing the rest of the globe. Entering Tibet was imagined as an initiation, as going across a threshold into another

46 With its invention of the word and world of “Shangri La” quickly became both bestseller and Hollywood success.
world, as going backward in time. Tibet was imagined by many as a dream or fairy tale outside of history. Tibet seemed to offer wisdom, guidance, order and archaic continuity to an increasingly disillusioned West. It is precisely within this stream of fantasy that Hilton’s Shangri La belongs (Bishop 2001). This complex utopian fantasy was however overshadowed by a sense of loss, a belief that traditional Tibet was doomed. The main threat was imagined as coming from an unstoppable process of globalization, producing a uniform, dreary materialism. In such an imaginative climate the utopian spiritual could no longer be entrusted to the literal geographical place. The myth of Shangri La was born, the hidden valley into which the essence of Western fantasies about Tibet was alchemically concentrated and distilled. In a period of environmental and cultural anxiety, Tibet as Shangri La was a fertile paradise in the midst of a global wilderness (Bishop 1989).

By the mid 1960s Tibet had virtually ceased to have global significance for the West. So too Shangri La was moribund as a geographical fantasy. In the era of jet aircraft, space satellites and global communications and tourism, much about Tibet had become demystified. The exile of the Dalai Lama along with a considerable section of the monastic elite had become a long-term fact. The coherence of western fantasies about Tibet had become fragmented, leaving only traces and new meanings. Yet even in glimpses, Tibet has been a vital landscape by which Western authors, either knowingly or unknowingly, have taken bearings on issues crucial for their own cultures and have sought to explore the contours of their own identity. Western travelers have often expected something from Tibet. Thus when Pico Iyer writes about certain magical moments in Tibet in 1988 or Frederick Lenz dreams of spiritual transformation and snowboarding in “Surfing the Himalayas of 1997,” they are participating in the myth of epiphany in Tibet (McMillin 2001: 3)47. Various forms of overt fictionalizing about Tibet – novel, short stories, film and travel writing seem to follow their own specific, imaginative trajectories. While most travel accounts of Tibet have extensively used illustrations both sketches and etchings for over two hundred years, a new visuality of

47 The word “epiphany” refers to a manifestation of the divine – to a moment of sudden intuitive understanding. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this notion of a flash of comprehension, while deeply connected to Christian notions of salvation and revelation, gained a wide currency in Britain.
Tibet occurred in the 1930s. This was aided by the invention of the portable camera and by the widespread adoption of techniques for the quick, cheap reproduction of photographs in magazines. This new visuality can be seen in collections such as R. Jones Tung’s A Portrait of Lost Tibet (1980) or the photo-essays accompanying various articles in The Geographical Magazine (e.g. Greene 1936; O’Connor 1937). It is in contrast to the lack of visual fidelity in films of the time such as Lost Horizon (1937) (Dodin and Rather 2001: 220). By no means has Tibet always been portrayed simply as a Shangri-la. Since the 1940s, there has been an ambivalence toward Tibetan culture, generally refusing to characterize it either as a utopia or as a simple answer to western problems and anxieties.

2b.1.1 Political representations of Tibet: Juxtaposing the Old and New

Statements produced by political institutions are often viewed in terms of outcome and policy rather than as images or representations. The prudent approach would be to look at representations in terms of their functions and intended effects. Political representations differ from literary works in that they include an implicit offer of certain benefits for their supporters if their proponents are able to acquire the power to put them into action, but they share the features of other forms of representation, among which is their tendency to contain contradictions that expose them to weaknesses and instabilities of one kind or another. Barnett tried to show how this process of inherent disintegration is especially marked and significant with regard to political representations and how it has led Tibetan leaders to seek constantly to adapt and modify the Western circulation of these views. Barnett was responding to the reductionist depictions of Tibetans engaged in the contemporary political and cultural domains as more or less trapped subjects of Western constructions.\footnote{Donald Lopez describes the western presentation of Tibet issue as “a prison, in which Tibetan lama in exile and their students are at once inmates and the guards” (1999: 11, 13, 200).}

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Vincanne Adams elsewhere questioned contemporary Tibetans’ “authenticity,” describing many of them as “engaging in scripted simulations, becoming the sort of Tibetans desired by Chinese and Westerners by reproducing and enunciating the scripts of authentic Tibetanness produced by outsiders” (Adams 1996). Strictly speaking, the “Tibetan Question” has not really generated a debate, in other words, it is not a process in which China and Western promoters of Tibetan claims put forward
arguments with the intent that the most persuasive one wins. It is more the presentation by each side of a strongly held collective imagining that is persuasive only to those who already share that imagining. In the Chinese case, the appeal is often to those who already share the envisaging of China as an integrated nation-state with its borders delineated in some ancient, loosely defined inviolable historical past. In the case of the foreign supporters of the Tibetan case, their appeals are often based on a notion or principle that is held to be preexistent or overriding such as the right of a nation to independence or the right of a people to cultural or religious freedom, which in the Tibetan case is seen to have been violated.

Western political discourse about Tibet, in the sense of formal statements by political bodies and representatives was quiescent throughout the 1970s, once China had achieved its rapprochement with the United States and had been readmitted to the UN in 1971; until then Tibet had been part of an anti-Chinese, Cold War agenda. Since the 1980s, the dominant form in which Tibet has been put forward in Western and exile political discussions has involved the image of a zone of specialness, uniqueness, distinctiveness or excellence that has been threatened, violated or abused. The circulation of this image in recent political discussion seems to have stemmed largely from decisions made by the exile leadership at a series of meetings held between 1985 and 1987. At these meetings, which followed the collapse of negotiations with the Chinese in 1984, the exile leaders for the first time asked the Dalai Lama to give political speeches abroad. They reverted to the policies of the 1940s before the Chinese annexation, when similar appeal to the West had been made. At that time too Tibetan leaders had used the notion of Tibetan uniqueness as a principal tool in their diplomacy (Barnett 2001). The representations of

49 The term “sacred territory” is standard in Peoples Republic of China’s discussions of its territorality. For more on this see Norbu 2001.

50 The exile government in 1986 commissioned a brief on Tibet’s legal status, which formed the basis of Michael van Walt van Praag’s 1987 book “The Status of Tibet” and provided much of the legal rationale for the Strasbourg Proposal; it discusses the role of human rights briefly but significantly in its conclusion. Tsering Shakya and other observers have noted that this internationalization initiative coincided with an increase in political tension between India and China.

51 There is a long history of Tibetan political perceptions of their state as unique. The Tibetan National Assembly issued a communiqué addressed to Chiang Kai-shek in 1946 copied to the British mission in Lhasa, which relies on this theme: “There are many great nations on this earth who have achieved unprecedented wealth and might but there is only one nation which is dedicated to the well-being of humanity in the world and that is the religious land of Tibet which cherishes a joint spiritual and temporal system” (Goldstein 1989: 542).
Tibet that emerged in Western discussions following the Dalai Lama’s speeches in the late 1980s focused on the uniqueness and violation of Tibet. In some more recent cases, the violation is seen as a result of advancing modernity or commercialization in general, a view that implicitly exonerates the state as a perpetrator of abuse. Usually this violation is identified with acts of violence or desecration that have been carried out by the Chinese authorities. In many cases this idea of violation seems to be linked to a perception of the place or the people as previously unimpaired and now desecrated for the first time. The images ensuing from this idea tends to disempower its subjects by implying that they are either victims who are incapable of standing alone, or collaborators in the act of violation (Lopez 1998). Chinese representation views the barbarity of Tibet as requiring civilizing. The paramount imagery in Chinese official and unofficial writing about Tibet’s relationship with China is found in its purest form in the frequently repeated accounts of the marriage of the seventh-century Tibetan ruler Songtsen Gampo with the Chinese princess Wencheng who brings with her to Tibet ink, music, agriculture and other Tang dynasty technologies. “Overall purpose is to strive to construct a united, wealthy and civilized New Tibet!” as the Chinese reformer Hu Yaobang put it in 1980.

In Western depictions, terms such as peace, tolerance and religion are reproduced in their adjectival forms in representations of Tibet or Tibetans to define them as peaceful, tolerant or religious. In each of the various forms in which this theme of “violated specialness” appears in western political texts can be found a number of internal contradictions that diminish over time the effectiveness of that representation as discourse in the political arena. The image that “the Tibetans are intrinsically non-violent people” is less preferred among politicians in the west during the 1990s. Instead they have preferred a less essentialist phraseology about the “path of nonviolent resistance” pursued by the Tibetans, which suggests a choice rather than an inherent quality. Even

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52 For a collection of Dalai Lama’s speeches see “Political Philosophy of His Holiness The Dalai Lama” Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre, New Delhi, 1998.
53 Here marriage is a metaphor for China’s civilizing mission toward backward peoples; it is thus similar to the Chinese view of their modernization project in Tibet in contemporary times.
54 Hu’s phrase about civilizing Tibet is still one of the frequently used slogans of the local government in Tibet.
55 “For the last 47 years, the Tibetan people have maintained a peaceful, non-violent resistance to the Chinese government’s policy of cultural genocide; but time is running out for the Tibetans and the power to stop this is in our hands” (“Boycott all Chinese Products,” Press Statement, Milarepa Fund (San Francisco), 30th April 1996).
this phraseology has led to occasional embarrassment for less careful politicians who had suggested that non-violence has been the Tibetans’ sole strategy rather than a recent choice, since the history of recent Tibetan armed resistance and some accounts of internal political violence are now well known.56

Many of the assertions behind these presentations of the Tibetan situation are problematic, even in the restrained forms in which they appeared in most parliamentary resolutions and yet more so in governmental statements. A European parliament resolution was passed in 1992 “deploiring the destruction wrought on the natural environment of Tibet by the ruthless exploitation of the country’s natural resources,” which it said, had “resulted in major deforestation around the upper reaches of Asia’s greatest rivers with catastrophic implications for the future of the region.”57 Much of this language also came from the Dalai Lama’s own writing about a primordial Tibet, “Prior to the Chinese invasion, Tibet was an unspoiled wilderness sanctuary in a unique natural environment. Sadly, in the past decades the wildlife and forests of Tibet have been totally destroyed by the Chinese… What little is left in Tibet must be protected and efforts must be made to restore the environment to its balanced state.”58 The environmental application of this model offers an insight into basic character of the “specialness” representation: It is a view of Tibetans as an endangered species or of Tibet as a threatened habitat. All the representations of Tibet as special share this sense of an unindividuated collectivity or zone that is unique and at risk. This is again important in a political analysis of these representations because it reproduces the colonizing type of relation between the writer and the subject that can be seen in literary texts of the romanticizing type and has disabling implications (Dodin and Rather 2001: 227).

56 For example, three monks were murdered in Dharamsala on 4th February 1997 by Tibetan followers of the banned Shugden sect, according to the Indian police (see Clifton 1997). For more on the Tibetan resistance see McGranahan 2005: 570-600.
58 The fourth item in the Dalai Lama’s Five Point Peace Plan 1987 was “restoration and protection of Tibet’s natural environment”.

The models presented by Chinese and Western political texts are very similar: the phrase “Tibet’s unique natural environment,” is standard in Chinese official texts. The models underlying this idea of specialness differ in the same ways as the choices of terminology and image – the Chinese official conception sees the uniqueness as backwardness that needs to be advanced or educated through the process of social evolution; the Western conception seems to view it as something special that needs to be preserved. “At the basic level the differences between the Western and Chinese political representations are small and the two models are converging in both image and import with all the indications of political rapprochement that this implies” (Barnett 2001: 277). Barnett further makes the point that “One of the difficulties in the Western representations of Tibet as a victim is that if there were ever actualized, the offer they hold for their adherents is the restoration of pride, support for a nationalist pride; since these are essentially symbolic or psychological conditions, the sustainers of these representations do not have the power to enforce or actualize their texts. The offer implicit in China’s representation of Tibet is that China will provide the material accoutrements of what it defines as civilization or modernity. Intellectually and politically this representation seems therefore to be more practicable and more coherent than the Western offer” (Barnett 2001: 227).

The Tibetan exile leaders having realized in the mid 1980s that foreign governments had no strategic interests in raising the Tibet issue decided to pressurize them by mobilizing popular support among their constituents. The Tibetan exiles turned for support to former colonizers rather than to the formerly colonized and chose public relations rather than political alliance as its form of politics (Barnett 2001: 279). Many of the assertions behind these presentations of the Tibetan situation are problematic, even in the restrained forms in which they appeared in most parliamentary resolutions and yet more so in governmental statements. The idea that Tibet has a unique culture overlooks the Tibetan cultural world beyond political Tibet, wherever that is located. The notion of a wholly Buddhist society ignores its Bon and Muslim elements as well as a Communist atheistic

59 Chinese official discourse refers frequently to the uniqueness of Tibetan culture as well, but focuses on what are seen as its non-religious aspects, such as the medieval system or the Gesar epics.
sector. Nevertheless, the claims to specialness have provided an extraordinarily effective and sustained political vehicle for the Tibetan leadership.

In one case where this claim has been highly effective is in the sphere of Human Rights. The focus of the exile Tibetan effort turned from the exile community as a site of enduring “Tibetanness” to the internal community in Tibet as enduring victims of abuse. The newly arrived refugees who, from the late 1980s, were crossing the mountains into Nepal at the rate of two thousand or more a year, were called upon to present testimonies of their personal experience at international forums. Much of the force of Tibetan exile presentations during this period derived from the idea that the authentic voice of ordinary Tibetans was being heard. The task of collecting evidence of violations in Tibet was taken up by a number of organizations and individuals some with connections to the exile government or to the support movement and others with commitments to journalism or human rights research. The difference from earlier efforts was that this time the main vehicle for propagating the information was the liberal media. Tibet had become a cross-party or centrist issue in Western Europe and North America and was no longer confined to the conservative end of the political spectrum. Much of the evidence this time was coming from westerners many of them journalists who had been allowed into Tibet when it was opened to tourism after 1979. What happened in a number of cases was that certain kinds of evidence those with particular emotive or ideological appeal to some sectors of the political spectrum were represented as indicating a far wider extent of abuse than could ‘reasonably’ be claimed. This form of representation which Barnett calls “totalization” appeared most prominently in discussions of the issue of forced abortions among Tibetan women, where occasional or unclear reports of the practice were presented as if the incidents were rampant throughout Tibet. This in turn led to the re-emergence in some Tibet related political discourse in the West of the term “genocide” apparently on the assumption that the birth control policy was intended to wipe out

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60 Human Rights Watch in New York published its first reports dedicated to Tibet in 1988; Amnesty International followed soon after. The Tibet Information Network was officially constituted in London in 1988 as a nonpolitical research body. Dharamsala set up a Human rights Desk within its Department of Information and International relations, which was replaced in 1996 by the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy.

61 By “Totalization”, Barnett (2001) meant the attempts to maximize rhetorical effect by applying partial observation or information to an entire group or situation.
Tibetans. Claims of genocide could hardly be sustained by pointing to other forms of killings, since after 1990 the Chinese authorities had ended the shoot-to-kill policy applied to demonstrators in the streets from 1987-89 (though it has continued for prison protests).  

The problem with the representation of Tibet as a site of human rights abuses was that it tended to become vulnerable because of what Barnett calls “double orientalism” – the tendency to view the Chinese system of governance and society as deeply alien because it is Communist and totalitarian. Essentialist constructions of this kind rendered ineffective some of the evidence that was integral to the human rights case made about Tibet from 1980s onward. In early 1994 the United States reversed its position on China’s trading status and ended attempts to link that status to human rights conditions and essentially the role of human rights as a tool of leverage in international relations collapsed at least in relation to China.

In India there was much interest in the representation of Tibet as a site of regional military threat because of the reported placing of nuclear missiles on the Tibetan plateau. Dawa Norbu wrote that only if this representation were taken up would the Tibet issue ever be capable of resolution, despite attempts to introduce it elsewhere, this approach appears in public discourse mainly in India. Briefly in 1997 just after the BJP came to rule and declared India a nuclear power, this representation of Tibet as a zone of major strategic concern shifted dramatically from the legislative and media sectors to the government.

The proposition that Chinese rule provides modernization has now replaced liberation from feudal oppression as the central legitimation device for the Chinese state and the Communist Party in Tibet. This new theme recurs in almost all political texts that explain the Chinese role in Tibetan lives and futures. This means that there are two or more interpretations of the same modernization; of the same fax machines, mobile phones,

62 Reports of prison deaths on the other hand, remain quite frequent and up to eleven prisoners are said to have died as a direct or indirect result of police actions at Drapchi prison in Lhasa during or after protests on 1st and 4th May 1998 see Tibet Information Network, 2, 17 May 1998.
metalled roads, computer links that line the streets of Tibetan towns. To the Chinese state, these facets of modernization represent progress, while to some foreign writers and the Tibetan exile members they represent modernization as encroachment, depravity or the erosion of distinctiveness and tradition. Some of these writers raised the question as to how modernization should be considered and recognized that interpreting this process was problematic. The most pervasive threat to Tibetan culture comes from the immigrant entrepreneurs in the figure of Chinese men to the Tibetan towns including Lhasa and this view is appropriated by the Tibetan exile administration and widely disseminated. It is particularly important because it is often adopted by Western governments as well as parliamentarians albeit in more restrained terms. Thus the 1996 report of the U.S. department of State on Human Rights noted that ethnic Han and Hui immigrants from other parts China, encouraged by government policies and new opportunities are competing with and in some cases displacing – Tibetan enterprises and labor…rapid and ecologically inappropriate growth has also disrupted traditional living patterns and thereby threatened traditional Tibetan culture.

Modernization is a theme that like other representations can be appropriated for almost any political need with very little change of language, even more readily than human rights discourse. Thus the spectrum of foreign readings of modernization is wide – it includes interpreting it as a Chinese extermination plot, as a development consequence of globalization. It has the inherent ambiguity of an image, in that it can be proposed with one meaning while it is used politically in another, allowing a government to present a model of Tibet intended to be read by its domestic audience as concern for the threat to traditional culture and by Chinese diplomats as sympathy for the difficulties of bringing a backward society into the modern world (Barnett 2001). The modernization theme is problematic for the Tibetan exile project. It neither accentuates the specialness of Tibet nor provides a language that identifies the policy objectives of Western governments and politicians if and when they take up this approach. According to Barnett, “Like human rights discourse, representations developed around this theme can be evocative as rallying

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calls within the ‘public relations’ mode of political discourse (for example, by saying that
the survival of Tibetan culture is threatened) but ambiguous and deceptive as builders of
practical political positions and collective interests. It offers a shared linguistic
framework within which Chinese and non-Chinese political forces can conceal their
differences and by exploiting its ambiguities, find themselves within what is in effect an
alliance in diminishing or neutralizing the claims of Tibetan nationalists” (Barnett 2001:
297).

2b.1.2 The Dalai Lama as a Representational Issue

In recent years there have been a number of attempts to circulate counter-representations
within the contemporary discussion of Tibet, most of them attacks on the personal
credibility of the Dalai Lama. Western counter-representations focused more on the
notion that the Dalai Lama’s authority was in doubt because of his association with film
stars, disputes among Tibetans in exile and in Tibet over the use of armed resistance or
his ban of the sectarian protector-deity Dorje Shugden. The persistent Chinese
representation of the Dalai Lama as an unreliable negotiating partner has come to
dominate the consideration of the Tibet issue for Western policymakers. Notwithstanding
this in the political domain, especially in governmental documents, the
dominant representation of the Tibetan issue in the late 1990s has this become the
representation of Tibet as the Dalai Lama.

According to Lopez (1998), “It is no mean achievement to have exported the perception
of Tibet and the Dalai Lama as one into foreign discourse because there is a constant
tension between his role as a traveling teacher representing spirituality in general and his

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64 In 1995 the Chinese authorities sought to link him to the Asahara cult in Japan (the story was developed in Germany
by the magazine Focus, Munich on 18th September 1995. The exile government relied in a press statement (Liaison
Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for Japan, 1995).
65 In fact the Dalai Lama and his advisors had strategically encouraged Tibetan youth movements to express diverse
opinions but generally the Tibetan Youth Congress have their objectives clearly marked out, that is, the independence
of Tibet, which is at variance with the policy of the exile administration and the Dalai Lama (Personal informant in the
Tibetan Youth Congress).
66 Increasingly in the Western political perception, the Sino-Tibetan conflict had come to revolve around the
interpretation of the Dalai Lama as an individual. The exile administration and the Dalai Lama had expressly sought to
avoid such an outcome during and after the talks with Beijing collapsed in 1985.
role as a representative of a country in crisis.” The Western version of this personification has taken a more literal form. Just as his words are taken as those of the Tibetan people, so his personal history is seen as the story of an exiled, religious people.

Of all the elements of Tibetan tradition that survive today, none is more critical to Tibetan self-definition than the Dalai Lama. In his own words, which represent his reflections before leaving Tibet and lack of fear at dying at the hands of the Chinese, the present Dalai Lama has expressed his awareness of what he means to his people: “I felt then as I always feel that I am only a mortal being and an instrument of the never dying spirit of my Master and that the end of one mortal frame is not of any great consequence. But I knew my people and the officials of my government could not share my feeling. To them the person of the Dalai Lama was supremely precious. They 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 1962: 195).

The evocative strength of the symbol of the Dalai Lama is directly counterpoised by a corresponding vulnerability: the unitary character of a summarizing symbol allows little possibility for adaptive reformulations when the social matrix that originally produced it undergoes radical change. This singularly remains the challenge of the Tibetan diaspora. The present Dalai Lama has impressed even non-Buddhists with his realism and openness to democracy and has given his avowed pledge to respect the will of the Tibetan people regarding the continuation of the political aspect of the institution. What he has said, in this respect, is that, if and when Tibet regains independence, he will willingly and completely relinquish the power and prerogatives of a Dalai Lama to a popularly elected leader and toward this end he has already promulgated a draft constitution which if ratified in Tibet would make him virtually a figurehead (Tibetan Review 1976). But no Tibetans, not even the most vocal critics (members of the Tibetan Youth Congress for

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67 For more on the institution of the Dalai Lama see Goldstein 1968.
68 Nowak treats the figure of the Dalai Lama as the “summarizing symbol,” a term which she borrows from Ortner’s article on key symbols (1973) which distinguishes between “summarizing symbols and “elaborating symbols” the latter category being further divided into “root metaphors” (cognitive) and “key scenarios” (behavioural elements).
example) of the Tibetan diasporic community want to see this happen; for all feel a very real need for the one Tibetan symbol that can transcend the potentially destructive factionalism of political groupings.

2b.2 Interpretive results on Tibet’s History and Geography

In the past, effective control over the production of historical narratives was generally held by governments that had the power to determine what version of history would be widely circulated and that controlled the means by which this information might be disseminated. However in modern times, one of the hallmarks of conflicts between competing groups is an ideological battle over the production of historical “truth” that often continues long after military subjugation has been achieved. A case in point is the conflict, which is being waged between Tibetan exiles and the People’s Republic of China (Powers 2004: 4). A central issue concerns the question of Tibetan history and both sides clearly believe that this is integral to their respective claims of legitimate ownership of the Tibetan mainland. Questions of history and historical claims have profound implications for the lives and futures of Tibetans in exile, many of whom learn to live the present historically (Malkki 2002).

Linked to the central issue is also the question related to political or cultural geography of Tibet, which again has implications for the Tibetan exiles in shaping the contours of their imaginings about Tibet, many of whom have not directly experienced their homeland. The issue of contention is what constitutes “Tibet”. The Chinese government generally limits Tibetan territory to the Tibet Autonomous Region, which consists of the central provinces of U and Tsang. The Tibetan government-in-exile, however, claims that Tibet includes these central provinces as well as ethnically Tibetan areas of eastern parts of the Tibetan plateau that have been made parts of other neighbouring Chinese provinces by the PRC. Traditionally, the Tibetan government has claimed ownership of the “three Provinces” (*Cholkhasum*): (1) U and Tsang which extend from Ngari Corsum in the west to Sokla Gyao; (2) Do Do, which extends from Sokla Gyao to the upper bend of the Machu river and includes Kham; and 93) Do ME, which incorporates an area ranging
from the Machu river to the traditional border with China marked with a monument called the “White Chorten.” Over the centuries, ownership of border areas has shifted between the Tibetan central government and China and although Kham and Amdo for example were claimed by modern Tibetan governments as part of their territory prior to the Chinese invasion in the 1950s, actual control was either in Chinese hands or in those of local hegemons (Powers 2004: 164).69

The notion of the ‘religious land’ is reflected in the Tibetan concepts of chos srid gnyis Idan, the dual religious and secular system of government and of chos rgyal, the king as protector and patron of religion. Chos rgyal is a Tibetan expression for the Buddhist conception of Dharma king. This conception of polity and political legitimacy has a widespread canonical basis in Buddhism throughout Asia.70 The Tibetan State continued the universal Buddhism paradigm of statehood but collapsed the two functions of patron of religion into one – role of the Dalai Lama (Schwartz 1994: 735). The Dalai Lama was understood as chos rgyal in the dual role of political leader and earthly manifestation of Tibet’s protector deity Chenrezig, the Buddha of Compassion. The clerical Buddhist traditions of Tibet draw on a vast array of oral and ceremonial as well as scriptural transmissions.71 Tibetan “folk religion” is based on oral traditions rather than scriptural (Stein 1972). In these “little traditions” of popular beliefs, every community had its own sacred spots, mountain deity, stupa, shrine or temple specific to the locality. These sacred centers defined the local communities, while Tibet in its entirety was defined by the sacred centre of Lhasa, where the Potala Hill was associated with the sacred mountain at the centre of the world (Kolas 1996: 53). Dawa Norbu maintains that the distinction between Tibetan and non-Tibetan was a Buddhist differentiation between believers and non-believers and that sub-national identity prevailed in Tibet before the Chinese invasion (Norbu 1992: 10). Norbu is his interviews with elderly exile Tibetans discovered that foreigners such as Nepalis, Chinese, Hui and Mongols were distinguished as separate groups but so were Amdowa, Tsangpa and other regional identities. There was no clear

69 Boundaries between Tibet and China were first established by treaty in the 8th century A.D. when the forces of the Tibetan empire dominated the Silk road lands and challenged the Chinese Tang rulers (Kolas 1996: 52).
71 Samuel (1993) makes a distinction between clerical Buddhism and Shamanic Tantric Buddhism.
distinction between national and other identities based on place of origin. According to Corlin, “The concept of bod (Tibet) describes the area of the Tibetan way of life, whereas chos (religion) describes the cultural instrument that provides the symbols of collective identification. In other words, ‘Tibet’ describes a particular territorial unit identified with and integrated by the Buddhist doctrine” (1975: 150-153).

There is a growing corpus of works in Western languages that explore the contested history and debates surrounding Tibet. Many western writers on Tibet advocate for either the Chinese or the Tibetan position and they often present the issue in absolute terms, as conflict between truth and falsehood, good and evil, oppression and freedom (Powers 2004: 4)72. Both the Chinese and the Tibetan authors, Powers considers, view history as an independent voice of truth. “All the Chinese works published in China accompany their assertions about the nature of Old Tibet and the improvements subsequent to the Chinese takeover with pictures that either claim to represent the brutal system of Old Tibet or the current happiness of its people. The covers of Great Changes in Tibet and Tibet: No Longer Medieval, for example, juxtapose these cheery titles with photographs of smiling Tibetan women; the implications appears to be that they are smiling because Tibet has leaped forward and because they are no longer medieval” (Powers 2004:15).

Western studies on Tibet, particularly those written by academics are more restrained in their language than are those of Chinese or Tibetan authors. Here too we find rhetoric and passionate advocacy for one side or the other. This is particularly true of pro-Tibet works, whose authors often persuade their target audience of the illegitimacy and barbarity of China’s occupation of Tibet. Many of them indicate that they have personal connections with Tibetan refugees and are deeply concerned about their plight, but they also state that their analyses are balanced and authoritative and that their conclusions are derived entirely from the facts of Tibetan history and not from bias or personal feelings. Some claim to possess authority to tell the truth of the situation because of direct contact with Tibet and their own eyewitness experiences; others have not visited Tibet or Tibetan

72 Till date there is no study, which compares the works of these contemporary Tibetan and Chinese authors. These may be because of the obviously polemical and hyperbolic rhetoric used in most English works on Tibet by Tibetans and Chinese cause many readers to dismiss as propaganda those with which they do not agree.
refugee settlements but assert authority on the basis of extensive study of available written sources on Tibetan history (Powers 2004: 15). Hugh Richardson states in “Tibet and its History” that he decided to write an introduction to Tibetan history after listening to debate regarding Tibet’s status during the fourteenth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1959. “I was struck by the need for a guide to Tibetan history which had regard not only to its continuous development over thirteen centuries but also to the Tibetan background and character and to the Tibetan point of view. That is what I offer in this book” (Richardson 1962). Richardson indicates that he is uniquely qualified to report on what really happened in Tibet because he lived there for a number of years prior to the Chinese take over and had extensive contacts with Tibetans from all walks of life. It is also clear that he believes that he is telling a story that Tibetans themselves are unable to tell and that he perceives himself to be advocating on their behalf. He straightforwardly reports the main events of Tibetan history but in a number of places he heaps contempt on what he characterizes as Chinese fabrications and distortions. Western authors who mainly support the Chinese view of events, such as Grunfeld are no less certain that their accounts are written to dispel misconceptions and reveal the truth of Tibetan history and the real nature of the Chinese takeover. Grunfeld indicates that he is aware of potential criticisms of his book, but he rejects them, stating that his analysis is balanced and authoritative, a “search for a middle ground… I have made every effort to use materials from the most if not all contending points of view. I therefore choose to call this book ‘disinterested and dispassionate’ history and I present it as an attempt at historical interpretation without political, religious, economic or emotional commitments to either side but rather with a commitment to furthering historical understanding and even truth” (Grunfeld 1988: 5). Despite these claims, Grunfeld’s book shows a clear pro-Chinese bias and it contains a number of historical inaccuracies and distortions. Powers however does regard Melvyn Goldstein’s monumental study “A History of Modern Tibet,” a richly documented study which attempts to be “neither pro-Chinese nor pro-Tibetan in the current sense of the terms. It attempts to explicate a dramatic historical event: the demise in 1951 of the de facto independent Lamaist State. It examined what happened and why and it balances the traditional focus on international relations with an emphasis n the intricate web of internal affairs and events (Goldstein 1989: 20). However
in his subsequent study, “The Snow Lion and the Dragon,” he betray a bias in favor of the Chinese position in a number of places. For example he portrays the fourteenth Dalai Lama as a devious but inept politician who continually exasperates China’s leaders with his duplicity and intransigence (Powers 2004: 17). The most vehement pro-China text is “Tibet Transformed” by Israel Epstein (a naturalized Chinese citizen of polish descent), a lengthy book published by the New World Press in Beijing that uses the sort of rhetoric found in works by Chinese authors on Tibet and reflects the Chinese government’s party line. Epstein asserts that his book is based on his own observations during three visits to Tibet and that it reports the truth of what he saw and was told by ordinary Tibetans, “given largely in the words of hundreds of people who were there all along – mainly Tibetans within a frame of historical background from any sources” (Epstein 1983: 7).

The most contentious focus of the use of language by both pro-China and pro-Tibetan authors is the nature of pre-1950s Tibet. The language they use is clearly persuasive intended to convince the readers of the correctness of their author’s respective historical narratives and the conclusions they draw from them. Powers (2004) notes some key words that occur over and over again in both Chinese and Tibetan sources. Chinese sources uniformly describe pre-1950s Tibet using the terms “feudal,” “serfdom,” “backward,” “cruel,” “brutal,” and others. Tibetan sources refer to it as “peaceful,” “happy,” “religious,” and so on. Chinese sources portray their takeover of Tibet as a “liberation” that freed the “serfs” from their feudal oppression and that has resulted in dramatically increased prosperity for the Tibetan people. From a state of “Mediaeval backwardness” Tibet has leaped forward in all significant areas and now its grateful people happily celebrate their full reintegration into the motherland. Tom Grunfeld endorses the Chinese version of events and paints a picture of pre-exilic Tibet as brutal, exploitative and primitive. In Grunfeld’s version of Old Tibet, the country was a “rigid and ossified feudal society” in which torture was widespread. He provides lurid descriptions of “brutal forms of punishment” and states that “a British resident of two decades reported seeing countless eye-gouging and mutilations” (Grunfeld 1988: 16, 24.

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74 Much of this is strikingly reminiscent of Western colonial discourses that justified invasion and colonization on the basis of the purported cultural benefits that colonial rule brought to the natives.
In Grunfeld’s view, those Westerners and Tibetans who reported positive impressions of Tibet were either blind to its squalid realities or deliberately obfuscating. Grunfeld’s book contains many harsh judgments about Old Tibet but he gives no indication that he has ever visited the country nor that he has fieldwork experience among his subjects. Despite these apparent limitations, he indicates throughout the book that he is confident of having ascertained the reality of the conditions in Old Tibet. He achieves this by mainly rejecting accounts of Tibetans who lived in Tibet and Western travelers who paint a positive picture and by privileging Western accounts that portray Tibet in a negative light. Unlike Grunfeld, Goldstein insists that prior to the Chinese takeover in the 1950s Tibet enjoyed de facto independence but he asserts that it was feudal theocracy and he portrays most of its rulers as corrupt, venal and inept. In Goldstein’s view, “The Tibet Question is about control of territory – about who rules it, who lives there and who decides what goes on there.” Like Grunfeld and Epstein, he asserts in a number of places that the Chinese pursued a “gradualist policy” in Tibet and that they showed tremendous patience and moderation despite prevarication and mendacity of Tibetan officials who tried to hold on to their positions and privileges in an attempt to delay what he apparently views as an inevitable process of historical change.

The picture of Old Tibet painted by Epstein, Grunfeld and Goldstein stands in marked contrast to Richardson’s version. He admits that the country was poor and technologically backward, but he contends that the populace was generally happy and content and he agrees with the Tibetan authors examined in this study that it was a deeply religious land with little difference between rich and poor. Richardson reports that there was a traditional aristocracy that along with the monasteries controlled most of the land, but the land itself was poor and most landowners were only slightly better off than the peasants who did most of the work. Mobility was present and if a particular landowner became too exploitative it was relatively easy for workers simply to move somewhere else.

75 The overall thrust of Goldstein’s analysis is that the weakness and isolation of Old Tibet coupled with the bungling and corruption of its leaders created a situation in which the Chinese takeover was inevitable.
Warren Smith adopts a strongly polemical tone and uses highly emotive language in his denunciations of Chinese actions in Tibet. He indicates that his decisions to write was a result of his extensive contacts with Tibetans in Nepal, Tibet and India and that a five month trip to Tibet allowed him to see the reality of Chinese rule. Smith is convinced that prior to the 1950s, Tibet was an “independent country” and that Chinese takeover was an invasion that violated international law. He contends that the Chinese and the Tibetans are two distinct ethnic groups and that despite Chinese attempts to destroy their culture and to assimilate them into their own, Tibetans remain convinced of their distinctiveness. Smith portrays Chinese as thoroughgoing chauvinists who implicitly believe that they are both racially and culturally superior to their minority populations, including Tibetans (Smith 1996: 16, 402).

2b.3 On Histories of Tibet

By delving into the literature of Tibetan history, limiting it to those produced in English by Tibetan and Chinese authors, two things are clear: First, publications on Tibet tend to be highly polarized. There is little ambiguity or nuance in most contemporary works about Tibet and some of the most emotionally charged rhetoric is found in studies of Tibetan history. Second, both sides believe what they say and there is an uncompromising tone to those that support the Tibetan exile view and their opponents in the pro-China camp. History is viewed by both sides as being crucial to their claims and both invest a great deal of energy in producing works that purport to tell the “truth” about Tibet’s past. According to Michael Aris, Tibetans “by comparison with many other peoples of the east or west…maintain a high level of historical consciousness and deep sense of the vitality of the living past…Mythical events were remembered and recorded as ‘history’…to serve as the basis for their re-enactment as ritual” (Aris 1997: 9-10).

Histories of Tibet by Tibetan exiles generally begin with ancestral myths that stress the central role of Buddhism in the early development of Tibetan civilization. According to

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76 The Tibetan term for “history” is lo rgyus, a translation of the Sanskrit itihasa. The term encompasses both historical and mythological sources as well as chronicles and hagiographies. There is no clear distinction between factual accounts of events and mythological narratives and beliefs about the past that have been passed down from generation to generation.
one popular story, the Tibetan race began thousands of years ago when a monkey who was physical manifestation of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of compassion, mated with an ogress living in the mountains of Tibet. Their progeny were the forbears of modern Tibetans. From their father they inherited the qualities of gentleness and compassion, while their mother’s passionate and violent nature also became a part of their psychological makeup. For Tibetans, this legend provides an explanation for why they have fervently embraced Buddhism but also often engage in negative actions.

According to another origin myth, the earliest settlers on the Tibetan plateau were refugees who escaped the conflicts described in the Indian epic Mahabharata. The Indian connection is important in this context because contemporary Tibetan histories develop a narrative in which India, particularly Indian Buddhism was the main source of the development of Tibetan culture and China played at most a peripheral role. Shakabpa cites both of these origin myths and states that some anthropologists believe that Tibetans are related to Mongoloid races. Most of the Chinese histories on the contrary downplay Indian influence and do not even mention these origin myths. Wang Furen and Suo Wenqing do state that many Tibetans consider their progenitors to have come from India but contend that “this presumption…is again opposed to truth.” The truth as they perceive it, is that Chinese tribes settled in Tibet and so the Tibetans are related to the Han. They assert that Neolithic human remains “are free from such physical features of the Indians of the Aryan race as prominent noses and deepset eyes” and that “the Neolithic culture of these areas was closely related to that of the interior of China.”

Certain episodes and periods of Tibetan history are emphasized by Tibetan and Chinese authors, who often attribute to them significance out of all proportion to their actual impact at the time they occurred. But such historical emphases do produce a “mythico-history”, which is animated in the minds and lives of Tibetans in exile, albeit in certain

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77 For an insight into the origin of Tibetan civilization, see Snellgrove and Richardson 1968.
78 According to the story, Avalokiteshvara consciously chose to take the form of a monkey to begin the process of creating a Buddhist country on the Tibetan plateau and as the Tibetan civilization developed, he continued to intervene to prepare the people for the introduction of Buddhism. He nurtured the spiritual inclinations of the Tibetan people, helping them to suppress their negative tendencies and develop their culture. The first stage of this process culminated in the initiation of the “first dissemination” of Buddhism during the reign of King Songsten Gampo who is characterized by several traditional Tibetan histories as an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara.
79 See Wang Furen and Suo Wenging 1984: 10-12. This book attempt to impose a Marxist paradigm onto Tibetan history, which requires that the authors sometimes have to invent historical events in order to fit the model.
settings. It should be immediately pointed out that the historical and political antecedents that have led to the creation of the Tibetan Diaspora in the latter half of the twentieth century still remain to be clarified. The issues involved here are part of an exceedingly tangled web of centuries of policies, politics, precedents, and legal ambiguities (Nowak 1984: 12). The production of Tibetan histories is closely connected with the question of how things came to be as they are (the fact of mass exodus following the Chinese invasion). What follows is an explication of few important episodes in Tibetan history, of those that have determined the structure of Sino-Tibetan relations over the ages; of how they are so important in the evolution of the self-identity of Chinese and specifically diasporic Tibetans and how they form part of their respective national narratives at present.

2b.3.1 The Marriage of Songsten Gampo and Wencheng

Contemporary Tibetan histories state with considerable pride that from the seventh to ninth centuries Tibet was a major military power in Central Asia. During this period, Tibet attacked China a number of times and at the height of its territorial expansion conquered and annexed large portions of Chinese territory. Under the kings of the Yarlung dynasty, a significant empire was created and Tibetan fighters enjoyed a fearsome reputation among their neighbours. During the early period of expansion, Songsten Gampo’s forces attacked and defeated several Chinese tribes and as a sign of his growing power, in 634 a mission was sent to the Chinese emperor Taizong requesting a marriage alliance. This is described in Tang dynasty chronicles as a tribute mission but the message it delivered was an ultimatum and not a gesture of subservience by a vassal. When the request was denied, Tibetan troops attacked and defeated the armies of tribes affiliated with the Tang in 637 and 638. In 638 an army camped on the border with China and again envoys were sent to the Chinese capital to request that the emperor give Songsten Gampo a princess of the royal family in marriage. The envoys were attacked by Chinese troops but because of the size of Songsten Gampo’s army, the emperor subsequently changed his mind and in 640 agreed that the princess Wencheng would
marry the Tibetan king. Chinese historians downplay the military angle: they portray the marriage as a calculated move by the emperor to bring the belligerent Tibetans within the Chinese political and cultural orbit and indicate that he was in no way pressured by Songsten Gampo; he freely gave the princess in marriage and this is presented as the beginning of a long process of sinification of Tibetan culture. The ability of Chinese culture to entice barbarians to adopt their ways is a core part of the mythology of the imperial period. The notion that Wencheng converted the Tibetans to Chinese culture has a very long pedigree in China. The earliest example is found in the Tang chronicles, which state that “since Princess Wencheng went and civilized this country, many of their customs have been changed.”

In contemporary Tibetan historical narratives, the role of China in the formation of Tibetan culture is minimized. Dawa Norbu cites unnamed Tibetan chronicles which assert that Songsten Gampo’s intention had nothing whatever to do with politics but was solely motivated by religion. According to Norbu, “That Tibet was greater military power in Central Asia from the seventh to the ninth centuries is an indisputable historical fact” (Norbu 1997: 52-53). He and other Tibetan writers also emphasized that Tibetans were strongly aware of their cultural and religious differences with the Chinese and never considered themselves to be part of China. In the study of the Tibetan accounts, Richardson concludes that she was “a dim figure who made no mark on either Tibetan or Chinese history in the remaining thirty years of her life (following Songsten Gampo’s death) and whose religious affiliation is uncertain” (Richardson 1998: 212).

2b.3.2 Trison Detsen and the Great Debate

While there is doubt regarding Songsten Gampo’s level of interest in Buddhism, it is clear that some of his successors became ardent Buddhists. In the eight century, King

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80 While Tibetan histories unanimously assert that the Tibetan army defeated the Chinese, the Tang annals contend that the Tibetans were defeated and that after a period of several years Tibet apologized and again begged the Tang emperor to consider a marriage alliance. See Bushell 1880: 444.
81 In Chinese imperial statecraft, giving royal princesses in marriage was the one means used to pacify the barbarian tribes. This was part of the heqin policy which worked to subvert the barbarians by giving them gifts from China’s superior civilization and flattering them with grandiose titles, see Rossabi 1975: 19.
82 See Bushell 1880: 457; Wang and Wenqing 1984: 19. These authors believe that Wencheng has become a culture hero for Tibetans, who celebrate her life and her importation of Chinese culture to Tibet.
Trisong Detsen (740-798) devoted considerable resources to the importation of Buddhist culture and the building of Buddhist monasteries and temples. Like Songsten Gampo, he is regarded by Tibetan tradition as an incarnate Buddha and is characterized as the second of Tibet’s religious kings (*chos rgyal*). In traditional histories, Trisong Detsen is said to have invited a number of Indian Buddhist teachers to Tibet, the most prominent being Santarakshita, the abbot of Vikamshila one of the great seats of Buddhist learning in India. Upon his advice, Trisong Detsen invited the tantric master Padmasambhava to Tibet because his magical powers could subdue the demonic opponents of the dharma. From that point on, Tibet began a wholesale importation of Buddhism, primarily from the great monastic universities of northern India and tantric lineages that mainly derived from Bihar and Bengal. According to Tibetan histories in 767, Trisong Detsen, Santararakshita and Padmasambhava officially consecrated the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet, which was called Samye and located in the Yarlung valley. In the following decades Buddhism began to attract increasingly large number of adherents. The government allocated significant funds for the import of Buddhist literature, teachers and artifacts and increasingly numbers of Buddhist missionaries traveled to Tibet to spread their version of the dharma. This led to a confusing situation in which competing messages were being propounded in various areas of the country and traditional histories report that Trisong Detsen decided to stage a debate between two of the main doctrinal rivals: proponents of Indian gradualist Buddhism and the Chan master Hashang Mahayana who advocated “sudden awakening.” Trisong Detsen declared the Indian side victorious and the doctrine preached by Hashang Mahayana heretical and therefore banned in Tibet. Because of the pervasiveness of Buddhist culture in Tibet another implication for Tibetans is that the debate created a rift between their country and China and that this continued to widen as Indian influence in Tibet grew. Shakabpa indicates that the debate led to “the defeat of the Chinese system of Buddhism,” following which it never again exerted any significant influence (Shakabpa 1984: 141, 147).

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83 According to Hashang Mahayana, buddhahood is a sudden flash of realization in which one awakens to one’s innate Buddha-nature. It results from meditative practices in which one halts the flow of thoughts and allows the Buddha-nature to manifest spontaneously. The opposition was headed by Kamasila who followed the traditional Indian Mahayana paradigm according to which sentient beings suffer because of the results of their previous actions which were motivated by ignorance, this ignorance is primordial and has been cultivated and reinforce during countless lifetimes and so it is impossible to eradicate it all at once. He likened the process of attaining buddhahood to climbing a mountain which must be done step by step.
Trisong Detsen’s successors continued to patronize Buddhism and imperial dedication to the dharma reached its apogee during the reign of King Ralpachen (815-836). He is regarded by Tibetan tradition as the third of the religious kings. Buddhism declined in influence with the ascendancy of Lang Darma who ascended the throne following the assassination of Ralpachen. A revival began in the eleventh century when the kings of western Tibet invited the Indian scholar-monk Atisa Dipamkara Srijnana (982-1054) to travel to Tibet in order to restore Buddhism and reform degenerate practices that had arisen there. Atisa was an adherent of both traditional Indian Mahayana gradualist Buddhism and of tantra and he taught his Tibetan disciples a path that combined the two. Together with his disciple Dromdon he founded the first Tibetan order, the Kadampa. This school was later absorbed into the Gelukpa which became the dominant tradition in Tibet.

2b.3.3 Tibet and the Mongols

Tibet’s state of political disunity persisted into the thirteenth century when the country was annexed by the Mongol empire. Beginning in 1207, Tibet began paying tribute to Genghis Kahn in exchange he did not invade Tibet nor interfere in its administration. This situation changed with the death of Genghis Khan in 1227 when Tibetans stopped paying the yearly tribute. This situation was not to last for long. Godan, the son of Genghis Khan’s successor Ogedai summoned a senior lama of the Sakya order named Sakya Pandita to his court in Liangzhou (modern day Gansu province) to formally submit the country to Mongol overlordship. Sakya Pandita had little choice and yielded to the demands of the Mongol ruler. Tibet became part of the Mongol empire and in return the khan had expressed an interest in converting to Buddhism. According to Tibetan accounts this was the beginning of an arrangement referred to as the “priest-patron” (mchod yon) relationship in which the Mongols agreed to leave Tibet fully under indigenous Tibetan control and the Sakya hierarchs became the religious preceptors of the khans and rulers of Tibet.

84 For more on the life and times of Atisa see Chattopadhyay 1994.
The Tibetan exile government’s official version of Tibetan-Mongol relations is outlined in a publication entitled “The Mongols and Tibet: A Historical Assessment of Relations between the Mongol Empire and Tibet,” which claims to be based on Chinese language sources although a number of its assertions are found only in Tibetan chronicles. According to its version of events, Godan does not appear to have been particularly concerned with military expansion; rather his primary interest was in religion. After encountering Tibetan Buddhism during his military excursions, he decided to seek a spiritual teacher to lead the Mongolians in a desirable moral direction… (Godan) was convinced that no power in the world exceeded the might of the Mongols. However he believed that religion was necessary in the interests of the next life. This he invited Sakya Pandita to Mongolia. Shakabpa and Norbu’s reading of this period involves a careful distinction between Mongols and Chinese in which the two are at odds. An example cited by Shakabpa is Sakya Pandita’s lobbying of Godan Khan to desist from throwing large numbers Chinese into a river. This was being done to reduce the Chinese population so as to negate the potential Chinese threat to Mongol power (Shakabpa 1984: 63).

Tibetan author’s belief in the equality of the two parties in the priest-patron relationship reflects their assumptions about the role of Buddhism in Tibet’s interactions with its neighbours. Because of the importance they ascribe to Buddhism and the profound effect it has had on their society, they tend to view the world through a lens colored by Buddhist perspectives. The Mongols benefited by receiving religious instruction from their court chaplains and the Sakya Lamas were able to gain influence in Tibet and Mongolia and to spread the dharma. “What Tibetans generally ignore is the fact that the arrangement may well have benefited the Sakyapas, but it left ultimate authority over Tibetan affairs in the hands of foreigners” (Powers 2004: 54). This pattern persisted during later centuries particularly during the period when Tibet was ruled by the Dalai Lama. Following the unification of Tibet under the authority of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Losang Gyatso (1617-1682) in 1642 every subsequent Tibetan ruler relied on foreign patronage and

military protection to support and maintain his power. The Fifth Dalai Lama was installed as sovereign of a unified Tibet by the Mongol ruler Gushri Khan who used his armies to defeat the Dalai Lama’s rivals. As Buddhist monks the Dalai Lama were generally reluctant to maintain powerful armies or personally order the use of force. Under their regime, Tibet became militarily weak and thus vulnerable to attack. From the time of the Sakya regency, no Tibetan ruler held power without at least the implicit military backing of a foreigner power. This created a murky situation in which indigenous Tibetan governments led by the Dalai Lamas or their regents were effectively rulers of their country but were unable to officially declare their independence from China and risk losing its military support. Tibetans commonly characterize the priest-patron arrangement as an agreement between equals but in fact it was a relationship of dependence and subordination. When in the twentieth century, Tibet was no longer able to find a military saviour to rescue it form military aggression by its former protector, it fell to the People’s Liberation Army.

2b.3.4 Relations with China during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

When Mongol power waned in the fourteenth century, the Sakyapa were unable to retain their position of authority and in 1358 were overthrown by Jangchup Gyeltsen (1302-1364) of the Phakmo Drupa branch of the Kagyu order who had been one of their governors. The Mongols were conquered by the Han Chinese who subsequently founded the Ming dynasty. In an attempt to assert an authority they were unable to exercise in fact, the Mongol court recognized Jangchup Gyelsten as their viceroy in 1351. During his reign, he attempted to reverse the dependence on foreign rulers that had characterized Sakya rule. He instituted a program of protonationalism that hearkened back to the traditions of the Yarlung dynasty’s religious kings. After the Ming dynasty was founded, he refused to acknowledge subordination to it, but the Ming rulers still claimed Tibet as part of their territory. As Goldstein notes, however, the Ming emperors “exerted no administrative authority over the area,” but still sought influence by giving presents and titles to prominent Buddhist teachers (Goldstein 1997: 4-5).
One way the Ming emperors attempted to influence Tibetan affairs was by encouraging powerful Buddhist leaders to participate in the Chinese tribute system.\textsuperscript{86} According to Chinese imperial mythology, everyone who was a tributary explicitly acknowledged subservience to the emperor and vassalage to China but in reality the system was a sophisticated bribe that was designed to purchase loyalty. Assuming that their superior civilization and technology were attractive to their barbarian neighbours, Chinese rulers invited them to come to the imperial court and acknowledge their inferiority and subservience; in exchange they received gifts and grandiose titles. In this process the barbarians would come and be transformed that is they would naturally be drawn to Chinese culture and manners and be impressed by the Chinese’s leaders. Through such contact they would become more and more sinicized and eventually come to view themselves as Chinese. In traditional Chinese views, the main difference between Chinese and barbarians was not race but culture. As June Dreyer notes, “From their ethnocentric view…the Han do not believe that the culture and territorial claims of minority groups are equal to that of the superior Han civilization” (1976: 17).\textsuperscript{87}

In Tibet’s dealings with its powerful neighbours, the priest-patron relationship became the model for its foreign affairs policy. The Tibetans assumed that the gifts and military aid they received were acts of devotion by their religious clients that did not imply that the recipients were in an inferior position. However, Chinese imperial imagery conceives of China as the cultural and military center of the world. “These self-images not only constitute a self-contained sense of identity, they serve also as a transethnic cultural consciousness that considers all groups who lie outside the cultural ‘center’ to be, according to such logic, culturally inferior. Because Chinese central power and culture have continued for two thousand years, traditional ethnocentric notions dominate the patterns of behaviour toward non-Han people and the expectations of how they should behave toward the central power. Imperial China understood itself as the cultural center

\textsuperscript{86} The common understanding of the tribute payments is that the vassals pay a regular indemnity in exchange for protection or to avoid being invaded by a superior military power. But the Chinese system was not this sort of medieval protection racket unlike the Mongols, it involved complex economic exchanges that were connected to imperial myths about China’s place in the world (Powers 2004: 57).

\textsuperscript{87} The discourse of transformation was often appropriated by some groups that were conquered by the Han in order to establish themselves as having an equal standing.
of the world and its culture as the culture of humanity. Accordingly, in traditional perceptions it was acknowledged that numerous other people had well-defined areas but only one people were entrusted with the mandate of ruling humanity. This people inhabited the earth’s epicenter, the Middle Kingdom” (Dodin and Rather 2001: 113).

2b.3.5 Rise of the Gelugpa sect (1640-1950)

The Gelugpa history is in several aspects a continuation of the post-Sakya period characterized by political instability and consequent power struggles. As Dawa Norbu notes a significant difference: “a polarization of conflicting forces into a direct confrontation between Gelugpa and Kargyupa forces by the 1530s. In the regions there was a serives of conflicts between U (where Gelugpa influence predominated) and Tsang (where Kargupa influence predominated). This Gelug-Kargyu struggle for power and sectarian hegemony continued for over 100 years (1537-1642)”.

The Gelugpa-Mongol relations began in the 1570s when Altan Khan of the Tumat Mongols invited the III Dalai Lama, Sonam Gyatso received numerous presents with the title, “Dalai Lama,” which ever since have been used by the highest religio-political hierarch of the Gelugpa sect. “Dalai” is Mongolian for “ocean” and metaphorically connotes the depth and width of the Lama’s knowledge and wisdom. Sonam Gyatso was given a seal with the inscription “Dorje Chang” (Vajradhara). The Dalai Lama in return gave the Khan the title of “Dharma king”.

The beginning of Chinese imperial interest in the Gelugpa sect may be traced to the lifetime of its founder, Tsongkhapa when the latter received invitations on two occasions from the Ming Emperor Yung Lo in 1408 and 1414. The V Dalai Lama’s Beijing visit of 1653 signified the Qing China’s recognition of the Gelugpa regime in Lhasa. Such occasions were characterized by complex layers of what today we call protocols that signified the hierarchy of authority relations and the relative distribution of power among the Chinese, the Tibetan and the Mongols. To the Tibetan lama, as to the Qing emperor and his Manchu officials, the relations were first and foremost of a religious nature and

88 For more on the rise of Gelugpa sect see Shakabpa 1984: 103.
secondarily of a politico-military nature, What the Dalai Lama was looking for was Qing patronage of his sect and protection of his non-coercive regime as it was with the Mongols. Chinese involvement with Tibetan affairs grew in the years 1690-96 when the Qing waged a campaign against Dgalden, a Tibetanized Qosor Mongol living near Amdo who was a Gelugpa convert and closely allied with the then Tibetan ruling class. In 1696 China annexed Ta-chien-lu to the Manchu empire. This was the beginning of a gradual Chinese nibbling of Eastern Tibet territory (Amdo and Kham) which culminated with the Communist incorporation of Amdo and large parts of Kham into the neighbouring Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan and Sichuan (Norbu 2001: 76).

During the greater part of the seventeenth century, the Dalai Lamas had a closer relationship with the Mongol Khans (over whom the Lamas enjoyed spiritual sovereignty than with the Chinese emperors. Moreover this was the period of the Great V Dalai Lama who according to most accounts enjoyed a high degree of independence. The type of lamaist polity, first created by the V Dalai Lama with Gushri Khan’s armed help remained an ideal Gelugpa model of government, even though its actual operation was by no means constant throughout the 300 years. It was characterized by a high degree of decentralization and even of distancing the autonomous units that supposedly composed the government. In Gelugpa political theory, the Dalai Lama occupies a supreme spiritual and political place in their political system. His function is essentially to legitimate and morally support the government he presides over. But since his spiritual influence is not confined to Tibet, his powerful reign extends beyond Tibetan borders to the Mongol and Manchu world. This factor even if it is not a religious reason has traditionally compelled the Chinese emperors to respect the person and institution of the Dalai Lama (Norbu 2001: 80). These powerful factors sustained the Dalai Lama as a fairly permanent institution in the Gelugpa political system.

Next in the hierarchy of the Gelugpa political system as it operated during the V Dalai Lama’s rule was the Mongol warrior whom the Lama called Bstan-zin chos-rgyal – defender of the faith and Dharmaraja. The role of the Mongol Khans was particularly crucial and visible during the early formative stages of the lamaist regime which was to
defend the faith and ensure the security of the country. However, military dependence on an external power constitutes a fundamental and inherent weakness of the lamaist regime, particularly as it is a dependence without which the non-coercive lamaist regime could not survive. This weakness became more serious with the decrease in the power of the traditional lamaist protector, the Mongols and the penetration of Asian countries by Western imperial powers. The role of the Desid had been a much more pervasive and somewhat permanent institution in the history of lamaist regimes. This title means “Chief Minister,” and the office holder could exercise as a matter of routine, considerable executive power. This was particularly true during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

What has remained a fairly constant factor in the long period of Gelugpa history is the institution of the Dalai Lama, sometimes as a real power but always as a moral and legitimate authority. What did change over time and especially in modern times was the non-Tibetan component of the system, namely the protector, who historically has been an external power – Mongol, Manchu, Chinese, Russian, British, Indian and the United States.  

2b.3.6 The Rise of the Han nation and Tibet

Confucian China did not appear to be either expansionist or imperialist. However there is a deeply internalized sense of territoriality that necessitates boundary-building and boundary-maintenance of what was initially ancestor-worship sanctified territory (Norbu 1992: 149-50). One of the central principles and policies by which Imperial China managed to maintain her influence and power within her trans-border cultural ideocracy and in her multinational empire was the typical Chinese institution of indirect rule.

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89 The XIII Dalai Lama toyed with the idea of Russian protection from the 1890s until 1907, using Dorjiev as a go-between. From 1912 to 1947, British India informally acted as the “protector” of the lamaist regime. Finally, in 1950-51 and again in 1958-59, the Tibetan political elite sought clandestine “protection”. If the present Dalai Lama frequently runs to the American president which attracts so much global media attention and which outrages Communist authorities in Beijing, it is because of the Lama’s instinctive need, which has been internalized for centuries to search for a “protector” the twentieth century equivalent of the all powerful Mongol Khan in the context of Communist occupation of Tibet.
variously translated in the past as either “suzerainty” or “protectorate”. During pre-modern periods, Imperial China had rarely sent any uninvited armed expedition into Tibet and only then upon the request of the ruling Lama to protect his non-coercive regime in extreme cases of internal rebellion or external invasion. Tibet in the traditional Chinese mind was always a separate country, foreign yet intimate territory. The subject matter of interstate relations discourse underwent a change. It was no longer dominated by traditional subject matters like tribute exchanges, announcement and acclamation of lamas and princes. By the middle of the twentieth century there emerged in the Lifangyuan (Chinese foreign office) a new breed of scholar-officials who began to talk in a new language. Their new discourse made tribute relations and patron-priest relations irrelevant and obsolete. They began to press for Chinese sovereignty over Tibet as signified by the 1905 Anglo-Chinese talks in Calcutta, the Shimla Convention of 1913-14 and General Huang Musong’s Lhasa negotiations of 1934 and finally be the communists in the 1951 Sino-Tibetan agreement. Medieval Tibet was totally unprepared for the “modern” change in Tibet’s status that was demanded by the “newly” educated Chinese.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the orderly and symbolic tribute relations were transformed into power politics especially in relation to Tibet. China’s encounter with Western powers from 1895 to 1939 proved beyond doubt the Western supremacy over the previously assumed Confucian superiority. This created among the Confucian literate a complex politico-cultural crisis, shaking the foundations of their Chinese self-image and concept of Confucian world order. The Chinese elite came to the stark realization that it was not virtuous behaviour as ancient sages advised but power that made the critical difference in the nation’s survival and world politics. Chairman Mao could formulate how that power was to be achieved; “Political power grows out of the barrel of the gun” (Schram 1969: 290). The most striking about the change in Sino-Tibetan

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90 Dawa Norbu (2001: 88) prefers to use the term “indirect rule” because it is devoid of Eurocentric connotations and associations. Indirect rule refers to a rule that is not based on direct political action by a reigning external power but on behind-the-scenes influence, subtly but effectively exerted through the medium of local elites so that foreign domination appears to be native rule in the eyes of the native population. This was characteristically been the mandarin manner by which Imperial China exercised indirect rule over neighbouring or relatively distant countries outside China itself where direct domination was unacceptable or illegitimate from the mandarin point of view.

91 The British advocates of this line of legal thinking include most of the British colonial officials dealing with Tibet.
relations is the increasing use of force to fit Tibet into the Han scheme of nation-state,\textsuperscript{92} such as signified by Chao Erh-feng’s 1904-11 military campaigns in Eastern Tibet and above all the Communist’s armed “liberation” of Tibet in 1950. Strictly speaking, Tibetan territory did not constitute a part of the ancestor-worship sanctified territory of Confucian China. However because the late Qing officials and early Han nationalists claimed Tibet to be a part of the five-race\textsuperscript{93} based nation-state or republic, both Koumintang and Chinese Communist Party officials declared and demanded Tibet to be “an integral part of Chinese territory.”

2b.3.7 The Genesis of Tibetan Autonomy

The entry of Western colonial powers on the Asian political scene altered the traditional balance of power centered on Buddhist Tibet and its military dependence on successive non-Tibetan regimes across the ages. British policy toward Tibet was characterized by two conflicting imperatives, which throughout their rule in India, they sought to reconcile. From early on the British rulers realized their importance of Tibet as a buffer between India and any external power on the north, be it France, Russia or China. But to support or even encourage a completely independent Tibet was to damage a much larger commercial interest in China. Therefore, the British government recognized what they called Chinese “suzerainty” but not sovereignty in Lhasa. As early as 1775, the British rulers tried to establish contact with Lhasa, but the latter studiously adopted a closed-door policy right up to 1904.

The images of Lhasa as the “Forbidden City” and Tibet as the “Hermit Kingdom” are of recent origin – probably dating from the nineteenth century. Prior to that, Lhasa was, by traditional standards, a fairly cosmopolitan city where Mongols, Nepalese, Butanese, Sikkimese, Ladhaki pilgrims and scholars, Kashmiri Muslim traders and Christian missionaries from Europe came together and mingled. Various types of influence, Indian,

\textsuperscript{92} The sense of territoriality was inherent in Confucian cultural practice but only at the level of family and clan. What transformed this clannish territoriality into a nation-wide consciousness about Chinese territory was the Maoists’ mobilization of Chinese peasants for the anti-Japanese war (1934-45) in China.

\textsuperscript{93} This includes Han, Mongols, Manchus, Tibetans and Turks (Hui). This was Sun Yatsen’s conception of the “five race republic”.

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Chinese and Middle Eastern had gone into the making of Tibetan civilization (Snellgrove and Richardson 1968; Stein 1972). What caused Lhasa to tighten its door to Westerners was the rise of imperialism in South Asia which since the 1840s had expanded into the Himalayan region, traditionally the Tibetan sphere of influence. The Tibetan speaking peoples inhabiting the Himalayan region saw Lhasa as the centre of their faith and in terms of the trans-Himalayan religio-political relations, Lhasa wielded considerable influence over the lamaist culture areas in the Himalayan region. In fact Ladakh, Sikkim and Bhutan used to pay tri-annual tributes to the Dalai Lama until the Communist takeover of Tibet in 1950.\(^94\) Dawa Norbu recognized the tragic irony in Tibet’s decision to remain isolated. It did so because of its incurable fear of colonization of the country by the British. The British after preliminary exploration found out that it was not worth colonization.\(^95\) Under the circumstances, the only viable option for the British was that China had suzerainty over Tibet but on the understanding that Tibet was autonomous. The Simla Convention of 1914 gave the fullest expression to British strategic designs and Tibet’s place in them. The British were interested in a relatively stable government because the theory of the buffer state has never worked properly except where the buffer state was strong enough to keep up an efficient Government and administration and to make encroachment by either neighbour a risk. While the British insisted that China’s historical status in Tibet was suzerain, the Chinese learnt to speak in the same political language but, of course, did not agree with the British proposition; they claimed their status was sovereign in Tibet. British officials contributed towards, the Chinese redefinition of China’s historical status in Tibet in two ways. Anglo-Chinese negotiations regarding Tibet, which dictated that the Chinese representatives express themselves in modern terms of nationalism, even though there was no appropriate English equivalent for patron-priest relationship in Tibetan. Tibet remained purely pre-modern in its outlook until 1950. The Europeanization of Sino-Tibetan relations between 1905-13 mark a major discontinuity in the history of Sino-Tibetan relations: “the terms of reference had changed

\(^94\) These tributes were called lo-phyag (annual submission). Bhutan used to pay annual tributes but Ladakh being far away used to pay every second year. Usually tributes consisted of local products of the countries concerned. For example, Ladakh used to offer apricots and Bhutan various types of Bhutanese cloth. It appears Sikkim stopped tributes when it became a British protectorate in 1890.

\(^95\) Despite the ban on the entry of Europeans into Lhasa, the British did send spies to explore Tibet, for example, Mann Singh and Mani Singh in 1865 were to conduct a route survey work up to Lhasa and Sarat Chandra Das disguised as a Sikkimese lama was sent to observe the political conditions of Lhasa and Shigatse in 1879.
by which issues are defined, relationships maintained or contentions resolved” (Ghosh 1977: 44). The terms of reference are no longer the Qing emperor and the Dalai Lama nor relations between two distinct though hierarchical civilizational realms. They are now the territorializing and nationalizing Chinese nation-state. From a comparative perspective, feudal inter-state relations in both theory and practice, were much more tolerant and subtle than the modern political and legal doctrine of state-centric sovereignty, as far as small states are concerned. There is no middle ground arrangement such as the one that fitted pre-1912 Tibet (Norbu 2001).

As far as the British were concerned, the term “autonomy or autonomy of Tibet” implied the following conditions: (a) the absence of Chinese troops other than the specified suitable escort to the Amban; (b) no interference in the Tibetan administration which meant the absence of Chinese officials in the said administration; (c) no transfer of Chinese colonists into Tibet; (d) that neither China nor Tibet was allowed to permit any foreign power into Tibet (Norbu 2001: 167). Neither Chinese “suzerainty” nor Tibet’s “autonomy” were acceptable to Lhasa. The Simla Convention was a logical culmination of an attempt to discuss Tibet’s status among all the actors involved – India, China and Tibet.96 With the decline of Chinese power in Tibet, British India tended to progressively relax its constraint on Lhasa from 1912 onwards, even encouraging Tibetan operational independence. On the whole, Britain appeared to be cautious even during this period about recognizing Tibet’s de facto independence (1912-1950). On the whole, British diplomatic pressure and the occasional threat to use force sufficed to protect the fragile Tibetan autonomy from Chinese intervention for nearly 35 years.

2b.3.8 The 1959 Revolt

When the Chinese communists passed through Eastern Tibet during the Long March in 1935, they at once established a “people’s government” there; they even managed to recruit two or three young Tibetans into the Red Army who later became high-ranking

96 For an examination of the international treaties signed on or by Tibet see Van Walt Van Praag, 1987: 70-3.
However in Edgar Snow’s words, “the Reds for the first time faced a populace united in its hostility to them” (Wilson 1971: 220). The absence of a peasant rebellion in Tibetan history is in stark contrast with China’s turbulent history, especially since the nineteenth century. Mao summed up the situation in Tibet when he said, “We have no material base in Tibet. In terms of social power they are stronger than us, which for the moment will not change.”

The 1959 revolt was only the culmination of a revolt that started in Eastern Tibet in 1952-53, when widespread fighting broke out in Kham and Amdo. Tibetans living in Kham which was considered de jure Chinese territory, enjoyed an incredible degree of independence both from Beijing and from Lhasa. While these Khampas were hostile to the Tibetan government and in particular to the lay aristocratic ruling class, their loyalty to the Dalai Lama as an incarnation of the Buddha of Compassion was unquestionable. According to George Patterson, over 80,000 rebels were involved in the initial rebellion, out of which some 12000 were deserters from the Kuomintang. The revolt however died down with “no immediate help forthcoming from either India or America and because the Chinese at the persuasion of East Tibetan leaders relaxed their policy of immediate land reforms” (Norbu 1995: 297-310). The strong military action in eastern Tibet was necessitated by China’s high political stakes in Central Asia (Norbu 2001: 220). As the PLA carried on is extensive suppression campaigns all over Eastern Tibet, the majority of the Khampa rebels who survived began to march slowly towards Central Tibet. The Tibetan government, as a rule, completely dissociated itself from the rebellion. Meanwhile, the simmering discontent of the local people in Central Tibet grew into open resentment and hostility against the Chinese, particularly in Lhasa. From all contemporary accounts it would appear that the whole atmosphere in Lhasa and Central Tibet was charged with anger, fear and suspicion. There was a Chinese invitation to the Dalai Lama to attend a theatrical show at the PLA headquarters on 10th March 1959. Tibetan suspicions were supposedly aroused by the timing of the invitation which coincided with the Great Prayer Festival in Lhasa and by the Chinese insistence that the

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98 See Mao Tse-Tung 1977: 64.
Dalai Lama and his entourage come unescorted by Tibetan troops to the PLA headquarters.\footnote{For a detailed account of the events surrounding the 1959 revolt see Barber 1969.} Thousands of Tibetans from all walks of life had gathered what they regarded as the symbol and essence of Tibetan civilization and Tibet, the Dalai Lama, to protect and defend and fight for all that he symbolized to the Tibetans. Norbu writes, “What was so striking beneath this strange medieval, religious and folkish behaviour was a resolute sense of anti-Chinese and anti-Communist feelings” (2001: 224). On 31\textsuperscript{st} March 1959 the Dalai Lama arrived at Chuthangmo, an Indian checkpost on the eastern border of India and from there he reached Tezpur in the North-eastern state of Assam.

The scope of the revolt, however, was limited by the lack of modern organization and communications in a vast and mountainous Tibet whose scanty population is scattered. The rebellion was initiated and led by the Khampas, Tibet’s warrior class but had other participants too including most of the Tibetan army on only a little more than 3000 men, most of Lhasa’s 20,000 monks, a great number of the 30,000 public that surrounded the Dalai Lama’s palace. In course of the suppression of the revolt, the Chinese had killed over 87,000 Tibetans. For Tibetan exiles today, the March 10, 1959 uprising has come to function as a potent symbol of the dawning of a national consciousness and it is commonly presented as the spark that ignited a nascent awareness of Tibetanness among their people. It is commemorated by Tibetan exiles all over the world every year. In Tibetan exile communities, most of the population gathers and recounts the events of March 10 and their aftermath. The Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders make speeches, which are disseminated on the Internet.

2b.4 Exilic Metaphors: Rangzen and Tibetan National Uprising Day (March 10)

Understanding the concept of rangzen – self-determination, independence or freedom is essential to understanding the framework of young Tibetan refugees’ lives and the choices they make in the process of the creating a distinct Tibetan identity. In her doctoral study of Tibetan refugee youth, Nowak explores rangzen as the “root metaphor”
for Tibetan refugees. Nowak maintains, the concept of rangzen fits well with and even enriches certain traditional Tibetan feelings and ideas nurtured in school: compassion (snying rje), respectful behaviour (ya rab cho zang), patriotism (gyal zhen) and avoiding shame (ngo tsa) (1984: 137-38). Striving to uphold all of them has led to a certain amount of frustration and “psychological anguish” for many young Tibetans trying to integrate old traditions and ideology with new ways of thought derived from their own lived experiences. The Strasbourg proposal brought home the fact that there exists a lack of unity amongst Tibetans, which does not augur well for the Tibetan independence movement (Ardley 2002: 170). The predominance of the Shangri La perspective has meant that all Tibetans agree with the Dalai Lama and believe that he acts in their best interests. Therefore it is presumed that when the Dalai Lama took the decision at Strasbourg to aim for autonomy this was the general wish of the Tibetan people. Jane Ardley in her work pointed to several problems with this proposition. First, there are no indications from inside Tibet itself that the people who continually protest against Chinese rule are fighting for anything less than independence. Second it is not uncommon for Tibetan people to state that while they support the Middle Way position of the Dalai Lama, they also wish for an independent Tibet. In the Tibetan exile community no such formal channels exist for aspirations to be formulated into policy. While unity exists in theory, it is clear that while the Dalai Lama officially champions autonomy, many Tibetans such as those belonging to the Tibetan Youth Congress or the newly formed Rangzen alliance disagree and still wish to fight for independence. This issue of Dalai Lama’s dual religious and political role is central to the Tibetan independence movement and according to Jane Ardley constitutes one of the most profound obstacles to its progress (Ardley 2002: 170).

The Tibetan term for independence, rangzen has only recently been introduced into the Tibetan lexicon. When the Chinese first began their attempts at indoctrinating the Tibetan population after 1949, Tibetan vocabulary at the time was replete with hundreds of terms relevant to topics of metaphysics, philosophy, religion and depth psychology. There were

100 Most of the protest inside Tibet against Chinese rule has been spearheaded by monks and nuns who in large numbers have taken to the streets of Lhasa several times in the past few decades. For an illustration of this see Barnett 1994.
however no standard Tibetan words for such modern concepts as “independence,” “exploitation,” “socialism,” and “capitalism,” and so on. According to Nowak, “The neologism rangzen, for example was coined by compounding already existing Tibetan morphemes: rang meaning ‘self’ and btsan meaning ‘power’” (Nowak 1984: 32). In this connection, the annual commemoration of the Lhasa uprising in March 1959 has become for refugees the archetype that sustains a recurrent but deeply meaningful new secular ritual. Many of the activities repeated annually by Tibetans on March 10 can be seen as a reenactment or reaffirmation of key elements of the original drama that took place in Lhasa in March 1959. Present day March 10 commemorations, which are held all over the world wherever there is a sufficiently large Tibetan population. A crowd gathers in a central, public location; speeches are made and a vociferous demonstration takes place marked by conspicuous wearing of national dress, singing of the national anthem, ubiquitous display of the Tibetan flag, pictures of the Dalai Lama as well as slogans, banners and placards proclaiming the Tibetan case against the Chinese. The Dalai Lama delivers an annual March 10 address in places other than Dharamsala, his prewritten speech is read out by a local Tibetan official and the theme of India, the host country, is played up by frequent mention of the long centuries of Indo-Tibetan historical ties and friendly relations. According to Nowak, “With such a repertoire of symbolic elements, the March 10 commemoration can indeed be seen as a key scenario, that is, as a ritual that publicly dramatizes both an ideal goal (proudly affirmed national identity) and the strategy for achieving it (self-conscious proclamation of ‘Tibetanness’ to and in the midst of others who are not Tibetan)” (1984: 35).

A further dimension to the Tibetan independence movement that was emphasized by the Strasbourg proposal is the lack of unity amongst Tibetans. In theory and from the Shangri-laist perspective, all Tibetans agree with the Dalai Lama and believe that he acts in their best interests. Therefore it is presumed that when the Dalai Lama took the decision at Strasbourg to aim for autonomy, this was the general wish of the Tibetan people. Ardley points to several problems with this idea. “First, there are no indications

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101 For more on this see the three part article by Tsering Topgyal in March, April and May 2003 issues of the Tibetan Review which offers an analytical insight on the circumstance leading to the culmination of the March 10, 1959 Tibetan National Uprising against the Chinese takeover of their country.
from inside Tibet itself that the people who continually protest against Chinese rule are fighting for anything less than independence. Second, it is not uncommon for Tibetan people to state that while they support the Middle Way position of the Dalai Lama, which essentially calls for compromise, they also wish for an independent Tibet. This problem could be linked to the lack of democracy in the Tibetan exile polity; if a truly representative government in exile existed then such confusion may not arise. In the Tibetan exile community no such formal channels exist for aspirations to be formulated into policy. While unity exists in theory, it is clear that while the Dalai Lama officially champions autonomy many Tibetans, such as the Tibetan Youth Congress or the newly formed Rangzen Alliance, disagree and still wish to fight for independence” (Ardley 2002: 170). It is evident that respect for the Dalai Lama’s religious position prevents a large-scale opposition organization from being formed that could continue to insist upon independence. At issue here is the Dalai Lama’s dual religious and political role, which according to Ardley (2002) constitutes one of the most profound obstacles to the Tibetan independence movement. While religion does not have the potential to be as divisive in the Tibetan community given there is only one major religion, the placing of political events in religious contexts is a hindrance for the Tibetans. The crucial question that Ardley raises is how far Tibetan Buddhism is appropriate for a modern independence movement and whether in fact it may be an encumbrance to the progress of that movement.

2b.4.1 Articulating Tibetan Nationalism-in-exile

Dibyesh Anand in his article “(Re)imagining nationalism: identity and representation in the Tibetan diaspora of South Asia,” writes “The story of the creation of the Tibetan community-in-exile illustrates the successful strategies of the Dalai Lama led government to foster and maintain a distinctive national identity among disparate groups of people from various parts of greater Tibet with mix of religious, cultural and political elements. This success has not been an unmixed blessing, for the contributory factors behind it also limit the vocabularies available for expressing Tibetan political identity” (Anand 2000: 271). He further states that the spatial distribution, economic differentiation, regional and
sectarian backgrounds, generational gaps compound the category of diasporic Tibetan. Thus a unified, homogeneous Tibetan-in-exile identity is more of a rhetorical device and imaginary construct than some verifiable reality. At the same time, it is naïve to dismiss any consideration of the identity question on this ground only, for all identities are in the last instance, products of the imagination.\textsuperscript{102} Though Tibetanness is an imagined and contested construct, it has its own effect on those who consider themselves Tibetans (Anand 2000: 272).

Since nationalism itself is a particularized discourse of collective identity, a discursive approach may be extended to a discussion of Tibet as a nation and Tibetanness as a narrative of national identity. A unified Tibetan nation currently exists only through the anticipated (re)construction of its parts: occupied country, dispersed communities and globally networked politico-cultural support system (Tibetan support groups) (Venturino 1997: 103). Prior to linking identity to refugee camps or to places Tibetan refugees dwell (which would be discussed in the forthcoming chapter on ethnography of displacement), it would be necessary to make explicit notions of belonging and power that underpin the theory of how nationalism is created. Placing the study of Tibetan national identity within wider theoretical debates over nationalism is deemed critical, as this can influence the interpretation of evidence from the site of field research. Nationalism is seen as a theory of legitimacy, “a political principle that holds that the political and national unit could be congruent” (Gellner 1983: 1). The most common dialectic for categorizing the theories of nationalism is to divide them into “primordialist” and “instrumentalist” camps where the former believe that nations are extensions of previously human communities and the latter believe nations are creations of modern conditions and elites.\textsuperscript{103} The instrumentalist scholars of nationalism are often accused of over-emphasizing the capacity of nationalism as an ideology to engender nations. Dibyesh Anand (2000: 274) suggests that a “better approach would be to retain skepticism about the primordiality of the past and

\textsuperscript{102} In this sense, Tibet according to Dibyesh Anand, is an “imagining community”. According to Anand, the term “imagined community” used by Benedict Anderson (1983) does not fully convey the sense of continuous imagination that goes into the making and existence of a nation.

\textsuperscript{103} In the rhetoric of nationalism, what is ignored is that the need to present one’s own community as a nation is a modern day phenomenon. More often than not, the proponents of nationalism take a primordialist view of nationalism. Nationalist movements in most places trace their genealogy to antiquity.
situate oneself somewhere in-between the instrumentalist-primordialist debate, adopting a more diversified and inclusive understanding of nationalism which highlights rather than obscures its cross-cultural variants.”

At this stage, it would be prudent to consider the ethnic theory of nation, the one that has an illustrious history\textsuperscript{104} and one which would aid in understanding Tibetan nationalism-in-exile. The genesis of a nation is rooted in its “heroic past, great men, glory that provides ‘the social capital’ upon which one bases a nation” (Bhabha 1990: 19). This “social capital” then supplies nationals with “the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage one has received in an undivided form” (Bhabha 1990: 19). Ethnic nationalism, according to Dawa Norbu is “that politicized social consciousness centred upon an ethnic identity born out of shared commonalities, seeking to achieve unity, autonomy and group interest by mobilizing ethnic based constituencies” (Norbu 1992: 181). Central to this definition is the notion of ethnic identity which may be defined as an aggregation of ethnic variables such as race, culture, language, society and so on by which the ethnic group differentiates itself from generalized others. Since the primary function of ethnic identity is differentiation vis-à-vis others who do not share that identity, the required differentiation may be achieved by emphasizing that ethnic variable which uniquely distinguishes a particular ethnic group from others around it (Norbu 1992: 181). Historically, the political control of the Dalai Lama did not exceed beyond U-Tsang (Now the Tibetan Autonomous Region), while Kham and Amdo (now part of Chinese provinces of (Qinghai, Sichuan, Gangsu and Yunan) were ruled by various small principalities with often overlapping influence. What bound the people in the regions was not an allegiance to one temporal authority but certain commonalities of culture and religion. These elements may be seen as forming the basis of Tibetan “ethnie”, the features which he includes in this are a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, a shared memory of rich ethnohistory, differentiating elements of a common culture, an association with specific homeland and lastly, a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of population (Smith 1986: 21). The failure of Tibetans to develop nationalism prior to 1950, which has been noted by Goldstein (1989), does not mean that

\textsuperscript{104} Renan delivered a lecture at the Sorbonne in 1882 that contained many elements of later theories.
pre-exile Tibetans did not have any sense of themselves as belonging to a distinct country. As Dreyfus (1994) argues, “at least in Central Tibet since the thirteenth or fourteenth century Tibetans understood themselves as belonging to a country defined in terms of the shared memories articulated by some of the more hidden treasures (gter ma) such as the ‘mani bka’ ... These narratives identify Tibet as an originally barbarous country civilized by Buddhism and transformed into the pure land surrounded by snow mountains” (gang ris bskor ba’I zhing khams) often referred to in Tibetan prayers.

The beginnings of a cultural movement such as nationalism are not easy to trace. In Tibet, perhaps the first relevant document is the Thirteenth Dalai Lama’s proclamation upon his return from exile in 1913. In this proclamation, one can see an awareness of Tibet as a distinct country, defined by its culture and history. The Dalai Lama starts his proclamation by explaining his claim to sovereignty on the basis of a connection with Avalokiteshvara, which goes back to the time of the religious kings (chos rgyal). He also traces the history of the relations between China and Tibet from the Yuan dynasty to the present, concluding that Tibet is a separate country. He then moves to issue five prescriptions, several of them bearing little direct connection with nationalism: Buddhism should be preserved, its schools should live in good harmony and officials should be honest. The Dalai Lama also makes two points that are more directly related to nationalism: Tibet should strengthen its defence and expand its economical basis by allowing people to cultivate vacant land (Goldstein 1989: 60). The 1913 proclamation is significant for it indicates the recognition of Tibet as a distinct country that is to be defended and developed. Another significant step was the formation in 1954 of People’s Committees (mi dmang tshogs ‘du) among low ranking officials and traders. This movement of protest against the Chinese occupation was in part motivated by the realization that the ruling elites had failed to confront the Chinese and by the desire to oppose directly Chinese occupation (Shakya 1999: 144-7). A second more significant step in the formation of Tibetan nationalism was the creation of the “Four Rivers, Six Ranges” (chubzhi gang drug) movement against the Chinese occupation organized by some of the rebel leaders from Khams. Shaken by events taking place in Khams and the bad omen reported throughout Tibet, a group of traders from Khams living in Lhasa
decided to collect funds from all over Tibet to offer a golden throne to the Dalai Lama. On the 4th of July 1957 the ceremony took place in the Norbulingka in Lhasa where a large number of people came together to express their allegiance to their leader and their defence of the Chinese (Shakya 1999: 165-70). Offering a golden throne to the Dalai Lama was seen as a way to express and strengthen the bond between the Tibetans and their leader. It was an attempt to reaffirm the power of the Dalai Lama over the land of Tibet. This date 4th July 1957 can be seen as retrospectively as marking the birth of Tibetan nationalism, the awareness that Tibetans have of belonging to a single country.

The particularity of the nationalism that emerged in Tibet in the 1950s is that it deploys traditional religious themes to define the nation. Instead of adopting the secular lingua usually associated with modern nationalism, this nationalism defines the Tibetan nation using traditional Buddhist values such as compassion, karma and the bond between Tibetans and Avalokiteshvara. The nation thus defined is not, however, traditional Tibet with its diversity of local cultural, social and political communities but a modern country united by its opposition to Chinese oppression. The religious nature of this nationalism is well captured by the anthems sung by Tibetans in exile to express their national aspirations such as the “Prayer of Truthful Words” (bden tshig smon lam) and the National Anthem (Klieger 1992: 61). The particularity of both these songs, which are still used nowadays by Tibetans in exile for celebrations such as March 10th, is that that they are modeled after traditional religious prayers. They contain traditional Buddhist motives such as the prayer for the continuation of the Buddhist teaching and the request to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas to help beings who are tormented by the unbearable suffering of karma (Michael 1982).

One way to understand Tibetan religious nationalism is to relate it to the ideological and practical organization of Tibetan political life. The religious themes contained in the “prayer of Truthful Words” reflect the arrangements of Tibetan political life over several centuries. During this time, one of the dominant features of Tibetan politics has been the political role of Buddhism and the monastic order. Such arrangements have been solidified in the ideology described as “the union of the religious and the political” (chos
Historically, this ideology is the result of a complex situation created by the fall of the empire, the inability of non-monastic groups to establish lasting kingdoms and the increasing political role of monastic groups. The nature of nationalism was further inflected by the experiences undergone by the Tibetan people both inside and outside Tibet after 1959. In particular, the experience of the exile and the encounter with Indian democracy were important in developing the commitment to human rights and democratic values expressed in the constitution promulgated by the Dalai Lama in 1963. This constitution in turn inspired activists within Tibet, particularly the young monks and nuns who demonstrated against the Chinese rule in 1987-88. As Ronald Schwartz (1994) has shown, these young people saw the Dalai Lama’s stance as reflecting a progressive political position through his articulation of key Buddhist concepts such as compassion, the prohibition of killing. These young activists based their democratic principles on Buddhism, which is depicted as a set of undogmatic religious and moral principles compatible with human rights and democracy. “Within the Tibetan exile community, Tibetans contest the notion of Tibetanness in various ways. Religion comprise the main idiom of Tibetan identity; the source of unity between all Tibetans. Religion as source of identity seems to be especially important to the uneducated, the elderly and the recent arrivals from Tibet. On the other hand, the secular concept of Tibet is now being established as a primary idiom of identity, as an elite project” (Kolas 1996: 64).

As Melvyn Goldstein puts it, “As a classic nationalistic dispute, the Tibet question pits the right of a people, Tibetans, to self-determination and independence against the right of a multiethnic state, the People’s Republic of China, to maintain what it sees as its historical territorial integrity. Such disputes are difficult to resolve because there is no clear international consensus about the respective rights of nationalities and states… In the case of Tibet, both sides have selectively patched bits and pieces of the historical record together to support their viewpoints, the ensuing avalanche of charges and counter-charges is difficult to assess, even for specialists” (1998: 83). The key to resolving the dispute is crafting a compromise that will ensure the preservation of a Tibetan homeland where ethnic Tibetans predominate and Tibetan language, culture and religion flourish. Goldstein notes, “To win the above concessions from China, the Dalai
Lama would have to return to China and Tibet, publicly accept Chinese sovereignty over Tibet... There is no consensus in the exile community about the advantages of such a political compromise, let alone about the exclusion of the ethnic Tibetan areas outside the Tibetan Autonomous Region, so the Dalai Lama would very likely have to decide to pursue this course without the unified support of his government-in-exile. It would not be an easy decision and his tendency will be to resist compromise” (1998: 96).