CHAPTER TWO

*Mimang Tsongdu and Mass Mobilisation*
Tibetans have a common historical tradition, a racial identity, a shared culture, linguistic unity, religious affinity, a territorial connection, and a common economic life. They are a distinct people. The international legal definition of statehood proves that pre-1950 Tibet was of independent status. Though it did not receive formal recognition as a sovereign state from any other nations, it had legitimately recognized treaties.

The treaty between Tibet and China (821), Tibet Nepal Treaty (1856), Anglo-Russian convention on Afghanistan and Tibet (1907), the Agreement between Tibet and China (1951), Treaty of friendship and Alliance between Tibet and Mongolia (1913), and India-Tibet Frontiers Exchange of Note between British and Tibetan Plenipotentiaries (1914) are some of the treaties legitimately recognized by the foreign countries.1

Between 1913-1933 the 13th Dalai Lama tried to drag Tibet into 20th century; he had come up against the conservatism of the religious institutions and the ruling elite.2 This initiative came from Tibetan choice to continue on an interface of modern technology, and spiritual dominance.

Tibet was isolated geographically and politically from the rest of the world. The only nations that did have a little knowledge were the British and the Chinese. These two nations misrepresented Tibet to the rest of the world to suit their immediate self-interests. Apparently, pre-1950 Tibet enjoyed diplomatic and international treaties. Tibetan government conducted its affairs on its own. Various

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countries of the world recognized the Tibetan government. Heads of the state such as president, viceroy, and prime minister and their secretaries received their delegations.  

When the British wanted to enact trade agreement with the sovereign Tibetan government, they dealt with Tibet as an independent nation. However, it is unfortunate that they made the world at large believe that Tibet was under the Chinese rule. Keeping Russia out and making the Chinese happy at the same time allowed the British to retain its valuable trade opportunities in Tibet. Tibet was geographically and politically isolated from the rest of the world. Briton and China misrepresented Tibet to the rest of the world to suit their immediate interests. According to western scholars, the relation between Tibet and China was "priest-patron" relationship. The relationship was purely on religious ground and it did not have any connotation of political relation. The gift given by China was purely help from yajamana to his purohita, it was never an act of a political protectorate.  

However, the stoppage of exchange of gifts between the Dalai Lama and President of China put an end to the idea of priest-patron relationship that existed before. Religion was no longer a binding force of national self. Political and economic interests, as well as territorial expansion, became the motive forces in international relations. The world has changed considerably, but the Tibetan response to it was hardly adequate.

The Chinese view China as the centre of the world, surrounded by systems and organizations in spatial order that decreases in integrity as the distance from the

centre increases. So, one of the major aims of Chinese policy has been to secure physical domination of the territories lying along its periphery. Since Tibet lies in this area, it is regarded as an inseparable part of China, which must be integrated into the national territory.4

The PRC has never denied that there is a Tibetan territory, though there are disputes on the precise boundaries of the Tibetan territories. But it was clear that the frontiers of historic and ethnic Tibet extended beyond the boundaries of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR),5 where Tibetans have been occupied for centuries. When the PLA entered into Tibet in 1950, there existed a Tibetan government, which exercised effective control over the territory, including both the relation among the Tibetans and relation between Tibetans and their government. The Tibet government had enjoyed the capacity to enter into relation with foreign states and had done so. It concluded treaties, and maintained neutrality with the neighbouring states including China. Tibet possessed all the attributes of independent statehood, under international law. Hence, Tibet appealed to United Nations Organization (UNO) when the PLA marched into Tibet, claiming that Tibet is an integral part of China.

The Ambassador of the Philippines described China’s occupation as “the worst type of imperialism, colonialism past or present.” Similarly, USA also condemned Chinese “aggression” and their “invasion” of Tibet. Irish representative at the UN stated: “For thousands of years, as far a couple of thousand years at any rate, (Tibet) was as free and as fully control of its own affairs as any nation and a

thousand times more free to look after its own affairs than any of the nations here”

However, China asserted that no country ever recognized an independent status for Tibet or considered her military intervention as aggressive. But the Chinese government cannot deny the fact which China’s Head mission in Lhasa, Shen Tsung-lien wrote in 1948 that since 1911 Lhasa for all practical proposes enjoyed full independence. And Mao himself admitted this when he was passing through the border region of Tibet during the Long March. When he was given food and sheltered by local Tibetans, he remarked that it was the only foreign debt for the Chinese and they were obliged to the Tibetans.7

Despite of all these facts, there was no response from the UN due to the lack of voters’ participation needed from Indian and British governments.

Faced with the military occupation of eastern and northern Tibet, the defeat and distraction of its small army, the advance of ten thousand more PLA troops towards central Tibet and the lack of active support from the international community, the alternative option left for the Dalai Lama and Kashak was to send a delegation to Beijing for negotiation with the new Chinese leadership. Thus, “peaceful liberation of Tibet” (seventeenth point in the agreement) was born in 1951 without the confirmation from the Tibetan government.

In a Directive to the central committee, Mao Tse-tung himself stated: not only the two Sizons (Prime Ministers) but also the Dalai Lama and most of his clique

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7 The Department of Information and International Relations of Tibet, Proving Truth from Facts (Dharamsala: Government of Tibet, 1993), p. 16.
were reluctant to accept the agreement and are unwilling to carry it out... we do not have material base for fully implementing the agreement nor do we have a base for this purpose in terms of support among the masses or in the upper stratum.\(^8\)

The seventeen point agreement put the seal on Tibetan independence by defining Tibet as the part of Chinese “motherland.” It granted internal autonomy while snatching military and foreign affairs and placed Tibet under the aegis of PLA. Subsequently, the provisions of autonomy were seen on paper only and the Hans, who dominated the native people, exercised the real autonomy. The most visible domination was influx of population, which beat down the Tibetan economy for the first time in history. And all extent and propose was attempt to change the value system and dragging Tibet into sinofication.

Every effort was made to undermine the sovereign authority of the Tibetan government and impose Chinese authority. This was carried out through a variety of means. Firstly, political and religious divisions were created among the Tibetans under the divide and rule policy. Secondly, social and economic reforms, calculated to change the fabric of Tibetan society, were introduced. Thirdly, Chinese government had demarcated the territories and brought under their authority and set up broader institutions alongside the existing Tibetan institutions. For instance, during 1950-1953, the Chinese incorporated a large portion of Kham province into China’s Szechwan province. Kham was divided into two Tibetan Autonomous prefecture and TAR district. The whole of Ü-tsang and areas of Kham were placed under the administration of TAR government in 1955.

In 1954, the special autonomy was replaced by TAR, for which the Dalai Lama became the nominal head without any authority. This was another move to drag Tibet into the road of sinofication. The rapid attempt of sinofication caused great resentment among the native people and prompted popular anti-Chinese protest movement, which plunged openly into the formation of Mimang Tsongdu.

Formation of Mimang Tsongdu (People's Council)

In order to transform Tibet into China, the Chinese made attempts to suppress the Tibetan religion, language and cultural identity. The establishment of Chinese power was a process of piecemeal conquest, the colonization of the society and consolidation of the economy of Tibet. This process produced discontent, resentment and resistance at every stage. However, it resulted in bloodshed. From the very beginning the nationalists opposed the Chinese policy of interfering in the affairs of the Tibetan government.

The Mimang Tsongdu was formed in 1954. The name is similar to that of the group, which was suppressed by the Chinese in 1952. On the Eve of the Dalai Lama's visit to China, the Mimang Tsongdu enforced and mobilized the masses to prevent His Holiness' trip to China. Many officials did not want the visit to take place. Phala and others thought that the only way they could stop the Dalai Lama was to mobilize the masses in order to request the Dalai Lama personally not to accept the invitation.\(^9\) In the early 1950s, the people expressed their feelings of discontent through Mimang Tsongdu.

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Mimang Tsongdu emerged as a first major resistance group that demanded the withdrawal of the PLA from Tibet. This resistance group engaged in varied sporadic sabotage of the Chinese activities in Tibet. However, for a long time, the Chinese denied the existence of Tibetan rebellion to the outside world and branded the large-scale of rebellion as feudal and reactionary and as a battle of landowners to regain their lost control. India too greatly underplayed the revolt, which Nehru once misrepresented as a "clash of wills rather than arms."

The objective of Mimang Tsongdu was to resist Chinese by broad-based social mobilization, through unification of the Tibetan people against the Chinese. The entire program of Mimang Tsongdu was an anti-Chinese and pan-Tibetan. For the first time the Mimang Tsongdu mobilized the masses to demonstrate the anti-Han movement in Tibet. The formation of Mimang Tsongdu was not only to counter the Chinese hegemony, but also to oppose the traditional ruling elite, who had left the young Dalai Lama to fend for himself. The organizers of the Mimang Tsongdu were traders and low ranking Kashak members. The lower Tibetan officials thought that the senior officials were either weak or actively collaborating with the Chinese.\(^\text{10}\) Putting up wall posters and submitting petitions to the Kashak characterized the Mimang Tsongdu protest. They expressed protest through performing and sponsoring rituals to propitiate wrathful deities and offered prayer for the Dalai Lama's life.\(^\text{11}\) They also demonstrated the popular displeasure against the presence of the Chinese. They shouted anti-Chinese slogans and stated that the system of Tibet cannot change.\(^\text{12}\)

\(^\text{10}\) Ibid. p. 145.
\(^\text{11}\) Chonzeo Tsering Dorje, 1983, p. 170.
In 1952, the initial version of Mimang Tsongdu was declared illegal and its ringleaders Alo Choze and Shekar Chazo were arrested. However, the anti-Chinese feeling continued. Though there was lack of modern means of communication, people carried the information of Chinese oppression from eastern Tibet to Western and Central Tibet to counter the oppression.

**National Protest Movements**

When the Chinese reforms were proposed in eastern Tibet, the monasteries and people opposed the reforms and made it clear to the Chinese that they were prepared to resist. When the Nationalist Voluntary Defence Army was formed, laymen and monks joined as well as the Khambas (warrior class) refused to give up their weapons and properties. The Chinese confiscated their properties and blew up their monasteries. When the monks refused to surrender their arms bombing and shelling occurred in various areas and including mass execution. The report of these incidences spread across and the people became further conscious of the Chinese opposition.

In southwest Tibet, Andrugtsang, the leader of "the Four Rivers and Six Ranges" ambushed Chinese convoys and started guerrilla warfare. The people of surrounding areas supported the guerrillas up to some extent. Even some officials joined them.

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14 Ibid. p. 95.
15 Ibid. p. 248.
16 *Current Scene* (Hong Kong) vol. 3, no. 23, 15 July 1965, p. 67.
But the Tibetan government arrested leaders at the instigation of the Chinese. However, some of the leaders tried to contact the American government for seeking help. One of them was Lama of Khumbum Monastery, Taktser Rempoche who left for USA. Thus the US occasionally helped the nationalists to check the communist power in Asia. For example, the Khambas were flown out of India to Taiwan for training and after training they were sent back to Kham for operation. More than 14,000 were armed, equipped and supported by the USA.

Most of the outside world was ignorant of the events in Tibet. *New York Times* reported in August 1954, citing sources from Formosa, that 40,000 farmers took part in the uprising in east Tibet. It stressed that many rebels were killed by communist regular troops, sent to the area to suppress the revolt. After five days, the *Guardian* stated that 18th Army had suppressed the revolt in Kham, and the armed clashes were becoming everyday events. On 21 October 1954, the *New York Times* revealed that the Chinese communists had withdrawn from eastern Tibet and added that the Khambas had shaken the Chinese.

Until 1956, the Mimang Tsongdu was unorganised and sporadic. Even though it was not officially given the state recognition, yet the Mimang Tsongdu was the only consensus organization of the Tibetans. In 1954, General Chang Cheng-wu became military governor of Tibet. The stage was now set for a long and bloody war. In the meantime, the revolt against the Chinese reprisal started spreading. In 1955, the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet.

By 1956 the Chinese had entrenched into Kham. Every twenty miles they installed an army depot, under the pretext of road surveillance and local pacification. Kandze, Dergue, Bathang, Lithang and Chamdo regions were heavily garrisoned. In 1955, the PLA entered Bathang, Kandze, Dergue and Lithang. They gave an order for disarmament. All the tribes developed full-scale rebellion against the Chinese and set out to fight for their homes, faith, and their very race.\(^\text{20}\)

According to Ngabö, the majority, i.e., 70 per cent, of the upper strata also supported the dissident factions. Reports from sympathizers put the number of support from 35,000 to 300,000. According to American intelligence sources, the large-scale rebellion started in July 1956, and was due to the Chinese interference in the Tibetans’ religious activities and also due to the confiscation of their weapons.

Many believed that the rebellion began at Lithang Monastery, when the Tibetans objected to the Chinese interference in their monasteries. The subsequent actions led to twenty-six days’ siege of the monastery by the PLA. The Tibetans retaliated by attacking PLA units and subsequently suffered savage reprisal.\(^\text{21}\)

The former abbot of Gyantse Monastery and the then Governor of Gyantse, Thupten Nyengi, described the events of Eastern Tibet in 1956. According to him, the liberation of Tibet was a mockery. A free country was invaded and occupied under the pretext of "Liberation". But liberation from whom? Tibet was a happy country till the Chinese invasion in 1950. Now Tibetans have been exploited and reduced to a state of intellectual, spiritual and economic bankruptcy. He further stated that the ruthless attacks by land, air and the indiscriminate cold-blooded

\(^{20}\) A. Tom Grunfeld, op. cit. p. 127.

\(^{21}\) Ibid. p. 128.
bombing of Dzuchkha in Geleq and Lithang were proofs of the Chinese ‘concern’ for Tibet’s progress and welfare. In Lithang alone over one thousand people were killed.22

After Eastern Tibet experienced savage suppression and refugee life, the focus of the protest movement shifted to Central Tibet. The growing opposition in Central Tibet was inevitable. Gampo Tashi Andrugtsang reorganized a single resistance army in June 1958 at Lokha.23 According to Dawa Norbu, the vast majority of 23 Khamba leaders of the Tibetan revolt were merchants and they made their fortune since the liberation as the Chinese kept pouring silver coins called dao-yuan into Tibet to pay the Tibetan ruling classes and road workers. But instead of making more money or running away to Indian safety with these silver coin fortunes, they spent their money for the purchase of arms and ammunitions for revolt.24 Gampo Tashi Andrugtsang stressed that Gyalthang was one of the first place in eastern Tibet, where democratic reforms were carried out. In 1953, Gyalthang Athena Kham population was divided into five strata. The people belonging to first strata were either humiliated in public or condemned to firing squad. In Amdo, Ma Pufang who allied with Amdawa and Mongol tribesmen led the fight against Chinese.25

When the Chinese victory became imminent in 1949, Ma Pufang fled with his wife and treasures. In 1949, the two chiefs of Nangra, Pon Wangchen and Pon

24 Dawa Norbu, op. cit.
25 Ibid. p. 191.
Choje led their man in battle against the Chinese, where one of Pon Wangchen’s sons was killed. Thus, by 1950, almost all the major Amdowan forces were killed. Pon Choje escaped by faking death. The tribal people were therefore compelled to leave their village and hide in the mountains. From there, they began to organize guerilla operations against the Chinese supply line patrols.

In order to maintain peace, through the Lama of Dechen Monastery, Pon Wangchen met Mao Zedong in Beijing in 1952. As a result, there was peace for a brief movement (1952-1953). But when the Chinese revived arrest and execution, the fight renewed all over the territory. By 1953, the Chinese had firmly established themselves with muscle power, arms and ammunition. In the final conflict, many Amdowans were killed executed or sent to labor camps and some even committed suicide. Some children were left.26

By 1955-56, the Chinese policies in eastern Tibet created new wave of hostility. After the Chinese declared Dartsedo as the capital of eastern Tibet, the resistance movements spread in eastern Tibet too. The tribal chiefs organized joint efforts of resistance to defeat the Chinese. The chieftain of Lithang sent messengers all over eastern Tibet to attack the Chinese posts. The monasteries and tribals at Nyarong, Kandze, Bathang, Drango, Linkashiba and many other places gave positive response. One of the chieftains, Yuru Pon, died after killing two Chinese. Dorgi Yudon, the wife of Gyari Nima, the chieftain of Nyarong, stated they received a letter from Lithang asking them to revolt on the eighteenth day of the first month of 1956.27 Since then the Chinese authority summoned Nima for a meeting, his wife

26 Ibid. p. 191.
Dorgi Yudon took up leadership of the Gyaritsang clan and the other tribes of Nyarong. The Chinese tried to assassinate her but failed. Hence, she was forced to revolt four days ahead of the plan with Yuru Pon. The Nyarong revolt was initially successful. They destroyed Chinese garrisons and also killed and captured many collaborators.

The surveying Chinese troops retreated back to the fortress of the female dragon and some even barricaded themselves behind the massive walls of the ancient fort. Before the Nyarongs could storm the place, the Chinese forces from Drugmo Dzong broke the rebel siege. After the siege, twenty-three tribal people of Kham responded to Yuru Pon’s call. The revolt was called "the Volunteers of Army to defend Buddhism." It is to be noted that the national uprising of eastern Tibet chased the Chinese out of the whole province for a few months. But later, the Chinese returned with greater reinforcement, which was beyond the Tibetan capacity. However, it is worth noting that despite the long-standing animosities among the various tribes and lack of basic communication, an attempt was made to unite the whole of eastern Tibet to counter Chinese hegemony. This was remarkable achievement.

As early as February 1956, it was reported that the bands of Tibetans had been carrying out raids against Peking forces. Later, New York Times reported that guerrillas had wiped out 600 Chinese communists in eastern Tibet. Chinese statesmen in Kathmandu denied the story. However, non-communist sources said that they heard similar account.

In May 1956, a rebellion of Galong tribesmen in northeast Tibet was reported and a few days later news from Kalimpong indicated that anti-Chinese and anti-communist tribesmen had killed or wounded 2,000 ‘Reds’ in eastern Tibet. The Statesman reported that Tibetan rebellion could inflict heavy casualties in Galong, Harkhok, Dergue, Yatug and Khamdo regions. It was said that even the delegation of Chinese had been murdered after the peace talks failed. The roads that ran between Tibet and China were blocked and ambushed.

The unprecedented revolt against the Chinese resulted in bombing, and it led to sending tanks in Lhasa by Chinese authority in order to put down the high intensity clash. Lithang, a Tibetan modesty town, was put under siege for 64 hours with bombardment.

Apparently the 1957 have been the year of lull, and however, fighting re-erupted in 1958 in full swing, which prompted Nehru to cancel his trip to Tibet. A political observer attributed it to the uncertain states of affairs in Tibet.

The PRC continuously faced the resentment from native people. As reports reflected, Khamba guerrillas, estimated at 30,000-40,000, made it virtually impossible for the Chinese to use the new military road linking Chinese proper with Lhasa through Khamdo. The Khambas had reportedly blown bridges. The strength of Khamba operation was further indicated by the fact that these guerrillas attacked 3,000 men of the garrison, the largest Chinese outpost on south bank of Brahmaputra, just 30 km from Lhasa. After six hours of heavy fighting, Khambas broke into garrison, scattered and mowed down the Chinese, thereby gaining control

of the roads across Lhasa for the northwest.\textsuperscript{32} By the middle of 1959, they almost seized the northern province of Lhoka, bordering India northeast.

The activities of the guerrillas were highly intensified in 1959, which Indian sources quoted that as many 50,000 Chinese had been killed in several months of fighting along with 15,000 Tibetans.\textsuperscript{33} The Chinese stated that in two days of fighting red China troops captured 8,000 small arms, 8 machine guns, 27 mortars, and 6 mortar guns.\textsuperscript{34} Few days later, China claimed that the red troops had captured 4,000 Tibetans, seized 800 small arms, 100 heavier weapons and 10,000 bullets.\textsuperscript{35}

The communist regime's response to protest movements by guerrillas was oppressive, which prompted the Tibetans to join the guerrilla force; punishments were cruel, people were executed, monasteries were disrupted and religion was decried. The guerrillas on their part cut the roads, demolished bridges and raided warehouses. The Chinese retaliation was savage. Even at this difficult juncture, the Dalai Lama wished for non-violent settlement and sent peace brokers to Khambas to disavow the armed struggle. But the Chinese demanded the Tibetan army to fight the guerrillas and persuaded the Kashak to ban these guerrillas. However, the Kashak rejected that rebellion broke out, and Chinese had to fight themselves. There was unprecedented uprising in Lhasa, which triggered off the Dalai Lama into exile and thus brought the entire course of Tibetan history in 1959.

After the god king went in exile, Tibet witnessed in 1960 heavy armed clashes in Shigatse and adjoining areas of southern Tibet where guerrillas continuously harassed the Chinese troops. A well equipped Chinese troops (2,5000)

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid. pp. 8-13.
\textsuperscript{33} New York Times, 26 March 1959.
\textsuperscript{34} Peking Broadcasting monitored in Tokyo. Quoted from New York Times, March 1959.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. p. 13.
had failed to put down the outbreak of guerrilla attacks in the Pokra area. The guerrilla presence continued to be felt, which forced the Chinese to abandon construction of 800 miles railroad from China to Lhasa. Despite many odds, Tibetan resistance to Chinese authority continued unabated. 36

After 1962, the period that witnessed a war between India and China, assassination of President Kennedy, and the escalation of war in Vietnam, there was little space left in the media for Tibetan struggle against Chinese regime; yet occasional reports confirmed the existence of protest movement in Tibet.

In 1963, the Dalai Lama’s brother, Gyalo Thondup, stated in New York that Tibetans were continuing their resistance against the occupation of Tibet. A few weeks later, through refugee sources, it was reported that sporadic fighting continued, and Khamba tribesmen in eastern Tibet who revolted five years ago continued raids. 37 In 1964, the Kambas carried raids and plundered Chinese convoys from near Nepal, sabotaged military installations, and murdered armed personalis. In 1965, the daily Telegraph quoted Associated Press and reported that more than 50,000 Chinese soldiers had been killed in few weeks during the year-end. 38

The protest movement against the Chinese regime continued till the end of 1969. The large scale protest movement and guerrilla activities raise the question how Tibetans have been able to mobilize the national sentiment to carry out the mass movement. The Tibetans might not have an access to modern weapons, and

38 Sunday Telegraph, 11 December 1965.
unfriendly terrain might have led to lack of communication and information in vast areas. But the indomitable spirit of the nation cannot be denied. The role of CIA is always associated with the Tibetan protest movement. However, it is observed that the role of CIA is not significant in Tibetan freedom struggle.

By June 1959 the Tibetan nationalists claimed to have established the Voluntary Freedom Fighter (four rivers and six ranges) in Loka region, by bringing together 23 separate groups. However, the creation of Voluntary Freedom Fighters and could not solve the myriad problems of nationalists. As the Dalai Lama's adviser remind split and apparently one of the reason due to the absence of communication facilities. According to Dawa Norbu "If we had modern means of communication, the entire Tibet people would have been mobilized. Unfortunately our officials were not able to identify wit the Tibetan masses. The situation was new one, demanding new leaders with new ideas. Tragically, ours leaders (if they deserve the term) were not prepared for the new situation, nor did they have much freedom." 39

**Ideological Implication of Mimang Tsongdu Movement**

As soon as the Chinese consolidated their position in Tibet, the Dalai Lama himself partially collaborated with the Chinese. His policy was neither totally against the PLA nor totally in support of Mimang Tsongdu movements, but rather blend of two. The Dalai Lama's policy does not suit the Mimang Tsongdu, since they wanted to unify the Tibetan people and resist the Chinese through social mobilization. The

Dalai Lama is the ruler of Tibet, but never had direct contact with the masses, and as such the masses had expressed their dissatisfaction through the Mimang Tsongdu.\footnote{Tibet and Chinese People's Republic: Report to the International Commission of Justice, (Geneva, 1960, India edition 1966), p. 245.} 40

During 1952-53, the Mimang Tsongdu displayed anti-Chinese attitude and openly criticized for the price rise and scarcity of food; subsequently the leaders of Mimang Tsongdu were arrested and the organization were branded illegal.\footnote{Bina Roy Burman, Religion and Politics (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1979), p. 82.} 41 It is conspicuous that when people are suppressed they tend to revolt.

The Tibetan resistance movement and Mimang Tsongdu represented national sentiments against the Chinese invasion and occupation. The majority of the people learned about the actual face of change brought about by the Chinese and began to oppose it. Many of the reforms could have been acceptable to the Tibetans if they (Chinese) had not touched the land ownership and destroyed the traditional Tibetan values (Buddhism) and tried to replace it with Marxist-Leninist ideology. According to A. Tom Grunfeld, in early 1952, Mimang Tsongdu put up posters and propagandised against the Chinese presence. They took advantage of religious activities to mobilize people and demonstrated the popular displeasure against Hans on 31 March 1952, shouting the slogan "PLA, get out of Tibet. The system in Tibet cannot change." The Chinese stationed in Lhasa also confirmed the report that the streets were not safe for the Hans in the early 1950s.

The Mimang Tsongdu could mobilize the people from all walks of life. Women from Lhasa demanded the withdrawal of the Chinese rule from Tibet. Its leaders presented an appeal for assistance to the Indian consulate in Lhasa. The three
great monasteries Drepung, Ganden and Sera also declared their support for independence. The mass mobilization capability of Mimang Tsongdu seems a major threat to the Chinese. Therefore, the Chinese urged the Tibetan government to suppress Mimang Tsongdu and labelled it as a false representative of the popular will.\(^{42}\) One of the remarkable characteristics of the resistance movement leaders was that they considered themselves as an army of Buddha. Thus, throughout the revolt, their strategy was based on religion.

For several years Tibetans from every nook and corner had been in favour of militant resistance to the occupational force of Hans. It was only monastery representatives in the Mimang who had been against violence and they had emphasized patience and also hoped that the Hans would grant some reasonable autonomy. But when the Lamas realised that the preparatory committee meant deathblow to Tibet, they agreed that nothing could be lost and something might be gained by opposing Hans with violence. Thus they finally voted in favour of the uprising.

It seems unusual for gentle Buddhist monks to participate in violence. However, it should be noted that some important legends described the ferocious battle of the holy ones who defended the religion against devil.\(^{43}\) In the past, many monks fought at all cost when their religion was threatened. When it came to defending the faith, the Lamas were magnificent fighters, as they had neither family ties nor personal possessions, which may soften their zeal. In fact, he welcomes


death for lofty rebirth. Under all these circumstances, the lamas generally dominated the resistance movement.

During Monlam festival ceremony of 1956, the leaders of Mimang Tsongdu put up wall posters asking the Chinese to return to China. In Shigates and Gyantse also posters were put up demanding the withdrawal of Chinese troops.

When the activities of Mimang Tsongdu had reached their height, the Chinese pressurised the Tibetan government to arrest the main leaders. Alo Chonzeds, Bumthang, Lhabchung and others were arrested. However, on 25 August 1956, Alo Chonzeds and Buthang were released. They then went to India. Buthang died in few years after his release. Alo Chonzeds has remained victim and is a controversial figure in Tibetan émigré politics. 44 Many leaders were arrested and their organizations were branded illegal. The Chinese not only eliminated the Mimang Tsongdu but also tried to maintain their control over the Tibetans through various means such as frightening the Tibetan people, trying to win them over, confusing the leaders by utilizing political factionalism and rivalry. 45 According to Ginsburg and Mathos, Chinese were able to suppress the Chamdo uprising with modern technology and superior powers. 46

The traditional ideology on which the revolt was based gave it sufficient popular appeal to transcend the border of eastern Tibet and to ingrate passion and violence even in the Tibetan Autonomous regions where the Chinese had caused no disruption in the social system, and where the aristocracy and clergy were courted

45 Bina Roy Burman, 1979, p. 82.
46 Ibid. p. 82.
by the Chinese authority. Hence, many Tibetans considered the revolt as a national revolt, as the national sentiments of the majority of the Tibetan people were involved.\textsuperscript{47} The protest movements initiated by Khambas and Amdowas constituted a national movement and were of dynamic nature.

The organization such as "The voluntary Army to Defend Buddhism" implies the ideological nature of the national protest movements. People from every walk of life got evolved. According to Dawa Norbu, the Khamba uprising was in defence of Tibetan Buddhist values and of the political and sacred institutions founded on such values. As long as the Chinese did not tamper with the objectively functioning social system and the value system, still considered sacred by the members of society, as it happened in outer Tibet, there was no revolt. But the moment Chinese tried to alter the functioning of the sacred social system, as it happened in inner Tibet, the revolt of began.\textsuperscript{48}

Some western intellectuals considered the protest movements an embarrassment, as it diverted from the preferred peace-loving image of Tibet as a Shangri-la. However, the protest movement was the right step for Tibetans. In the past, Tibetan monks, on many occasions, have fought whenever their religion was threatened. In fact, monks were trained for combat, and the lamas, however gentle or wise, were always ready to fight ferociously in defence of their faith. An old Tibetan proverb goes: "if there be an enemy of Buddha, his followers must put on armor."

As Dawa Norbu has succinctly put it, the invasion was not perceived as the threat to territorial integrity of Tibet, although the Tibet assumed a distinct


geographical entity as an independent country since seventh or eighth century. It was seen as more a threat to their faith. The Chinese ‘liberators’ were called *tendra*, enemies of faith. The Khamba guerrillas, who led the Tibetan national movement, branded themselves as *Ten-sung* that means the defenders of faith. The main movement was in defence of Buddhism, as personified in the Dalai Lama. The popularity of Buddhism and the power of the Buddhist "church" made it practically impossible for communism to be an ideological rival - at least for the time being. In those days, communism was depicted as destroyer of Buddhism. When we talk about religious persecution in Tibet, as Dawa Norbu noted, it was not a “Nazi type of persecution." However, the Chinese are saner and more sophisticated than Hitler. Judging from disparate suicides committed, it should be understood that perhaps one would have preferred to be shot than to have endured a living death. Chinese anti-Buddhism propaganda, which was a part and parcel of the ideology or indoctrination meetings, was very much resented by all sections of the Tibetan population.