I

Sino-Tibet Relations in Historical Perspective

Between the seventh and ninth centuries, Tibet came in contact with China as its military campaigns backed by the powers of mounted warriors, highly mobile cavalry and intelligent infantry tactics enabled her to project its power into China and Inner Asia. Tibetan armies fought and conquered territories belonging to or contested by the Empires of the Arabs, the Turks and the Chinese during this period. Tibet rivaled T’ang dynasty (618-907) China and pressed further and further into the borderlands of what are now Kansu, Szechwan, Yunnan and Shansi. On one occasion they even captured Ch’ang-an (Sian) which was then the capital of China.

Politically, Tibetan military conquests unified the previously autonomous clans and petty states of Central Tibet into a confederative Empire encompassing the entire Tibetan plateau. The two centuries of Tibetan imperial adventure (630-842) under the leadership of Yarlung1 sovereigns also coincides with the introduction

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1 Yarlung Valley is south of the Tsaqpol (see map). The confederacy of the Chief of Yarlung formed the nucleus of Tibetan Empire. The feudal confederation established by the Yarlung sovereigns to establish their military and administrative authority over territory far beyond the capability of Yarlung to directly administer laid the foundation of Tibetan state and later Tibetan Empire.
of Buddhism. The early Tibetan religious practitioners were magicians, sorcerers and shamans with no religious organization and no organized system of religious beliefs. These practices were referred to as 'Bon'.

However, the Tibetan Empire and its martial strength collapsed with the last Yarlung King Ralpachen in 838, four hundred years before the fall of Yarlung dynasty in 842. The regions of the Tibetan plateau reverted to their former fractious independence. The collapse of the Tibetan Empire put an end to the two centuries of coordinated expansion of Tibetan military power and its political influences throughout wide stretches of Central Asia.

From the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, Buddhist ideas and philosophical schools of all sorts were continuously transported from India into Tibet. The effect was startling. And in the centuries that followed, one might justifiably say that Tibet itself was conquered by Buddhism. The Buddhist revolution brought about both ideological

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Buddhism was introduced into Tibet during the reign of Khri-srong-ide-vrtsal, who in later Buddhist tradition was accounted as the first of the three great religious i.e. Buddhist kings; the other two being Khri-srong-ide-brtsan, who ruled throughout the second half of the eighth century, and Ral-pa-tsen, who ruled from 815 to 836. Buddhism was established as state religion in 762. The first Buddhist monastery was founded at Samye in 767. The Tibetan religious history in the ‘empire period’ can be described as a transition from the individualistic Shamanic religious Bon to the clerical religion of Buddhism. In contrast to Shamanic religious as typical of disorganize decentralized preliterate societies; clerical religions are more characteristics of centralized states, as Geoffrey Samuel argues.
and structural transformation in Tibet. Buddhism created a unique religion-political order, variously described as 'ecclesiastical order' Hermit Kingdom or 'non-coercive regime', which depended on others for military support.³

This chapter contains a discussion of changing patterns of Sino-Tibetan relations and the bases of their objectively constituted assumption from the Middle Ages till the early twentieth century. In addition, I also argue that the assumptions on which inter-state relations were based in traditional Asia were radically restructured according to the requirements of western colonial powers in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

**The age of Chos-gyal**

Our analysis will begin with a focus on the key issues and events, which determined the relationships between Tibet and China between the seventh and the ninth centuries. This period is regarded by Tibetans as the heroic age of Chos-gyal (Religious kings).

³ Buddhist ideology (viz. non-violence) converted an entire warrior race into a peaceful Buddhist community subsequently influencing the Tibetan political structure. Tibetan Historical Dawa Norbu argues that in Tibet, prevalence of Buddhist ideology from the mid 13th century to the early 20th century created two structural contradictions. Internally, the Tibetan ecclesiastical leaders contributed to the growth of autonomous centres of local power characterized by decentralized polity. But externally, its lack of armed forces compelled the Lamaist regime to depend on external powers for military support.
To T'ang China, Srong-brtsan-Sgam-po became a military presence on its borders to be viewed with apprehension and to be seriously reckoned with, and his friendship was won by the grant of a Chinese princess as bride in 641. Srong-brtsan-Sgam-po sought the hand of the daughter of the T'ang emperor T'ai-ssung. This proposal conflicted with a similar request made by the rulers of T'u-yii-hun (Eastern Tartars). Srong-brtsan-Sgam-po sent his troops against T'u-yii-hun and defeated them. The defeat of T'u-yii-hun brought the strategic Kokonor region under the control of Tibetan Empire. Tibetan army also attacked and subdued other intervening tribes like Ch'i'ang.

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4 Desmond Martin states that since the beginning of the fourth century, the Kokonor areas had been ruled by the T'u-ku-hun: but in 672 they were conquered by the Tibetans, and the T'u-ku'hon subsequently fled to China (the T'u-ku-hun, also known as T'u-yu-hou are called 'A-zha in Tibetan). Desmond Martin, The Rise of Chingis Khan and his conquest of North China, Baltimore, 1950, p. 53. Also see the map attached for exact action of the Kokonor areas.

5 Ren Shumin maintains that the Kokonor areas was famous for its horses. The Chinese traditionally sought Kokoner horses to strengthen its mounted warriors in order to weaken the Tibetans.


Trading horses with silk with the Chinese was one of the major provocations of warfare. The right and the privilege to participate in the silk and horse trade was a symbol of sovereignty among the nomadic tribes.


Because the nomads could not master the art of silk production due to their constant movement. But their desire for Chinese silk never waned.
Pai-lan and Tang-hsiang Tibetan military conquests and strategic advances forced the T'ang emperor to accept the marriage proposal made by Srong-brtsan-Sgam-po. The Tibetan King also made a marriage alliance with Nepal, predating that with the Chinese, since the Nepalese princess, Belsa (Brikuti in Nepali) was considered by the Tibetans to be senior to the Chinese princess. (Gyalsa (wencheng) in Chinese). Both Srong-btsan-Sgam-po and one of his successors, Mes-Agtshans married Chinese princesses. Snell Grove and Richardson argue that the 'granting of Chinese princesses to neighbouring 'barbarian' rulers was an instrument of Chiense diplomacy, and the Tibetans, adopted the same policy and similar alliances with other neighbouring peoples, with the Turks and the A-zha and the T'u-yii-hon, with Nepal Shang-shung and 'bru-zho (Hunza).

Between the seventh and the ninth centuries, Tibetans extended their war like activities in all directions with remarkable vigour. The Tibetan military captured the four main Chinese military garrisons (Kashgar, Khotan, Kucha and Karasha) in the Tarim (modern Chinese Turkestan). When the T'ang sent an army of 100,000 men from the east to regain the Tarim, they were defeated with great losses by a

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7 David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, A Cultural History of Tibet, Delhi, UBS Publishers and Distributors, 1968, p. 31.
Tibetan army said to number 2,00,000. In 678, the T'ang, taking advantage of the death of the Tibetan emperor and the revolt of Shang-shung, attempted to regain Kokonor with a large army but were defeated. The Chinese built a fortified city Songpan on the border of Tibet named Anjung-cheng. This fortress was said to have been built “in order to cut off contact between the Tibetans and the Han”. The fortress was captured by the Tibetans after which many Han tribes were “said to have submitted to the Tibetans”. The T'ang conceded that the Tibetan territory “extended over more than ten thousand miles, and from the Han and Wei dynasties downwards, there had been no people among the nations of the west so powerful”.

In the west, the Tibetans occupied Hunza. They were in contact with the Arab conquerors of Transuxiana. For the most part relations with the Arabs were friendly. But that the Caliph of Baghdad Harun-ar-Rashid, allied himself for a short time with the Chinese against the Tibetans, speaks eloquently of the Tibetan military strength, as Petech writes, “the very fact that nothing less than the coalition of the two most powerful empires of early-middle ages was necessary for

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9 The Tibetans are here referred to as “Jung”, a generic name for western ‘barbarians’. (Anjung means “Pacification of Jung”).


11 Ibid., p. 28.

12 F.W. Bushell, op.cit., p. 450.
checking the expansion of the Tibetan states, is a magnificent witness of the political capacities and military valour of those sturdy mountaineers.”

In the north and north-east the Tibetans marched with the Uighurs and with the western Turks (Tou-Kiue). They frequently made common cause with the latter against China. In the south, the Tibetans dominated the Kingdom of Nepal and the hill tribes on the Indian side of Himalayas. Their influence wants as far as upper Burma. To China itself the Tibetans were a constant source of trouble. Their armies pushed further and further into the territory of the T'ang Empire. In 783 a peace was negotiated between Tibet and China in the treaty of Ch'ing Shui which established the boundaries between the two countries during the reign of Trisong Detsen. However, the treaty could neither sustain peace nor prevent violent boundary conflicts to control strategic trade points. By the early ninth century, Tibetan power spread far and wide. The T'angs were anxious to make peace even on less than desirable terms due to the Tibetans constant

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menacing of T’ang frontiers. The T’ang Annals report that it was as if “a swarm of ants had invaded our borders”.  

Finally, in 821, the Chinese and Tibetans concluded another peace treaty. Although the Tibetans suffered some reverses, they remained in firm control on positions and frontiers from which they could constantly threaten Chinese cities. The treaty confirmed Tibetan territorial gains all along the frontier with China, and “the border agreed upon was essentially the same as that of the treaty of Ch’ing Shui of 783”.  

The treaty of 821 was the culmination of 200 years of Sino-Tibetan conflict. It is recorded in an inscription in Chinese and Tibetan on a stone pillar erected in the year 823 in Lhasa. The inscription clearly demonstrates that at the time of the treaty, Tibet and China were two powers on equal footing. The west face of the stone pillar “bears an inscription of the treaty in both Tibetan and Chinese. The East side bears an edict by the King summarizing Sino-Tibetan relations. The north side gives the names of the seventeen Tibetan officials who participated in making the treaty, and the south side gives those of the eighteen Chinese officials”.  

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15 F.W. Bushell, op.cit., p.514.
16 Tsepon, W.D. Shakabpa, op.cit., p.48.
17 Tsepon, W.D. Shakabpa, op.cit., p.49.
18 Tsepon, W.D. Shakabpa, ibid., pp. 49-50.
The terminology of “Nephew and Uncle”\textsuperscript{19} in the treaty was common diplomatic phraseology implying amicable relations as close as family relations which while according the symbolic superiority as “uncle” to the Chinese, did not empty any political dominance of China over Tibet. The full text of the inscription shows the treaty to be one of friendship and understanding between the two sovereign states. ‘The ‘Great China’ and ‘The Great Tibet’, not a record of unity as partial quotation ‘Nephew and Uncle united their kingdom’ would have us believe. The inscription also reads: “All to the east of the present boundary is the domain of Great China. All of the west is totally the domain of Great Tibet. Henceforth there shall be no looting or ambushing and no making of war . . . . Even the border security personnel shall, without any disquietude or terror, relax comfortably in their own territory . . . . Having come to a cordial agreement and made this great treaty . . . enjoys will be sent in the old tradition . . . . Tibetans shall be happy in the land of Tibet. Chinese shall be happy in the land of China, and the solemn agreement now made shall never be changed.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{19} For full text of the treaty see appendix, 821.

The treaty of 821 proved to be the high point of Tibetan Empire. However, the treaty had its background of conflict in the Tibetan occupation of Chinese capital in 763. A stone column erected in the same year describes this particular conquest of the Chinese by the Tibetans: "The two great commanders were ordered to carry war to Keng-Shi (where the Chinese King’s palace was situated, in the very heart of China). On the bank by the fort of chi-hu-chir a great battle was fought with the Chinese. Tibet put them to fight... many Chinese was killed. The Chinese king, Kwang Peng Wang also fled from the fort.... Keng-Shi was captured." 21

Henceforth, the period of the T’ang dynasty until its breakdown, shows no evidence from Tibet or China, as to any claim by one nation to have any authority over the other. In fact, the Tibetans were regularly the aggressors and in general, had the upper hand.

Tibetan military successes were due not only to human resources but also to technological innovations and adaptation. Tibetan body armour was reportedly of the finest workmanship in Asia at that time. According to the T’ang annals, "the armour and helmet are very strong and cover the whole body, with holes for the eyes only, so that the strongest bow and sharpest sword can hardly do them

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much harm". 22 Beckwith suggests that “both men and horses wore chain mail armour". 23 A French Tibetologist in his work Tibetan Civilization, maintains that “the Tibetans capacity to manufacture armour of such quality, and in large quantities is one of the mysteries of their extra-ordinary rise to power". 24

The two hundred years of Tibetan Imperial greatness collapsed due to dissensions among the nobles leading to succession disputes following the assassination of King Langdrama in 842. In particular, there was constant rivalry between the heads of the noble families from which the Kings took their wives, each in turn seeking to establish a dominant influence of court. The newly introduced Buddhist teaching met active opposition from many nobels who held to older Bon beliefs. Eminent Tibetan historian Shakapba indicates that King Langdarma “promulgated laws designed to destroy the teaching of Buddhism in Tibet”. 25 However, the phenomenal growth of Buddhism as we shall see in the following centuries does not lend credence to the idea of its persecution to extinction. As Snellgrove and Richardson argue, “there is evidence in Tibetan records that Buddhism was kept alive in private houses in central Tibet and that the more

22 F.W. Bushell, op. cit., p. 442.
23 Christopher Beckwith, op. cit., p.110.
holy places, although allowed to fall into dilapidation, were at least preserved from desecration. Buddhism was now neglected rather than persecuted, for the continuing civil strife exhausted and impoverished the leading families of Central Tibet, on whom organized religion of any sort depended for patronage. But in the outlying regions, such as the small principalities of the east where Buddhism was established religion, and later in the new kingdoms of the west, which bordered on the Buddhist lands of north-western India, Tibetans continued and developed their practice of new faith".26

The long lineage of Tibetan Royalty broke up into a number of disunited princedoms. The T'ang dynasty towards its end in 905 could "recover almost all the Chinese territory which the Tibetans had occupied".27

Although, the decline of central authority structures in both Tibet and China drifted them away as ‘there were no exchanges at all between a Chinese government and any rules of Tibet proper’28 for a period of some four hundred years, from 842 until Tibet came under the dominance of the Mongols. During the period from 842 to 1274, Tibet was still in the state Tibetan historians call Sil-bu'i dus, “the

26 David Snell grove and Huge Richardson, op. cit, p.112.
28 Ibid., p. 33.
period of fragmentation which “appears to have actually been a period of transformation”.  

Once introduced and entrenched in Tibet, the Buddhist faith generated in the period of transformation, various religious sects. At first they served the interests of powerful aristocracies, who would use a sect against family rivals and rival sects. The sects thus became involved in politics. Politically, at the beginning of the 13th century, Buddhist sects had become the dominant economic, political and spiritual authorities in Tibet, but Tibet remained disunited because no one sect was powerful enough to dominate the others. This situation was transformed with the rise of the Mongol empire, under whose patronage Sakya sect achieved predominance and Tibet achieved political unity.

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29 Here, ‘period of transformation’ indicates the expansion of social history of Tibetan Buddhism from an ideology for the Kings or ruling houses to an all-encompassing ruling force of Tibet. Also see, Dawa Norbu, “Btsan, Blama-Dponpo and Sprut Skii; changing notions of authority, and shifting basis of power and their combined impact on political development in Tibet”. Paper presented at the 9th Wisconsin Conference on South Asia, (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1980).


30 The founder of Sakya sect was Konchong Gyalpo, who established the Sakya monastery on his ancestral land in 1073. Located on the trade route between Nepal, Lhasa and other inland centres and at the point of contact of nomadic and agricultural ways of life. The monastic center flourished and soon became politically powerful. Its best known scholarly heads are the Sakya Pandita (1182-1251) and his nephew Phagpa (1235-1280).
By 1263 the Mongols became the acknowledged rulers of China while Tibet was the only country in central and northern Asia to escape the Mongol invasion and military conquest. Around this time, Buddhist revolution in Tibet had shifted the political authority from lay rulers to Charismatic Lamas entrenched in big monasteries. Godan Khan, successor to Chinghes Khan in the process of conquest and empire building was impressed by the success of the Sakya educational system and monastic bureaucracy and invited Sakya Pandita,31 the abbot of Sakya and his nephew Phagpa to his court in 1244. In 1247 Sakya Pandita converted the Mongol warrior chief to the Sakya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism and in turn he was “invested with temporal authority over the thirteen myriarcheis of Central Tibet”.32 Eminent Tibetan Historian Dawa Norbu argues that “this dramatic conversion may be partly explained by what sociologists call elective affinity”. The warrior could at once identify himself with the chief wrathful deity of Sakya tradition, Hevajra, whose empowerment (Dban) he was given as an initiation into Buddhism”.33

31 Sakya Pandita, though not actually the founder of Sakya sect, was the true organizer of the sect who diversified and advanced the standard of teaching and study and founded leading Sakya monasteries.


In 1251 both Godan and the Sakya Pandita died and Tibet came within the orbit of Kublai Khan. In 1253, Phagpa, Sakya Pandita's nephew, who once visited Mongol court with him, was invited by Kublai. Impressed by his personality and religious teaching, the Mongol ruler made him his religious teacher, gave him authority over entire Tibet and established him as Vice-Regent with the title of imperial preceptor (Ti'shih/dbu-bla), and later when he was proclaimed Khaghan, at Korakorum in 1260, he named Phagpa, "National Preceptor" (Kuo-Shih). He declared Tibetan Buddhism the official religion of the whole eastern part of Mongol Empire in China and himself became a powerful and devoted patron of Buddhism. From this time dates that peculiar relationship between Tibet and China, known as Cho-Yon Patron and Priest, by which the ruler of Tibet in the person of the predominant grand Lama was regarded as the religious advisor and priest of the Emperor, who in return acted as patron and protector. However, no written bond sealed this

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34 Kublai Khan was at this time the Khaghan of the Mongol Empire, not Emperor of China. Kublai declared a new Chinese dynasty and had proclaimed himself the Emperor of China only in 1270. Morris, Rossabi, Khublai Khan : His Life and Times, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1988), p.56.

35 Luciano, Petech, “Tibet Relations with Sung China and with the Mongols” in China among Equals, (ed.), Morris Rossabi, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 184. The "nation (Kuo) of which Phagspa was "National preceptor" was the Mangol Empire, not China, This date has in Modern times been cited by the Chinese at the time when Tibet became part of China.
relationship and no other basis was recognized for the connection between two countries.

As Wylie commented, despite the significance of this relationship or perhaps because of it, "...no other development in Tibetan history has been recorded in such an anachronistic and obfuscated fashion".36

This extraordinary relationship between the Mongols and Tibetans was important mainly for its political implications. The Cho-Yon relationship fulfilled the needs not only of the Tibetan Buddhism but of Mongols as well. The Mongols recognized the universalistic nature of religion and favoured religious practitioners over the more nationalist feudal nobility. Generalising this form of practice, Max Weber writes, "if the political ruler wants to create an apparatus of officials and a counter-weight against the nobility...he cannot wish for a more valuable support than the influence of the monks on the mass".37 He also recognizes, however, that an ecclesiastical organization is typically far from powerless in relation to its patron despite its total dependence in the political and military sense. Tibetan caught with spiritual authority and charisma, and reputation for possessing magical powers established a power position for themselves

in the Mongol court. Phagpa's influence at the Mongol court more than anything else was based upon charisma of his religion. Sakya Pandita became the first religious head of the Tibetan government with Mongol military backing. Tibet's military dependence on the Mongols produced situations with implications for future interstate relations in the region. On the one hand it resolved China's security problem which was her overbearing concern since 823, on the other hand, it also curtailed the relative autonomy of Sakya regime externally as well as internally, as exemplified firstly by the dispatch of Chinese troop to resolve a dispute between Non Chen Kun dga bzan-pa and one of Sakya's relatives and then by the military aid given by Kublai's son to suppress the rebellion of Bri-gumpa against the Sakya regime.38

However, throughout the Sakya rule, the Mongol dominance was mostly indirect because the loci of military power and political authority remained separate from each other. An autonomous office was set up in Peking whose head Phagpa was responsible for all Tibetan affairs. It was called the Bureau of Buddhist and Tibetan affairs (Hsuan-Cheng-yuan).39 The main function of this office was to

38 David Snell grove, op.cit., p. 149.
39 Dawa Norbu has drawn an interesting analogy between India office in London during the British Raj and Bureau of Buddhist and Tibetan affairs by comparing their political function. This analogy underscores the subtlety and degree of power relation between the Sakya regime and Mongols, No. 29, p. 181. Dawa Norbu, Paper presented at the 9th WISCONS in Conference on South Asia, op.cit., p.181.
select an executive to head the administration in Tibet. The executive was called Dpon-chen (literally, “Great authority”) Dpon-chens were appointed by the law. They carried out the administration, while the lamas remained the source of authority and legitimacy.

The Mongols made no attempt to administer Tibet with their own people. But they arranged a broad survey of the country for the purpose of taxation, created an efficient system of communication with well placed staging posts, and established an overall organization of ‘thousand districts’ obviously to make it possible for the lamas to rule, or for the Yuan dynasty to control developments in Central Asia, as a whole indirectly, but effectively. Thus, the Mongols provided the Sakya lamas with an administrative infrastructure, which Tibet then lacked.

Scholars have variously interpreted the Mongol-Tibet relationships. Norbu describes the Tibetan-Mongolian relationship in “structural” terms, whereas Indian Tibetologists characterized the Mongol power in Tibet during the Sakya period as “suzerainty”.

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Norbu interprets the power or control exercised by the Mongols in two senses, institutional and organizational. Institutional aspect is represented by Bureau of Buddhist or Tibetan Affairs (Hsian-Cheny Yian) and organizationally it represented the reorganization of Tibet along semi-military lines and introducing of Chinese bureaucratic elements on to fragmented Tibet. The sum total of both these aspects is explained in structural sense in the context of Tibet.

Recently, a German Tibetologist has written that “Tibet was terra incognita, a foreign country for the Chinese and Mongols”\(^{42}\) during the Sakya-Mongol period.

The nature of Tibetan-Mongol relationship does not have either any historical lineage or implication for current Chinese sovereignty claims over Tibet because Mongolia and Tibet “acquired a similar status as territories of Khaubilai’s realm as Mongol Khagan, pre-existing and separate from the realm he acquired as Chinese emperor”.\(^{43}\)

However, the pattern of Mongol-Tibetan relationship are the foundation of future Sino-Tibetan relationship as it continued to be a flexible and variable relationship, depending on the relative power and interest of the parties at any given time.

After the death of Khubilia in 1294, Tibet lost the intimacy that had characterized the period of Khubilai and Phagpa. However, by 1358, the Sakya rule fell corresponding to the declining strength of Yuan (Mongol) dynasty of China, which was driven out.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., p. 183.

From the end of Yuan dynasty (1368), there was no fixed relationship, certainly not one of sub-ordination between the rulers of Tibet and emperors of Ming dynasty (1368-1644), but contact was maintained by visits to China by monks and lamas of the Tibetan monasteries. Like the Yuan, the Ming clearly underscoring the logic of inner Asian politics and “unmistakably singled out for imperial patronage the Karmapa sect which had become the most popular sect and therefore the most powerful sect after the fall of Sakya. But it did not help to set up a national regime.”

Ming Emperor Chieng-tsan invited the fifth Karmapa, Denzin Shekpa, to his court in 1403 to perform the Buddhist death and rebirth ritual for his predecessor T’ai-tsu. The Karmapa lama was awarded a lavish and lengthy title, the essential part of which was ‘ta-paofu-wang’, “Great precious king of Dharma”, one of the titles that Phagpa had held under the Mongols.

However, the likelihood of a second Mongol conquest of China was the greatest threat to early Mings, because the successive tribal confederacies in Mongolia struggled to reconstruct the Mongol polity and empire of the 13th century. Later, this fear was confirmed by the Manchu Emperor, Kang-hsi (1661-1722)’s attempt to install an imposter Dalai Lama. He however later backtracked and favoured the Tibetan choice as the Mongol tribes backed it. Charles Bell argues that

44 Dawa Norbu, “Btsan, Blama-Dponpa and Sprut Skii; changing notions of authority, and shifting basis of power and their combined impact on political development in Tibet”, op. cit., p. 183.
the Manchu emperor “feared a Mongol-Tibetan combination against China resulting perhaps in the foundation of a new Mongol Empire”.45

The Ming dynasty, aware of extraordinary relationship between the Tibetans and the Mongols, used the lamas and their monastic missions to establish their influence on Mongols. Understandably, a Ming frontier official observing Altan Khan’s preoccupation with Buddhism reported to Peking that we must promote the diffusion of Buddhism and help it in every way. Therefore, as the Mongol threat diminished, so did the Ming interest in Tibet as “none of the Inter Ming emperors had the same interest in Buddhism, nor did the later Ming have much interest in Tibet”.46

Further, the hopes of early Ming emperors to exercise their political influence along the lives enjoyed by Mongols through the patronage of Lamas were upset by Karmapa and his limited political influence in Tibet. Karmapa refused the military support offered by Ming emperor Ch’eng-htsn to establish the predominance of his sect over the others in Tibet in a way reminiscent of Phagpa’s refusal of Khublai’s offer to prohibit other sects in Tibet. The karmapa refused this offer, as well as a political relationship of Cho-yon type between

45 Charles Bell. op. cit., p. 40.
himself and Chi'eng-tns\textsuperscript{47}. Lacking the will or the need to impose the
type of dependence relationship upon Tibet that had existed under the
Yuan. The Ming maintained the relationship by conferring Tibetan
officials titles that had existed under the Yuan as if the Ming had
inherited the Yuan relationship with Tibet. Despite later Chinese
claims\textsuperscript{48}, Ming patronage of Tibetan Lamas and their award of
"meaningless titles"\textsuperscript{49} can hardly be said to be the equivalent that Tibet
was a "part of China" during the Ming. It should also be noted that
"whereas letters from Emperors of the Yuan dynasty to Tibetan lamas
sometimes contain instructions on monastic administration, those of
Ming Emperors are purely complimentary" Richardson Characterizes
the Sino-Tibetan relations as the existence of 'distance diplomatic
relation'.

\textsuperscript{47} Elliot Sperling, "The 5th Karmapa and some aspects of Relationship
between Tibet and Early Ming", Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh
Richardson in Michael Aris and Aan San Suu Kyi (ed.) (England: Aris
and Phillips Ltd., War Minister, 1979), p.89.

\textsuperscript{48} In 1368, the Ming dynasty replaced the Yuan dynasty in China and
inherited the right to rule Tibet. It is then contended that the titles of
the officials instituted during the Yuan dynasty remain during the
Ming dynasty, and the Emperor of the Ming dynasty conferred titles on
various officials and main hands of Beets in Tibet. It is contended that
Chinese (Han) officials were present in Tibet, Robert McCorquodale
and Nicholas Orosz (ed.) op. cit., p. 176.

\textsuperscript{49} Apart from Karmapa, Sakyapa Lama Kunga Tashi was awarded the
title Ta-Ch'eng fa-wang (Great vehicle king of drarma) and Gelgpa
Sakya Yeshe received the title of Ta-tz'u-awang (Great comparison of
Dharma), Warren. W. Smith, Jr. op. cit., p. 100.

Another five Lamas received lesser titles without actually travelling to
the Ming Court. Three of these were of the Shakyapa Sect One of
Dhagmorgupa, and one of Bringpu. Guiseppi, Tucci, op. cit., p.137.
Tibet relations with the Ming were formal but irregular and lacking the intimacy, which had existed between the Tisris and the Yuan dynasty.

**Emergence of the Dalai Lama and the Patterns of Sino-Tibetan Relationship**

The rise of Gelugpa sect under the leadership of its founder Tsong Khapa (1375-1419) to purify and rejuvenate Tibetan Buddhism is perhaps the most significant event to later Tibetan politics to the present. The Gelugpa order repeated the history of the Sakya rule. The third incarnation of the Gelugpa order of Drepung monastery, Sonam Gyasto the preeminent Lama of the day in Tibet, was invited by Attan Khan as a leader of the Ordos tribe in 1577 to his capital at Hothot (Khoto Khotan), where in 1578 he had converted him to Buddhism. From the Mongol Chieftain, the Galugpa lama received the title of the ‘Dalai Lama’ (“Ocean” viz. Virtue). This title was later applied retroactively to the first and second incarnations who became the first and the second in the line of incarnations of the Dalai Lamas.

Attan’s conversion to Buddhism also witnessed the rapid spread of Tibetan Buddhism among the Mongols. From this time up to the Manchu conquest of China in mid seventeenth century Gelugpa hegemony was established in Tibet with active Mongol support. In 1642, Mongol chief Chos-rgyal of Tibet, Gushri Khan, conferred upon the fifth Dalai Lama temporal authority over all of Tibet, the first time that a Dalai Lama attained both temporal and spiritual rule. Although
the successive Dalai Lamas had acquired an important religious
authority in Tibet and among the Mongols by the end of the sixteenth
century, it was not until the rise to power of the fifth incarnation,
Ngawang Lobsang Gyaltso (1617-1682), that the Dalai Lama came to
wield uncontested supreme spiritual and temporal power in Tibet.
The collapse of the Tibetan Empire put an end to two centuries of
coordinated expansion of Tibetan military power and political influence
throughout the wide stretch of Central Asia.

The effect of Gushri Khan’s intervention on behalf of the
Gelugpa minimized the regional and sectarian conflict and Tibet was
politically united. Zahiruddin Ahmed writes, “This period also marked
the end of an essentially religious war that had raged since 1603
between the Gelugpa and the rulers of Tsang province, who supported
the rival Karmapa”.50

The fifth Dalai Lama’s sovereign authority over Tibet, inherited
by his successive incarnations, was described by Ippolito Desideri, a
Jesuit scholar who visited in Tibet until 1721, as follows: “The
hierarchy existing in Tibet is not secular but superior to all temporal
and regular government. Head of all is the Grand Lama of Tibet...(He)
is recognized and venerated not only by all Thibetans...but by

50 Zahiruddin, Ahmed, “Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth
Century”, Series Oriental Roma, 40 (Roma: Istituto Italiano Per Il
Nepalese, Tartars, and Chinese and is regarded as their chief, master, protector, and Pontiff...He rules not only over religious, but over temporal matters, as he is really the absolute master of Thibet".51

Professor Petech maintains that "The great fifth fueled both as the sole sovereign of a unified and independent state of Tibet and as the spiritual head of the dominant state religion, until his retirement in 1679".52

Clearly, the source of sovereignty came to be vested in the person and the position of the Dalai Lama. For protection against external invaders, however, it became expedient for Tibet to have friendly relations with a state that understood the compulsions of its religion and would willingly respond to its requests for assistance. Thus developed the Cho-Yon relationship between the Dalai Lama and the Mongol emperors and later the Manchu emperors. However, the substance and spirit of Cho-yon relationship shifted and established a degree of Manchu authority as its fragility was exposed by increased cases of conflict and intervention.

It is primarily on the Tibetan-Manchu relations which evolved during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the People's Republic of China bases its claim to Tibet.

**Conflict, Intervention and Military Dependency: Tibetan Relations with the Manchus (1644-1911)**

Historically, the Manchu's were descendants of the Jurchen, who had formed the Ch'ing dynasty in Northern China (1115-1234). The Jurchen had been substantially sinicized during their dynastic period and had retained some of this legacy even during their four hundred-year retreat in Manchuria. The Manchu's had some cultural affinity with the Mongols, but, unlike the Mongols who were a nomadic peoples, they were easily assimilable to the Chinese culture due to their semi-agricultural economy. The name Manchu derived from the Buddhist deity Manjushri, "given as a title by the Fourth Dalai Lama to the Manchu ruler in a 1615 New Year Greetings".53

The award of the title of "Manju Shri" to the Manchu ruler who was not a Buddhist, by the fourth Dalai Lama, "may represent a Tibetan attempt to create a Cho-yon relationship with the Manchu. The Manchu period in the history of Sino-Tibetan relationship represents two dominant and interdependent tendencies. On the one hand, competition and conflict between the Manchu Empire and the

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Mongol tribes to increase their respective share of influence in the lamaist world and on the other, the emergence of the institution of the Dalai Lama as a central axis in Tibetan politics.

Motivated by the idea of extending the Manchu influence over Tibet, and to achieve this, the Manchu Emperor Taizong invited the Dalai Lama. The ostensible purpose of the invitation was to propagate the growth of Buddhist faith and to the benefit of all living beings. Unable to visit personally, he accepted the Manchu offer of the

*Cho-yon relationship and regarded Taizong, in his reply, as “in no way different from his relationship with any other worshipper-patron and protection”.

The Cho-Yon relationship thus became the formal basis for Tibetan’s relations with the Manchus who came to rule over China in 1644. The Manchus shifted their capital to Beijing from Mukden when they included China into their empire.

Nearly ten years later, the Dalai Lama visited Beijing following the reviewed invitation extended in 1648 by Taizong’s successor, Shunzhi (1644-1661). W.W. Rockhill, an American scholar and

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54 Warren W. Smith, Jr., op.cit., p. 159.
diplomat in China has very succinctly described the Dalai Lama's visit very aptly”

“The Dalai Lama had been treated with all the ceremony which could have been accorded to any independent sovereign, and nothing can be found in the Chinese works to indicate that he was looked upon in any other light: at this period of China’s relations with Tibet, the temporal power of the Lama sacked by the arms of Gushri Khan and devotion of all Mongolia, was to a thing for the Emperor of China to question”.56

However, the relationship between Tibet and the Manchus underwent a sea-change as the power vacuum created by the death of 'the great fifth' Dalai Lama in 1682 and relatively shorter periods of rule and premature deaths until the 13th reincarnation in 1876.57 The

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57 The Dalai Lama incarnations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Reign Years</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>Genum Drubpa</td>
<td>1391-1475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Gendun Gyatso</td>
<td>1475-1592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Sovam Gyatso</td>
<td>1543-1588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Yontan Gyatso</td>
<td>1589-167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>Nawang Lobsang Gyatso</td>
<td>1617-1682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>Tsangyang Gyatso</td>
<td>1683-1706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>Kalzang Gyatso</td>
<td>1708-1757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>Longtok Gyatso</td>
<td>1758-1804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth</td>
<td>Tsultrim Gyatso</td>
<td>1806-1837</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenth</td>
<td>Khendrup Gyatso</td>
<td>1816-1837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleventh</td>
<td>Triula Gyatso</td>
<td>1838-1856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelveth</td>
<td>Plin Gyatso</td>
<td>1856-1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirteenth</td>
<td>Tenzin Gyatso</td>
<td>1976-1933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourteenth</td>
<td></td>
<td>1935-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The ninth Dalai Lama born in 1804 died when eleven, the tenth at 23, the eleventh at 17 and the 12th at 20 years of age.
power vacuum started a rivalry between the Mongols and the Manchu marked by a series of conflicts and interventions by the Mongols, Manchus and Gorkhas. In face of interventions and conflicts, and failure of the ‘non-coercive regime’ in Tibet to control their dimensional contradictions they moved from infancy to maturity and led to the creation of a military dependency. Norbu argues, “a fundamental change in Sino-Tibetan relations during the Ch’ing period was Tibet’s military dependency on China in the event of any major national crisis, external aggression to internal rebellion.58

Therefore, internally, the military dependency of the ‘non-coercive regime’ combined with the decrease in power and influence of the institution of the Dalai Lama set in the Manchu-Tibetan relationship into a new phase.

In 1720, a new dimension was added to the Tibetan-Manchu relations with the assistance given to the Tibetans by the Manchus against the Dzungar Mongols who had invaded and occupied Tibet. The imperial armies brought with them the seventh Dalai Lama, Kelsang Gyaltsa (1708-1757). “Greatly enhancing the emperor’s popularity”.59 After placing the seventh Dalai Lama in power in 1720, the Chiang Army remained in Lhasa. The Chiang installed a

58 Dawa Norbu, op. cit., p. 786.
provisional military government presided by General Yansin, which gave way to a regular government in 1721. The Tibetan administration and government was reorganized. The office of the Desi was abolished and the new government was headed by the council of ministers. However, the new regime could not bring about stability as the old political rivalry led to a civil war amongst the ruling nobels. This situation was occasioned by the withdrawal of Chinese troops from Lhasa by Yung Cheing emperor after his father's death in 1722.

The civil war (1722-1728) upsurge of the old rivalries among the Pholhanas and Khangchenas resulted in former's victory. Once again the emperor established the garrison in Lhasa. For the first time two resident Manchu officials were posed in Lhasa. They were called Ambans from then until the fall of Manchu dynasty in 1911, Ambans remained the direct representatives of Manchu emperor in Tibet.

60 This title equivalent to that of a prime minister became the designation of the chief administrators, who served under fifth and sixth Dalai Lama. All political affairs were handled by the Desi who referred such matters to the Dalai Lama only when they were of special importance.

61 The presence of Ch'ang troops caused an immediate shortage of supplies, a consequent rise in price which was a constant source of friction in Sino-Tibetan relations. Petech argues that this measure was part of the retrenchment policy of the new emperor, who intended to put an end to K'ang-hsi's imperialistic drive, and to reduce the commitments of the empire outside the boarders of China proper,F. De Filippi (ed.) op. cit., p.92.

However, the actual administration in Tibet was in the hands of Polhanasa, who reestablished order, commerce the postal system and taxation. By 1733, Polhanas had succeeded in inspiring confidence in the imperial court, as the Dzungar danger had also faded away; the military garrison at Lhasa was reduced to only 500 even from 2000 as well as the Dalai Lama was allowed to return to Lhasa from exile two years later in 1735.63

In the general pattern of Tibetan history this regime exemplifies the ascendary of temporal over the religious elements. In their relations with China, the Polhanas shrewdly saw that as long as Tibetan policy did not endanger the wider interests of China in Central Asia, Chinese overlordship in Tibet could be reduced to a mere formality. Petech characterizes the power distribution in Tibet at this time as follows:

"The power of Polhanas was absolute, the authority of the Dalai Lama was in abeyance, the supervision by the Chinese (Manchus) nominal only. Truly Po-lhanas was a king, the first Tibetan king after the tragic end of the last gtsan ruler in 1642".64


64 Cited in F. De Fillippi (ed.), p. 169.
As far as the influence of Ambans over Tibetan internal administration is concerned, Petech concludes that "the duties of the Ambans consisted mainly in holding the command of small garrison, ensuring communication with Peking and reporting to emperor of the doings. Richardson writes that although it was not their function to take part in the actual government of Tibet, the presence of Ambans in command of a substantial escort "provided the emperor with some assurance that if ever his advice matters of policy should become necessary, it would be respected." Joseph Kokmas also concludes that although the Manchu official’s presence must have had some influence, the Tibetan administration was left unaffected and the Ambans were therefore little more than observers.

Clearly, during this period Tibet developed military dependency on Manchus:

The age of lay administration came to an end with Polhanas death in 1747 and the sequence of events took a dramatic turn to the restoration of authority and power to the Dalai Lama.

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65 Ibid., p. 256.
66 H. E. Richardson, op. cit., p. 52.
The assassination of Polhanas successor, Gyume Namgyal (1747-50) and the lynching of the Ambans' in the anti-Manchu. Lhasa created the space so be filled only is the Dalai Lama “on the first day of the second month of the Iron-Sheep Year (1751)” who assumed “full spiritual and temporal powers over Tibet”.

Upon the arrival of Ambans in 1751 the Tibetan administration was again reorganized along the lines suggested by the Dalai Lama.

However, in 1751 the powers of the Ambans were greatly increased. Prof. Petech, describing their functions, writes – “besides commanding the garrison and having exclusive charge of the postal service, their advice had to be taken by the council of bka-blon on every important affair. This gave them a broad right of supervision on the actions of the government”.

This was the first incident of direct intervention of the Ambans in the administrative work of the government.

The last direct intervention by the Manchus came in the wake of the Gorkha invasion in 1792. To upset the Gorkha invasion of Tibet, the Qianlong emperor sent a large army under Manchu General

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69 Ibid.
70 F. De Filippi (ed.), op. cit., p.256.
Fukangan to help Tibet drive the Nepalese back. However, at this time the Ching army 'composed mainly of Tibetans (only 5000 out of the 13000 troops were non-Tibetans)'. Appropriately, more than a Manchu army, the 'Tibetan-Ching' army concluded a peace treaty between Nepal and Tibet in 1792.

The 1792 Gorkha invasion and conflict with Tibet provided an excellent opportunity for the Manchu to control the inner Asian politics against the March of British imperialism. The peace treaty concluded with Nepal gave an increased intervention and responsibility to the Ambans to conduct its foreign relations. According to the terms of the treaties, “Nepal and Tibet pledged to maintain fraternal relations and to refrain from engaging in hostilities, and agreed that future disputes would be submitted to the Amban in Lhasa for arbitration”.

The Tibetans dependence on the Manchus increased as a direct consequences of the conflict. Hence, the Manchu imposed reforms on the administration of Tibet in order to bring the country’s government particularly the conduct of its foreign relations under its direct supervision.

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Among the most significant reforms impinging upon the Tibetan independence when the Ambans took control of the frontier defence were foreign relations along with rights to take decisions into internal matters.

The Ch’ing also required the selection of highly learned lamas of Tibet including the Dalai and the Panchen Lama by instituting a system of “choosing of lots from the golden urn” under the supervision of Ambans. Traditionally, the high incarnate Lamas were selected according to the concept of incarnation introduced by the Karmapa sect n 12th century.

The empirical edict invoked the Emperor’s obligation as protector of the Gelgupa order from alleged corruption and nepotism, and prescribed the drawing of lots from a golden urn as the new selection procedure. However, this decision had potentially serious implications for the deeply religious Tibetans with the decline of Mongol power by the mid 15th century. The Ch’ing were enabled to intervene in Tibet, restricting the role of Tibet in inner Asian affairs. From 1720 to 1792, the Ch’ing gradually increased their control in Tibet, intervening in the case of third party invasions of Tibet (1720 and 1792) and internal disorders (1750). Each intervention resulted in an increase in Ch’ing gradual administrative control over Tibetan
affairs until in 1792 when the Ch'ing significantly restricted Tibetan autonomy, at least temporarily, in both domestic and foreign affairs.

The recurring Manchu intervention coupled with the reorganization of Tibetan administration changed the nature of Sino-Tibetan relations and resulted in the establishment of what Petech calls Chinese "protectorate"\textsuperscript{72} and Litiehtsen calls Chinese "Sovereignty"\textsuperscript{73} in Tibet.

**SINO-TIBETAN RELATIONS IN THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY**

The measures undertaken in the wake of Gorkha invasion in 1792 represents the height of Manchu influence and authority in Tibet. But by the beginning of Nineteenth century, Manchu Ching dynasty began to decline and with it, its control over Tibet. It became evident as the selection of the ninth Dalai Lama was confirmed by the traditional process. Without recourse to the Ch'ing golden urn system introduced in 1792. It was possibly due to the outbreak of demonstrations in Lhasa against Ch'ing interference in the selection.\textsuperscript{74} This incident was reminiscent of Lhasa uprising of 1750 underscoring the important position and authority of the Dalai Lama over Tibet. By

\textsuperscript{72} F. De. Filippi (ed.), op. cit., p.257.


the middle of the 19th century, Manchu authority and had have considerably. Li Tieh-tsen, citing the Imperial Qing records, (Xuan Zong Shilu) has commented on the sharp decline in Manchu influence.

Abbe Hoc, a French missionary who lived in Lhasa at this time, confirms his assessment of Manchu authority characterizing Ambans as "permanent embassy" whose real purpose, he noted, was solely "to flatter the religious beliefs of the Mongols and to rally the people behind the reigning dynasty by leading them to believe that the Beijing government was a devout believer in the dictums of the Buddha-la i.e. the Dalai Lama".75

By the middle of the Nineteenth century Manchu influence was reduced to a nominal one coinciding with the rise of British imperialism in South Asia which since the 1840s expanded into the Himalayan regions which had traditionally been a sphere of lamaist influence. The British had bound all the Himalayan states, most of which had close religious, commercial and political ties with Lhasa, to the expanding British Empire by means of a series of wars, annexations and agreements and the Tibetan feared an imminent advance into Tibet.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of takeover</th>
<th>Name of the Lamaist Cultural Area</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>Lahul and Spiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>Ladakh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Darjeeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861-90</td>
<td>Sikkim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>Bhutan</td>
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<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>Tawang</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Tibetan speaking people in the Cis Himalayan region had close cultural links and they used to look up to Lhasa as epicenter of their faith. Therefore, Lhasa wielded considerable influence over the CIS-Himalayan region. In fact Ladakh, Sikkim and Butan used to pay tri-annual tributes to the Dalai Lama until the communist take over in 1950. Richardson writes that the Tibetan suspension of British power in India was "progressively confirmed by the extension of British ascendancy all along the Himalayan foothills in areas where the influence of Lhasa, even if not sovereign had long been respected."

British expansionism into the Lamaism cultural sphere of influence

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77 These tributes were called to Co-phyag (annual submission) Bhutan used to pay annual tributes but Ladakh being far away used to pay every second year. It appears Sikkim stopped tributes when it became British protectorate in 1890.
accentuated the Tibetan anti western phobia and forced Lhasa to adopt "a close door policy until 1904". 78

Despite Tibet's closed door policy, British India attempted to survey the economic resources, to spy on the political condition in Lhasa and Lhingatsl and above all to establish some sort of contact with the government of the Dalai Lama, causing anxiety to Russia. 79 And by 1895 the stage was set for the "Great game" 80 to be played between imperial Russia, the British and the Manchus.

In the 18th Century the Russians and consolidated their position in Siberia as far as the Pacific and expanded rapidly into Central Asia. This brought them into contact with Persia, where British had interest in Afghanistan, control of which the British considered necessary for the protection of nor the western India. The Czarist Russia realized the importance of Tibet as a key to exercise influence over most of the people in Central Asia. The Russian Empire had already included

78 No. 77. p.22.
79 Mission of Samual Turner. George Bogle and Sharat Chandra Das is ample evidence of the British activities in Tibet.
80 In the late 19th and early 20th century, Tibet became the unwilling object of contention among the three great empires in Asia: the Russia, British and Manchu Empires. Their relations with Tibet conditioned primarily by the imperial competition to keep out of the other's influence. This was known as the great game. Thus, Tibet was treated in much the same way as smaller countries are today by the demands of Superpower rivalry. Edmund Candler's observation that, "jealousy and suspicion make nations willful blind" is poignantly applicable in this convention. Edward Candler. The Unveiling of Lhasa", (London. 1905), p.277.
Buryat Mongols who were the religious subjects of the Dalai Lama. It could also establish a diplomatic foothold through a Russian citizen of Mongol origin called Dorjiev. Dorjiev, a tutor and an advisor to the XIII Dalai Lama, argued for an alliance between Tibet and the Czarist regime in Russia, in order to depend Tibet against British India, traditional protractor, China was getting weaker.  

The British government's realization of the extent of Manchu weakness was echoed by the Foreign Secretary, Robert Cecil: "if the Chinese (i.e. Manchus) ever had any had nay authority in Tibet they certainly have none now". A British military officer, while commenting on Manchu presence in Tibet writes "A power which is incapable of protecting anyone or applying the most insignificant rules of police, does not deserve the name of a Government".

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81 The Manchu weakness was exposed as the Tibetan government repudiated both 1890 "convention Relating to Sikkim and Tibet" and 1893 "Regulations regarding Trade. Communication and pasturage of 1893 respectively and expressly rejected the authority of the imperial government making it unenforceable, since the Tibetans had no participation in conclusion of the treaty. Thus a British Political officer, J. C. White concluded in 1894 that the Manchus had no authority whatever there: "though rulers in name (they) have no power and can enforce no order". No. 54. p.29. Also, in 1895 China's defeat in war with Japan convinced the XIII Dalai Lama of the inadequacy of Manchu power to be relied upon for protection against an invader.


83 Ibid. pp.206-207.
Realization of the Manchu weakness along with the fear of Russian influence, as discussed earlier, became the principal determinant of Britain's Tibet policy. Lord George N. Curzon, the Viceroy of India (1899-1905) felt that the Empire could not permit "the creation of a revile or hostile influence in such a position so close to the Indian border and so pregnant with the possibilities of mischief".84

Trade considerations were now held only secondary importance in the face of Manchu weakness and Russian activities in Tibet. However, initially it was trade interest, which recorded after the Macaulay Mission (1885) and after all of their interest and centered on the political and strategic issues.

To obtain political influence in Tibet Lord Curzon, being aware of the British India's strategic interest in Tibet, tried to initiate some contact with those through different channels to establish friendly and good-neighbourly relations with Tibet by giving assurance to the Dali Lama that "the British Government [has] no desire to interfere in any way in the internal administration of Tibet. This is a matter that concerns the people and the ruler of Tibet".85

The non-coercive regime under the incurable fear of British strategy to safeguard British economic interest in China as well as

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85 Ibid., p. 32.
national security of the Indian empire. Their strategy was to allow Tibet to continue with the fiction of Chinese suzerainty over her. This concession to Peking was not out of any British love for the Manchu rule but for their understanding that Tibet under the suzerainty of the weak Chinese would not be a source of danger to the safety and security of British India. This could be ensured if Tibet remained free from direct Chinese control or hegemony.

British rational imperialists arrived at such a policy decision after undertaking the cost-benefit analysis of colonizing Tibet. Also the defense of British position in India did not in itself required further expansionism. The British did not attempt to impose their control directly upon territories on the frontiers of India, since the potential political and economic benefits did not justify the great difficulties involved. This was recognized by Owen Lattimore: "in conquering and occupying it (India) the British moved stage by stage up to an arc of natural inland frontiers. Until they reached these limits every political and territorial acquisition was a profitable accretion, enlarging an empire with a natural center of gravity of its own. Beyond these limits it was unprofitable to expand because expansion became converted into a drag away from the centre.


Clearly, Tibet was the case of diminishing returns to imperialism. Even "the most optimistic imperialist would have shrunk from assuming responsibility for another 2000 miles or so or frontier enclosing over 500000 square miles of the country, mostly high, severe and unpopulated and totally lacking in communication. It seemed, therefore, the best solution to patch things up between Tibet and China in a way which would restore formal connection between them, saving Chinese face but restricting Chinese control".88

Lord Curzon, the architect and advocate of British forward policy towards central Asia, wrote in 1901: "It would be madness for us to cross the Himalaya and occupy it (Tibet). But it is important that no one else should seize it; and it should be turned into a sort of buffer between the Indian and Russian empires. If Russia were to come down to the big mountains she would at once begin intriguing with Nepal; and we should have a second Afghanistan on the north. I have not put this very clearly. What I mean is that Tibet itself and not Nepal must be buffer state that we must endeavour to create".89

This succinctly sums up the British policy towards Tibet. It is with such a strategic vision that British found China almost an ideal suzerain in Tibet.

88 H. E. Richardson, op. cit., p. 71.
89 A. Lamb, op. cit., p. 260.
Meanwhile, Dorjievi mission had met with Czar Nicholas in 1898, 1900 and 1901, each time having been sent by the Dalai Lama to establish relations with Russia. On the third mission, in 1901, Dorjievi was accompanied by three official Tibetan representatives. Dorjievi's mission to Russia raised British suspicious of Russian, and Curzon, seeking to initiate a more activist policy ordered Young Husband expedition in 1904.

The Younghusband military expedition of 1904 was ordered to converge with the British strategic requirements in Central Asia. Once colonization of or protectorate over Tibet was ruled out from early on, it became a matter of adjustment with the Chinese Empire. When the Younghusband Expedition was under preparation, the British government made it clear to the Chinese and Tibetan governments that "the mission was of an exclusively commercial character, that we repudiate all designs of political nature upon Tibet, that we have no desire to declare a protectorate or permanently to occupy any position of country." There is therefore some truth in Premen Addy's assertion that at certain periods especially during Curzon's Viceroyship there developed a working alliance between Imperial China and British

90 John Swelling, Buddhism in Russia : The Story of Agvan Dorzhiev, China's Emissary to the Tsar, (Rockport, Massachusetts: Element, 1993), pp. 54, 72, 83.
91 Ibid., p. 74.
India. The common enemy intriguing in and disturbing Inner Asian peace was perceived to be Czarist Russia. Thus the formula which the British worked out in the early 20th century was an autonomous Tibet, subject to a weak Chinese suzerainty and guaranteed by an Anglo-Russian treaty. In view of Czarist government, the British's involvement in Tibet, especially the conclusion of the Lhasa convention was a departure from the British assurances made in 1903 and 1094 not to meddle into Tibetan affairs. To ally Russian displeasure, but more importantly, to forestall possible retaliatory expansionist moves, the British negotiated a treaty with Russia concerning. Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet in which they defined the limits of each other's influence.

The overdetermined effort by the British government to keep the imperial powers out of Tibet was inextricably linked with Tibetan autonomy, which in turn was a necessary pre-requisite to the security of India's northern frontier. As Norbu puts it: "the Tibetan autonomy which the British insisted so much was a necessary concomitant of

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94 Lhasa convention was sighted after Younghsband expedition in 1904 between British and Tibet. According to the convention, Tibet was to observe the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1890 and Trade regulations of 1893 and no foreign power was allowed to Tibet without British consent.
95 The Russians did in fact react the advancing into Mongolia. Charles Bell, op. cit., p.71. For a discussion and evidence of Russia's continued interest in Tibet. A. Lamb, op. cit., p.317.
India's frontier being peaceful".96 In other words, Tibetan autonomy was a necessary precondition to the security of India's northern frontier.

Unfortunately for Tibet, the avowed purposes of maintaining Tibetan autonomy was betrayed in the Adhesion agreement of 1906, who interpreted it as a recognition of Chinese sovereignty in Tibet. The Chinese representative in Tibet, Chang-yin-tang, a Han rather than a Manchu was also a representative of the new Chinese policy towards Tibet.97 Chang made it clear that he interpreted the 1906 convention as superseding the 1904 between Britain and Tibet's equivalent to a recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.98

However, the autonomy secured for Tibet at Lhasa convention by the British demonstrated Tibet's ability to conclude its own international treaties and very markedly China's calamitous lack of authority in Lhasa was lost at the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907. The British, not only tacitly recognized Chinese right in Tibet, but further bound themselves down to a position of not conducting negotiations with that country except through Chinese intermediacy. As Article II of the convention mentions "In conformity with the

96 Charles Bell, op.cit., p. 36.
98 See Appendix
admitted principle of the suzerainty of China over Tibet, Great Britain and Russia engage not to enter into negotiations with Tibet except thought the intermediacy of the Chinese government".  

Lord Curzon wrote on September 25th 1907 - "The Russian conventions, in my view is very deplorable, it gives up all that we have been fighting for years and gives it up, with a wholesale abandon that is truly cynical in its recklessness. And me, it makes one despair of public life and efforts of a century sacrificed and nothing or next to nothing in return."  

The 1907 agreement as a whole laid the foundation of cooperation between Russia and Britain. But by the provision, which bound both powers to negotiate on Tibetan matters - with a few exceptions through China alone, as well as in other ways, it placed Tibet still further in the grip of China.  

British strategy assumed an important as China was unable to control its own internal territory, much less Tibet. China, however blistered, by recognition of its rights in Tibet in terms of modern international law and fearful of losing Tibet began to take steps to reassert its authority. This was achieved by a combined skills of diplomacy backed by military force until Dalai Lama's declaration of independence from China in 1911.

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99 See Appendix.
The payment of indemnity to British under Article 6 of the Lhasa convention.\textsuperscript{101} Exclusion of Tibetans except as observes in trade negotiations between Britain and Tibet of 1908 agreement were same of the example of establishment of Chinese stronghold over Tibet.

The Young husband expedition by its withdrawal on the morrow of resounding military 'victory' had helped in creating a power vacuum which the Chinese, despite their varied pre-occupations at home, did not neglect to fill.\textsuperscript{102} Attempts to impose Manchu control over parts of Kham bordering China, including dartsado (Daganltu or Kangding in Chinese). Annexation of Batsng in 1906 and Degre, Draya and even capital of Kham (i.e. Chamdo) within four years of appointment of Manchu General zhao Erhfeng as imperial commissioner created a general crisis in Tibet.\textsuperscript{103}

On the other hand, the Chinese in 1908, in order to effectively control Tibet, invited the Dalai Lama, to Peaking from Urga, who had gone there in exile at the time of Yong husband expedition in 1904. The Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa from the Manchu court in 1909 was from having been influenced in favour of closer ties with the Manchu court.

\footnotesize{101} Parshotam Mehra, "The young husband repetition an interpretation" \textit{(Asia publishing House, New York 1968)} p. 375

\footnotesize{102} See appendix

\footnotesize{103} Warren W. Smith, Jr., op.cit., p. 42
As American diplomat in China, W. W. Rockhell reported to
president Roosevelt at that time that "the Dalai Lama leaves Peking
with his dislike for the Chinese intensified. I fear that he will not co­
operate with the Chinese intensified. I fear that he will not co-operate
with the Chinese in the difficult work they now oppose to undertake of
governing Tibet like a Chinese in the difficult work they now propose to
undertake of governing Tibet like a Chinese province, and that serious
trouble may yet be in store for my friend the Dalai Lama, if not for
China."

Predictably, when Zhao's military campaign reached Lhasa in
February 1910 with 2000 men, the Dalai Lama sought refuge in India.
However, he addressed and append to Great Britain and Foreign
Powers in 1909 for intervention with the Chinese to stop the dispatch
of troops to Lhasa. He also sent urgent pleas for help to Russia. France
and Japan but the only result was a weak protest in Beijing.

The invasion of 1910 is a turning point in the relations between
China and Tibet and marks a break with the previous Chinese policy.
The Manchu interventions in the eighteenth the century (1720, 1728,
1750 and 1792) had been the only measures taken at the request or
with the support of the Tibetans to restore order or to protect Tibet
from foreign aggressors.
The violent upset of the status quo in Tibet created concern in India. Yet the British attitude was surprisingly passive and somewhat ambitious. The developments in Tibet endangered the safety of India's northern borders, which was also the foundation of the British imperial policy towards Tibet.