



The Last Years of Independence and Chinese Conquest (1913 - 1959)

Since 1912, Tibet enjoyed de facto independence while China endured its Warlord era, civil war, and World War II. Some Chinese sources argue that Tibet was still part of China throughout this period. Some other authors argue that Tibet was also de jure independent after Tibet-Mongolia Treaty of 1913, before which Mongolia has been recognized by Russia.

Tibet continued in 1913–1949 to have very limited contacts with the rest of the world, although British representatives were stationed in Gyantse, Yatung and Gartok (western Tibet) . These so-called "Trade Agents" were in effect diplomatic representatives of the British Government of India and in 1936-37 the British also established a permanent mission in Lhasa. This was in response to a Chinese "condolence mission" sent to the Tibetan capital after the demise of the 13th Dalai Lama which remained in Lhasa as, in effect, a Republican Chinese diplomatic post. After 1947, the last British representative, Hugh Richardson remained in Lhasa until 1950 serving the Indian government. The British, like the Chinese, encouraged the Tibetans to keep foreigners out of Tibet and just over 90 European and Japanese visited Lhasa during the years 1920-1950, most of whom were British diplomatic personnel.

Very few governments did anything resembling a normal diplomatic recognition of Tibet.



Death and prophecies of the 13th Dalai Lama

The 13th Dalai Lama predicted before dying in 1933:

"Very soon in this land with a harmonious blend of religion and politics deceptive acts may occur. At that time, if we do not dare to protect our territory, our spiritual personalities including the Victorious Father and Son (Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama) may be exterminated without trace, the property and authority of our Lakangs (residences of reincarnated lamas) and monks may be taken away. Moreover, our political system will vanish without anything remaining. The property of all people, high and low, will be seized and the people forced to become slaves. All living beings will have to endure endless days of suffering and will be stricken with fear. Such a time will come."

Only 20 years later, the Chinese invasion of Tibet brought many of these prophecies to reality. During the Chinese Great Leap Forward between 200,000 and 1,000,000 Tibetans died. Approximately 6,000 monasteries were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, destroying the vast majority of historic Tibetan architecture.

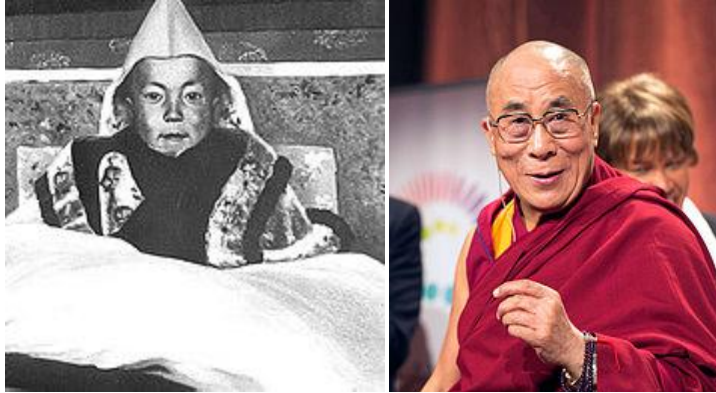
After the death of the 13th Dalai Lama

Since the expulsion of the Amban from Tibet in 1912, communication between Tibet and China had taken place only with the British as mediator. Direct Sino-Tibetan communications resumed after the 13th Dalai Lama's death in December 1933, when China sent a "condolence mission" to Lhasa headed by General Huang Musong.

Soon after the 13th Dalai Lama died, according to some accounts, the Kashag reaffirmed their 1914 position that Tibet remained nominally part of China, provided Tibet could manage its own political affairs. In his essay *Hidden Tibet: History of Independence and Occupation* published by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives at Dharamsala, S.L. Kuzmin cited several sources indicating then Tibetan government had not declared Tibet a part of China, despite an imitation of Chinese sovereignty made by the KMT government. Since 1912 Tibet had been de facto independent of Chinese control, but on other occasions it had indicated willingness to accept nominal subordinate status as a part of China, provided that Tibetan internal systems were left untouched, and provided China relinquished control over a number of important ethnic Tibetan areas in Kham and Amdo. In support of claims that China's rule over Tibet was not interrupted, China argues that official documents showed that the National Assembly of China and both chambers of parliament had Tibetan members, whose names had been preserved all along.

China was then permitted to establish an office in Lhasa, staffed by the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission and headed by Wu Zhongxin (Wu Chung-hsin), the Commission's director of Tibetan Affairs, which Chinese sources claim was an administrative body but the Tibetans claim that they rejected China's proposal that Tibet should be a part of China, and in turn demanded the return of territories east of the Drichu (Yangtze River). In response to the establishment of a Chinese office in Lhasa, the British obtained similar permission and set up their own office there.

The 1934 Khamba Rebellion led by Pandastang Togbye and Pandatsang Rapga broke out against the Tibetan Government during this time, with the Pandatsang family leading Khamba tribesmen against the Tibetan army.



After the birth of the 14th Dalai Lama

In 1935 the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, was born in Amdo in eastern Tibet and recognized by all concerned as the incarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama. After ransom of 400,000 silver dragons was paid by Lhasa, contrary to the wishes of the Chinese government, to the Hui Muslim warlord Ma Bufang, who ruled Chinghai from Xining, Ma Bufang released him to travel to Lhasa in 1939.

He was then enthroned by the Ganden Phodrang government at the Potala Palace on the Tibetan New Year. China claims that the Kuomintang Government 'ratified' the current 14th Dalai Lama, and that KMT representative General Wu Zhongxin presided over the ceremony; both the ratification order of February 1940 and the documentary film of the ceremony still exist intact. According to Tsering Shakya, Wu Zhongxin (along with other foreign representatives) was present at the ceremony, but there is no evidence that he presided over it. The British Representative Sir Basil Gould who was present at the ceremony bore witness to the falsity of the Chinese claim to have presided over it.

Tibet between 1942 and 1949

In 1942, the U.S. government told the government of Chiang Kai-shek that **it had never disputed** Chinese claims to Tibet.

In 1944, during World War II, two Austrian / German mountaineers, Heinrich Harrer and Peter Aufschnaiter, came to Lhasa, where Harrer became a tutor and friend to the young Dalai Lama, giving him sound knowledge of Western culture and modern society, until he was forced to leave in 1949.

The Tibetan representatives who attended the Chinese Constitutional Assembly established a Foreign Office in 1942, and in 1946 it sent congratulatory missions to China and India (related to the end of World War II). The mission to China was given a letter addressed to Chinese President Chiang Kai-shek which states that, "We shall continue to maintain the independence

of Tibet as a nation ruled by the successive Dalai Lamas through an authentic religious-political rule." The mission agreed to attend a Chinese constitutional assembly in Nanjing **as observers**. Under orders from the Kuomintang government of Chiang Kai-shek, Ma Bufang repaired the Yushu airport in 1942 to deter Tibetan independence.[citation needed] Chiang also ordered Ma Bufang to put his Muslim soldiers on alert for an invasion of Tibet in 1942. Ma Bufang complied, and moved several thousand troops to the border with Tibet. Chiang also threatened the Tibetans with bombing if they did not comply.

In 1947, Tibet sent a delegation to the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi, India, where it represented itself as an independent nation, and **India recognized it as an independent nation from 1947 to 1954**. This may have been the first appearance of the Tibetan national flag at a public gathering.



André Migot, a French doctor who travelled for many months in Tibet in 1947, described the complex border arrangements between Tibet and China, and how they had developed:

"Once you are outside the North Gate [of Dardo or Kangting], you say good-by to Chinese civilization and its amenities and you begin to lead a different kind of life altogether. Although on paper the wide territories to the north of the city form part of the Chinese provinces of Sikang and Tsinghai, the real frontier between China and Tibet runs through Kangting, or perhaps just outside it. The empirical line which Chinese cartographers, more concerned with prestige than with accuracy, draw on their maps bears no relation to accuracy".

In 1947-49, Lhasa sent a trade mission led by Finance Minister Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa to India, China, Hong Kong, the US, and the UK. The visited countries were careful not to express support for the claim that Tibet was independent of China and did not discuss political questions with the mission. These Trade Mission officials entered China via Hong Kong with their newly issued Tibetan passports that they applied at the Chinese Consulate in India and stayed in China for three months. Other countries did, however, allow the mission to travel using passports issued by the Tibetan government.

The U.S. unofficially received the Trade Mission. The mission met with British Prime Minister Clement Attlee in London in 1948.



Incorporation of Tibet into the "People's Republic of China"

In July 1949, in order to prevent Chinese agitation in political Tibet, the Tibetan government expelled the (Nationalist) Chinese delegation. In November 1949, it sent a letter to the US State Department and a copy to Mao Zedong, and a separate letter to Great Britain, declaring its intent to defend itself "by all possible means" against PRC troop incursions into Tibet.

In the preceding three decades, the conservative Tibetan government had consciously deemphasized its military and refrained from modernizing. Hasty attempts at modernizing and enlarging the military began in 1949, but proved mostly unsuccessful on both counts, It was too late to raise and train an effective army. India did provide some small arms aid and military training, however the PLA remained much larger, better trained, better led, better equipped, and more experienced than the Tibetan army.

In 1950, the 14th Dalai Lama was 15 years old and had not attained his majority, so Regent Taktra was the acting head of the Tibetan Government. The period of the Dalai Lama's minority is traditionally one of instability and division, and the division and instability were made more intense by the recent Reting conspiracy and a 1947 regency dispute.

Both the PRC and their predecessors the Kuomintang had always maintained that Tibet was a part of China. The PRC also proclaimed an ideological motivation to liberate the Tibetans from a theocratic feudal system.

In September 1949, shortly before the proclamation of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) made it a top priority to incorporate Tibet, Taiwan, Hainan Island, and the Pescadores into the PRC, peacefully or by force. Because Tibet was unlikely to

voluntarily give up its de facto independence, Mao in December 1949 ordered that preparations be made to march into Tibet at Qamdo (Chamdo), in order to induce the Tibetan Government to negotiate.

The PRC had over a million men under arms and had extensive combat experience from the recently concluded Chinese Civil War.

Peace talks and the invasion of Chamdo

On 7 March, a Tibetan delegation arrived in Kalimpong to open a dialogue with the newly declared PRC and to secure assurances that the PRC would respect Tibetan "territorial integrity", among other things. The onset of talks was delayed by debate between the Tibetan delegation, India, Britain, and the PRC about the location of the talks. Tibet favored Singapore or Hong Kong (not Beijing), Britain favored India (not Hong Kong or Singapore), India and the PRC favored Beijing, but India and Britain preferred no talks at all.

The Tibetan delegation did eventually meet with the PRC's ambassador General Yuan Zhongxian in Delhi on 16 September 1950. Yuan communicated a 3-point proposal that Tibet be regarded as part of China, that China be responsible for Tibet's defense, and that China be responsible for Tibet's trade and foreign relations. Acceptance would lead to peaceful Chinese sovereignty, or otherwise war.

The Tibetans undertook to maintain the relationship between China and Tibet as one of priest-patron:

"Tibet will remain independent as it is at present, and we will continue to have very close 'priest-patron' relations with China. Also, there is no need to liberate Tibet from imperialism, since there are no British, American or Guomindang imperialists in Tibet, and Tibet is ruled and protected by the Dalai Lama (not any foreign power)" - Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa

They and their head delegate Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, on 19 September, recommended cooperation, with some stipulations about implementation. Chinese troops need not be stationed in Tibet, it was argued, since it was under no threat, and if attacked by India or Nepal could appeal to China for military assistance.

While Lhasa deliberated, on 7 October, Chinese troops advanced into eastern Tibet, crossing the border at 5 places. The purpose was to capture the Tibetan army in Chamdo, demoralize the Lhasa government, and thus exert powerful pressure to send negotiators to Beijing to sign terms for a handover of Tibet. In the middle of October, 1950, Two PLA units quickly surrounded the outnumbered Tibetan forces and captured the border town of Qamdo by 19 October, by which time 114 PLA soldiers and 180 Tibetan soldiers had been killed or wounded. After capturing Qamdo, the PLA broke off hostilities and sent a captured commander, Ngabo, to

Lhasa to reiterate terms of negotiation, and waited for Tibetan representatives to respond through delegates to Beijing.



On 21 October, Lhasa instructed its delegation to leave immediately for Beijing for consultations with the Communist government, and to accept the first provision, if the status of

the Dalai Lama could be guaranteed, while rejecting the other two conditions. It later rescinded even acceptance of the first demand, after a divination before the Six-Armed Mahākāla deities indicated that the three points could not be accepted, since Tibet would fall under foreign domination.

Tibetan negotiators were sent to Beijing and presented with an already-finished document commonly referred to as the Seventeen Point Agreement. There was no negotiation offered by the Chinese delegation; although the PRC stated it would allow Tibet to reform at its own pace and in its own way, keep internal affairs self-governing and allow religious freedom, it would also have to agree to be part of China. The Tibetan negotiators were not allowed to communicate with their government on this key point, and pressured into signing the agreement on 23 May 1951, despite never having been given permission to sign anything in the name of the government.

This was the first time in Tibetan history its government had accepted - albeit unwillingly - China's position on the two nations' shared history . Tibetan representatives in Beijing and the PRC Government signed the Seventeen Point Agreement on 23 May 1951, authorizing the PLA presence and Central People's Government rule in Political Tibet. The terms of the agreement had not been cleared with the Tibetan Government before signing and the Tibetan Government was divided about whether it was better to accept the document as written or to flee into exile.

The Dalai Lama, who by this time had ascended to the throne, chose not to flee into exile, and formally accepted the 17 Point Agreement in October 1951. According to Tibetan sources, on 24 October, on behalf of the Dalai Lama, general Zhang Jingwu sent a telegram to Mao Zedong with confirmation of the support of the Agreement, and there is evidence that Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme simply came to Zhang and said that the Tibetan Government agreed to send a telegram on the 24th of October, instead of the formal Dalai Lama's approval. Shortly afterwards, the PLA entered Lhasa.

Aftermath

For several years the Tibetan Government remained in place in the areas of Tibet where it had ruled prior to the outbreak of hostilities, except for the area surrounding Qamdo that was occupied by the PLA in 1950, which was placed under the authority of the Qamdo Liberation Committee and outside the Tibetan Government's control.

During this time, areas under the Tibetan Government maintained a large degree of autonomy from the Central Government and were generally allowed to maintain their traditional social structure.

In 1956, Tibetan militias in the ethnically Tibetan region of eastern Kham just outside the Tibetan Autonomous Region, spurred by PRC government experiments in land reform, started fighting against the government. The militias united to form Chushi Gangdruk Volunteer Force. When the fighting spread to Lhasa in 1959, the Dalai Lama fled Tibet. Both he and the PRC

government in Tibet subsequently repudiated the 17 Point Agreement and the PRC government in Tibet dissolved the Tibetan Local Government.



2008 unrest

Protests in March, 2008 developed into riots in which Tibetan mobs attacked Han and Hui people in Lhasa. The Chinese government reacted curtly, imposing curfews and pressuring journalists in Lhasa to leave the region.

The international response was measured, with a number of leaders expressing concern. Some people protested in large European and North American cities and chanted slogans, with some supporting China's actions and some supporting the protesters in Tibet.

For a time after the 2008 unrest, Tibetan-populated areas of China remained off-limits to journalists, and major monasteries and nunneries were locked down, according to Amnesty International. While Chinese authorities announced after the unrest that over 1,000 individuals detained had been released, Tibetan exile organizations claimed that at least several hundred remained in detention by the start of 2009.

Tibetan members of the Chinese Communist Party were told to remove their children from Tibet exile community schools.