

The Dorjéling Armoury in the Potala According to the Fifth Dalai Lama's *gsung 'bum*

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Abstract Although the government established through the alliance of the Géluḳpa (Dge lugs pa) and the Khoshud in 1642 took its appellation from the Ganden Palace (Dga' ldan pho brang/Ganden Phodrang) at Drepung ('Bras spung), the symbolic seat of power of this government was the Potala, at the same time fortress, administrative centre, earthly copy of the celestial palace of Avalokiteśvara, and official residence of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Less known, however, is that the Potala also came to symbolise military readiness. It acquired this new martial function in 1667, when an armoury, called Dorjéling (Rdo rje gling), was set up at the base of the White Palace. The Fifth Dalai Lama memorialised its establishment with a poetic text, which is included in volume nineteen (*ma*) of his collected works. This paper examines this text, which provides information both on the contents of the armoury and on the logic employed to justify the creation of spaces dedicated to military preparedness within a palace that was fast becoming one of the most revered sites in the Tibetan sphere.

Keywords Buddhism. Army. Tibet. Weapons. Dalai Lama. Ganden Phodrang. Armoury.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The Context. – 3 An Analysis of the Preamble. – 4 Conclusions. – 5 The Text and Its Translation.



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1 Introduction

It is said that in the fifteenth century, just as the appearance of siege artillery was transforming warfare in Europe,¹ Pope Pius II (Enea Silvio Piccolomini, r. 1458-64) was so enthusiastic about the new technology that he not only encouraged other European sovereigns to acquire gunpowder weapons, but he also named two cannons after himself, the 'Enea' and the 'Silvio', and one after his mother, the 'Vittoria'.² Such fervour may seem misplaced in a religious figurehead, but it should be recollected that "in Christian Europe, gunpowder weapons were seen to provide justice".³

In order to accomplish this task, Christianity even provided artillerymen with their own dedicated protector, Saint Barbara. She had been chosen for this role because her own father, who had denounced her as a Christian, effectively condemning her to martyrdom, had been killed by a lightning that produced a thunderous boom. The Saint's protective powers were such that her effigy was often represented on guns and protective gear, and her name was invoked in battle to obtain safekeeping from injury and death. However, other saints' effigies were also depicted – such as a Saint George on a shield kept in the Museum of the Middle Ages (Musée de Cluny) in Paris – similarly to apotropaic mantra and Buddhist images on Tibetan helmets [fig. 1ab].⁴

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1 Many publications discuss the appearance of siege artillery in Europe and the transformations it entailed both in warfare and general civil life. The pathbreaking study on the topic is Roberts, "The Military Revolution. 1560-1660", originally delivered as a lecture in 1955 and first published in 1956, then again in revised form in 1967 (Roberts, *Essays in Swedish History*, 195-225) and in 1995 (in Rogers, *The Military Revolution Debate*, 13-35). This article has elicited and still sparks a fervid debate; among the publications reinforcing its arguments or taking exception with them, one may bring to notice Parker, *The Military Revolution*; the several articles in the above-mentioned *The Military Revolution Debate*; Ayton, Price, *The Medieval Military Revolution*; Black, *Beyond the Military Revolution*; Boot, *War Made New*; DeVries, "Gunpowder Weaponry"; Hoffman, "Prices, the Military Revolution"; Stone, "Technology, Society, and the Infantry Revolution".

2 DeVries, Smith, *Medieval Military Technology*, 151.

3 DeVries, Smith, *Medieval Military Technology*, 151.

4 The image of Saint George is surrounded by a border inscribed with the words: "Hilf Gott Du Ewiges Wort dem Leibe hier, der Seele dort Hilf Ritter Georg" (Help, God, eter-



Figures 1a-b

A shield representing St. George kept at the Musée de Cluny in Paris (Cl.1956) and a helmet decorated with Buddhist images and mantra.

© The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, gift of William H. Riggs, by exchange, 1999 (1999.120)

The comparison between these two images illustrates that there is an evident similarity in the approach to warfare of Buddhism and Christianity. However, while knowledge of the involvement of Christianity with arms and warfare is not new, and the examples mentioned above are but two of the many instances that have been the object of study for many years (suffice it to think of the gigantic body of research on the Crusades) in this paper I propose to inquire about Tibetan Buddhism's connection with weapons and war. This strand of research is rather novel, as arms are not commonly associated with Tibetan culture, unless one is concerned with ritual weapons, used symbolically in a variety of rites.⁵ However, not only Buddhism has had a major influence on Tibetan society throughout the entire course of this country's history, but it also influenced the nation's politics in multiple ways,⁶ and especially so during the period of the Ganden Phodrang (Dga' ldan pho brang, 1642-1959), when the Dalai Lamas were at the head of a predominantly ecclesiastical state.⁷

It is thus important to explore more in depth the involvement of the Ganden Phodrang, the paramount political entity arisen within Tibetan Buddhism, with warfare and weapons.⁸ In particular, research on weapons raises important questions that have not been yet addressed in the context of Tibetan history, namely whether the introduction of advanced firearms caused a military revolution, i.e. a

nal word; the body here, the soul there; help, knight George), <https://www.musee-moyenage.fr/collection/oeuvre/targe-saint-georges-dragon.html>. For various examples of images of saints and other religious symbols on armour and weapons in Christianity, Buddhism, and other religions, see La Rocca, *The Gods of War*.

5 The typical Tibetan ritual weapon is the dagger or *phur bu* (or *phur pa*, Skt. *Kīla*), usually a short, three-sided, sharp-pointed knife used to slay symbolically the effigy of the enemy which a ritual aims to defeat. On the *phur bu* see Huntington, "The *phur-pa*"; Heller, Marcotty, "Phur pa"; Cantwell, Mayer, *Early Tibetan Documents on Phur pa*, and, more recently, Grimaud, Grimaud, *Les Dagues Rituelles*.

6 Already in the imperial period (seventh-ninth century CE) Buddhist kings such as Trisong Détsen (Khri srong lde btsan) financed enterprises to support the Dharma, particularly the construction of monasteries, and also subsidised various projects to foster the spread of Buddhist knowledge, such as the Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary *Mahāvvyutpatti* and the debate of Samyé (Bsam yas). After the fall of the empire, political governance, whether regional or (more rarely) pan-Tibetan, was always in association with religious establishments, either by direct administration from a monastic site, such as Sakya (Sa skya), through an alliance between aristocratic families and specific religious traditions, such as the Pakmo drupa (Phag mo gru pa) and the Lang (Rlangs) clan, or through the legitimation of political power by religious authorities.

7 While the government of the Ganden Phodrang was not entirely comprised of monks, and indeed one-half of its officials were non-ecclesiastic, in general the status, prestige and influence of clerical figures, especially if considered reincarnations (*sprul sku*), were predominant, and thus the Ganden Phodrang is often described as an ecclesiastical polity, or even a theocracy.

8 On the Ganden Phodrang and its employment of warfare, see Travers, Venturi, *Buddhism and the Military*.

series of changes that affected the country's society, stimulated political and financial reforms, and ultimately contributed to the centralisation of government. However, to even begin to ask these questions, it is necessary to understand more about the state of weapons in Tibet, and to assess their availability, technology, quality, and other issues such as whether they were imported or self-produced, etc. In order to do so, in this paper I shall examine a seventeenth-century document, composed not long after Tibet was largely united under the Buddhist government that we call Ganden Phodrang.

2 The Context

As it will be shown, the text is a preamble to the general catalogue of what appears to be the first official state arsenal of the Ganden Phodrang, a repository called the Dorjéling armoury (*go mdzod rdo rje gling*).⁹ The manuscript was composed by the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lozang Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, r. 1642-82), the figure whose strategic alliance with the Khoshud Mongols rendered possible, after a hiatus of circa three hundred years, the unification of a large part of the Tibetan plateau under a single government. Although research on this Dalai Lama has been copious,¹⁰ his views on weapons and warfare have begun to be explored only recently.¹¹ Still, examination of documents in which he comments on military activities is critical to achieve a better understanding both of the Fifth Dalai Lama as a historical figure and of the Ganden Phodrang as a government. The papers in question provide a measure of his level of involvement with military affairs, and contribute to portray a fuller picture of his multilayered efforts at creating a state in which religious and political aspects were delicately balanced.

In addition to these reasons, this particular document is especially significant because, at least in the current state of our knowledge, widespread diffusion and use of matchlock muskets in Tibet occurred approximately in this period.¹² Thus, this preamble allows the read-

⁹ This text is also mentioned in the article by Tashi Tsering Josayma in this issue.

¹⁰ Among the many publications on the life and work of the Fifth Dalai Lama the publications by Karmay stand out: *The Illusive Play; Secret Visions*; "The Fifth Dalai Lama and his Reunification of Tibet"; "The Gold Seal". Other important political aspects of this head of state have been discussed by Schwieger, "The Dalai Lama and the Emperor of China", and Yamaguchi, "The Sovereign Power".

¹¹ Among the exceptions can be included: Sperling, "Orientalism"; FitzHerbert, "Rituals as War Propaganda", and Venturi, "To Protect and to Serve"; "Mongol and Tibetan Armies on the Transhimalayan Fronts"; "On Reconciling Buddhism and Violence".

¹² According to La Rocca, *Warriors*, 198, "firearms were probably introduced into Tibet gradually during the sixteenth century", however, "early documentation for the

er to estimate, in broad terms, the Fifth Dalai Lama's knowledge of weaponry in general, and his awareness of the importance of weapons in the wider political context of which he was part. Understanding this last issue is especially crucial, as the establishment of his religious-political government had been possible thanks to warfare waged by the Khoshud on his behalf. Since the preamble mentions some of the military equipment that was stored in the armoury, it also provides a fixed point of reference on the type of weapons in use at this time – or, at least, of the weapons with which the Dalai Lama was familiar.¹³

Before proceeding to analyse the preamble, we should mention that its composition is mentioned with a short notice in the autobiographical diary of the Fifth Dalai Lama. This records that the preamble was composed on the nineteenth day of the seventh month of the Fire-Sheep year, that is at the height of the summer of 1667. The notice also briefly illustrates the salient details about the armoury. First, it calls it “the new Dorjéling armoury”, indicating that it had just been inaugurated. Considering all the internecine wars that had punctuated life in Tibet in the first half of the seventeenth century, it seems unlikely that no armoury had existed before this one. Perhaps what was novel about the Dorjéling armoury was it being the first official depository of military gear of the Ganden Phodrang proper. As for the reasons for establishing the new armoury, the autobiography mentions that it was founded because until then there had been no sheltered area where to store weapons (*sngar go cha rnam la gra sgrig par bkab gcig mi 'dug*), again hinting at the possibility that this might indeed have been the first official armoury of the Ganden Phodrang. Also, its position at the base of the Potala (*rtse pho brang*)¹⁴

use of firearms in central Tibet appears to be lacking before the late seventeenth century” (199).

13 For an overview of the chronological apparition of weapons terms in a sample of Tibetan sources, see Maurer in this issue.

14 Construction on the first portion of the Potala, known as the “White Palace” (*pho brang dkar po*) began in 1645, under the supervision of the regent Sönam Raptan (Bsod rnam rab brtan, also known as Sönam Chöpel/Bsod rnam chos phel), and was concluded, at least for what concerns the exterior structure, in 1647 (Alexander, “Zhol Village”, 109) or 1648 (Chayet, “The Potala”, 45). The red palace (*pho brang dmar po*), partly conceived as mausoleum of the deceased Fifth Dalai Lama, was founded in 1690 and built between 1691 and 1694 (Chayet, “The Potala”, 50). An eighteenth-century mural painting depicting the Potala and the surrounding neighbourhood of Zhol, examined by André Alexander (“Zhol Village”), depicts a large, four-story structure called Makchi khang (*dmag spyi khang*), that is said to have been used as “the old local government army headquarters” (“Zhol Village”, 113). It is possible, but by no means certain, that this structure may have been part of – or may entirely correspond to – the Dorjéling armoury in question here; on this, see The Treasury of Lives, <https://treasuryoflives.org/institution/Armory>. The Dorjéling armoury was known and used as a point of reference at least until the early twentieth century, as we know that the Army Head-

might have been a novelty, perhaps indicating a move from a previous site. If this was the case, the new location reflected the decision to establish a stable military arsenal in the immediate vicinity of the residence of the Dalai Lama, in a strategic location from which both the protection of the administrative machine of the Ganden Phodrang and the general security of Lhasa could be ensured.

The entry in the autobiography also specifies that the armoury was built by the Dalai Lama's regent, at the time the *jaisang dépa*¹⁵ Trinlé Gyatso (*jaisang sde pa* 'Phrin las rgya mtsho), who was in charge of administrative affairs between 1660 and his death in 1668. He was well versed in astronomy and astrology, since well before his appointment as regent he had instructed the Fifth Dalai Lama in these disciplines. His hand in the decision to establish the armoury on that exact day can be seen in the fact that the text specifies the time of its founding had been calculated to be at the auspicious conjunction of the planet Mars and the constellation Aśvinī. In keeping with the propitious circumstances, the Dalai Lama had also composed the preamble on the very day in which the armoury was founded, thus immediately giving an official imprimatur to this institution. Incident-

quarters (*dmag spyi las khung*), founded 1913, were located "in a building opposite the Dorjéling armoury" (Travers, "Monk Officials", 218).

15 Trinlé Gyatso (d. 1668) was the second of the regents of the Fifth Dalai Lama. His tenure in this position began in 1660, and concluded with his death eight years later (Petech, "The Dalai Lamas", 134). In the two-year interval between the death of the previous regent Sōnam Rapten and the official appointment of Trinlé Gyatso, the Dalai Lama seems to have largely exercised direct secular control, with the exception of the circa four-month tenure – often not officially counted – of Nangso Norbu (a nephew of Sōnam Rapten) as *dépa*. The title *jaisang*, with which Trinlé Gyatso is styled here, was awarded to him in 1637 directly from Gushri Khan (Richardson, "The Decree", 451). This term is a rendition of the Chinese *zǎi xiàng* 宰相 'minister', and was later adopted as a Mongolian honorary title for clan chieftains, eventually coming into use also as personal name (see Sárközi, "Toyin Guisi", 87 fn. 76 and Dungkar, *Tshig mdzod chen mo*, 871). Other epithets of Trinlé Gyatso derive from the estate to which his family was attached, that of Nyangdren (Nyang bran), with its attached village of Drongmé (Grong smad), in the area just north of Lhasa. Thus he is also referred to as Nyangdren Drönmépa (Nyang sbran gron smad pa), *dépa* Drongmépa (*sde pa* Sgrong smad pa) and Nyangdren *dépa* (Nyang bran *sde pa*). He began his career as a monk official (*las sne*) of the Ganden Phodrang and became the personal assistant of the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1632 (Karmay, *Illusive Play*, 105). He seems to have had direct experience of war, as in 1641 he led troops against the army of Tsang (Gtsang), and his own father, Gopa Trashi (Sgo pa bkra shis), was injured by a cannon (or catapult? Tib. *sgyogs*) strike in 1642 (Shakabpa, *Moons*, 345). Later, in 1663 (or 1662? The pattern of dating is confusing in this section of the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography), when he was already acting as regent, he led a military expedition against the area of Zichenthang (Gzi chen thang) in Kham (Khams), that presumably was rebellious to the authority of the Ganden Phodrang (Karmay, *Illusive Play*, 476-7). A short biographical note focusing on the chronology of his regency can be found in Petech "The Dalai Lamas", 134; a more detailed biography, compiled on the basis of the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiographical diary, can be found in Jones, "Depa Trinle Gyatso": <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Depa-Trinle-Gyatso/P3649>.

tally, it should also be pointed out that Trinlé Gyatso is said to have led a small body of troops in 1641 and again in 1663, and thus it may be speculated that his military experience gave him an understanding of the importance of an organised and well-stocked armoury.

One last word about terminology, which is – I believe – one of the core issues that will transpire from this volume. In the context of the sentence above, the term *go cha* can be intended in its broader connotation, i.e. ‘weapons, (military) tools or implements’, rather than its more restricted meaning as ‘armour’.¹⁶ In fact, the list of items provided in this brief note includes not only arms and armour from India, China, Hor and Sog, as well as from the nomads of Kham, but also armour for mounted troops; standards in different colours; and even light, easy-to-pack equipment for travel. In sum, Dorjéling was a true armoury, a depository not only of arms and armour, but of all implements necessary for war.

3 An Analysis of the Preamble

We turn now to the preface itself, tucked in volume nineteen (*ma*) of the collected works of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Its full title is “A fierce Rain Shower. The First Uninterrupted Poetic Preamble to the Book Chapter on Military Supplies (*g.yul chas*) of the Dorjéling Armoury of the Great Potala Palace” (*Pho brang chen po po ta la'i go mdzod rdo rje gling gi g.yul chas rnam kyid deb ther le tshan gyi 'go brjod sdeb sbyor rgyun chags dang po gtum po'i char 'bebs sogs*). The title highlights the poetic style of the preamble, which begins with two initial statements in verses of fifteen syllables; then the majority of the document continues in the more typical nine-syllable metre.¹⁷ The two opening statements are offered in bilingual Sanskrit and Tibetan versions (with the Sanskrit being transliterated in Tibetan script), and set an unabashedly combative tone, displaying a defiant attitude and a strikingly graphic violent language. The first intimates that “Not being satisfied by merely making garlands with the heads and necklaces with the entrails of the killed enemy, [you] wear their skins drenched in dripping blood in the guise of a canopy, [and] trample on

¹⁶ On the term *go cha* and its various meanings see La Rocca, *Warriors*, 268, where the two main meanings of this term are given as: 1) “armor, harness, gear, implements, tools”, and 2) “weapons”. Also see the article by Maurer in this issue.

¹⁷ From the thirteenth century onward, the Indian *kāvya* style has exercised a strong influence on Tibetan poetry, imposing highly codified rules regarding metric, metaphors and technical structure. Because of the complex arrangements it required, *kāvya*, or *nyen ngak* (*snyan ngag*), as it came to be called in Tibetan, “was composed almost entirely by those with an academic background” (Jackson, “Poetry”, 375); its employ by the Fifth Dalai Lama is well documented.

the crushed sludge of their corpses" (*log 'dren bsad pa'i mgo 'phreng rgyu ma ga shar byas kyang ma tshim par / khrag 'dzag pags rlon lding stabs gyon nas bam ro 'dam star brdzi ba yi*). The second describes how a *rākṣasa*,¹⁸ manifested through the empowerment of a wrathful form of Jampel Dorjé ('Jam dpal rdo rje, Skt. Mañjuvāra, an esoteric form of the bodhisattva of Wisdom, Mañjuśrī) will make the heads of the enemy fall to the ground with his shining, sharp sword. This language clearly does not represent a defeatist stance or any sort of shame or embarrassment of the efforts made to win a war. Likewise, the remainder of the text is also constructed not as a mere accolade for the opening of the armoury, but particularly as an argument to prove that Tibet, as the sole country that has preserved the original Buddhist legacy, is fully justified in fortifying itself by establishing an army and founding an armoury.

This case is carefully and methodically made in the main poem, which can be divided into six sections: 1) an invocation; 2) a panegyric of the virtues of the Ganden Phodrang; 3) a description of the army; 4) a discussion of the contents of the Dorjéling armoury; 5) a final justification of the importance that Tibet is a military power; 6) a colophon. I shall now proceed by analysing each separate section.

(1) The invocation makes an appeal to several deities; first Makzor gyelmo (Dmag zor rgyal mo),¹⁹ and Bektsé,²⁰ both among the major protectors of the Gélukpa doctrine, who are here extolled as remarkable defenders; then a wide range of other minor demons, including *kanyen* (*bka' gnyan*), *tsengö* (*btsan rgod*)²¹ and *nöjin* (*gnod sbyin*), who are in fact all among the retinue of Makzor gyelmo,²² and finally the class of war deities in general (*dgra lha*).²³ All are asked to protect Ti-

¹⁸ Tib. *srin po*, sometimes translated as 'ogre', a category of flesh-eating demons possessing superhuman abilities.

¹⁹ Makzor gyelmo, also known as Makzorma, is one of the main forms of Penden Lamo (Dpal ldan lha mo) or Śrīdevī, a main protectress of the Geluk school of Buddhism and particularly of the Dalai Lamas; she is also considered the protector of all of Tibet. See de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons*, 23 and related chapter.

²⁰ The term *beg tse* is said to mean "hidden shirt of mail" (Das, *Dictionary*, 876), and this *dharmapāla*, strongly connected to war, is in fact depicted as wearing a protective coat of mail. On Bektsé see Heller, "Etude" and de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons*, 88-93.

²¹ Although many lesser protectors of the Buddhist doctrine are designated by the epithet *tsengö*, 'wild demon', and thus as a collective name *tsengö* identifies a category of minor defenders of Buddhism, the *Tsengö* par excellence is a companion of the goddess Penden Makzor Gyelmo (Dpal ldan dmag zor rgyal mo), a warlike form of Penden Lhamo. On *Tsengö* see de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons*, 25, 29; Bunce, *An Encyclopaedia*, 72.

²² See de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons*, 25, 32.

²³ The term *dgra lha*, generally translated as 'enemy deity', 'warrior deity', or simply 'war/battle deity' is generally regarded as identifying a set of deities whose purpose is to fight against the enemies of Buddhism; however, there are several unresolved ques-

bet and forever defend and reduce the power of the malicious, heretic sentient beings. As in the opening statements, the language here can also be graphic. An example is the sentence in which the *tsengö* are compared to “sentinels who distinguish between white and black actions” and are described as beings who “ask to drink the delicious warm blood, the life essence of the enemies of the doctrine holders of the religious government of the Land of Snow” (*gang gi bka' snyan btsan rgod gnod sbyin che / dkar nag las rnams 'byed pa'i mel tshe mkhan / gangs can chos srid bstan 'dzin phas rgol gyi / srog snying khrag dron ro bda'i skyems su gsol /*).

(2) The section that extols the virtues of the government of the Ganden Phodrang describes it as the only government committed to “the two indivisible laws” (*khirms gnyis zung du 'jug pa*), the secular and the religious one; a government able to become the basis of happiness for all living beings on account of its respect for the supreme tradition of the Buddha; and a great lamp able to dispel the robbers who steal joy and happiness from men. In addition to these advantages, the government’s military power is said to “spark more and more the appearance of the golden age” (*rdzogs ldan gsar pa'i snang ba ches cher sbar*).

This sentence is insightful, because it directly links military power to the acquisition of the Buddhist ideal of *kṛtayuga*, the golden age in which the Buddhist doctrine reaches its apogee, being perfectly developed and absolutely authoritative. Moreover, the implication is that because the military is in the service of a government in which the Gélukpa are the dominant element, it is the Gélukpa who can lead to the new *kṛtayuga*, and the military in their service is a crucial support. Additionally, the military is described with the expression *rgyal thabs yan lag rnam bzhi'i dpung tshogs nyis*, that may be rendered as ‘the two armies of the four districts’, or possibly ‘the two armies that are four-branched’. In the first case, the text may be seen as tracing a historic link with the Tibetan empire and its regional and military divisions into the four horns of Ü (Dbus) and Tsang;²⁴ in the second, the troops are envisioned, poetically at least, as divided in four traditional branches of Indian warfare, comprising infantry, cavalry, elephant-mounted troops and chariots. This same configuration is also attributed to the troops of the *cakravartin*, the

tions concerning the actual origins and significance of this term, partly also derived from the fact that several different spellings are possible: *sgra bla*, *sgra lha*, *dgra bla*, *dgra lha*. In this regard, see Gibson, “Dgra-lha. A Re-examination”. On this term see also FitzHerbert, “Rituals as War Propaganda”, 84 fn. 106.

24 On the subdivision of Central Tibet according to the placement of military divisions, see Uray, “The Four Horns of Tibet”; Stein, “Tibetica Antiqua 2”, 264-6.

ideal universal ruler.²⁵ In either case, the military in service of the Ganden Phodrang receives a double validation: from a religious perspective, as a vital aid toward the goal of reaching *kṛtayuga* under the guidance of the Gélukpa, or as a duplicate image of the troops of the *cakravartin*; and from a historical viewpoint, through its association with the Tibetan empire.

(3) Only at this point, after having spelled out clearly its role, the army is described. It is portrayed as being made up of two components comprising all four districts of the kingdom (*rgyal thabs yan lag rnam bzhi'i dpung tshogs nyis*).²⁶ The two sections, mounted troops (*rta dmag*) and infantry (*shugs drag dpung*, literally 'mighty troops'), are lyrically extolled. Of the former, its horses are highlighted; their hoofs rise dust and make the earth shake (*bsnun pa'i sa chen 'dar ba rdul gyi 'tshub*); while the latter is compared to a hurricane-like army of gods that will "release the life-force of the enemy in great numbers" (*pha rol dgra de srog phral grangs de snyed*). Overall, they are described as "a large group, fierce and strong" (*dpa' gtum rtsal ldan tsho chen*) and, intriguingly, as "a host of young men who live with a royal stipend" (*rgyal po'i zho shas 'tsho ba'i stag shar tshogs chen*).

The crux of the sentence here is the word *zho shas 'tsho ba*, a term that in older dictionaries is often rendered as 'soldier'.²⁷ This meaning appears for the first time in Friedrich Schröter's *A Dictionary of the Bhotanta, or Boutan Language*, the first known Tibetan-English dictionary, published in Serampore in 1826, but in fact a translation of Father Orazio Della Penna's early eighteenth century Tibetan-Italian dictionary.²⁸ Schröter's translation defines *zho shas 'tsho ba* as

²⁵ The four-fold configuration of the *cakravartin's* army appears, among others, in the *Lalitavistara sutra* (Goswami, *Lalitavistara*, 21).

²⁶ Ü, Tsang, Kham and Amdo (A mdo), and Ngarikhorsum (Mnga' ris khor gsum).

²⁷ Jäschke, *Dictionary*, 479 has: "a publican Cs., a soldier *Schr.*, prob. any officer that receives salary or pay"; similarly, Das, *Dictionary*, 1076, states: "one who subsists by the wages he earns; according to *Schr.* a soldier, any officer that receives pay". It can be seen that both Jäschke and Das refer to Schröter for the meaning of 'soldier'.

²⁸ Please note that in a previous article (Venturi, "Mongol and Tibetan Armies", 45 fn. 47) I erroneously wrote that Della Penna's dictionary was Latin-Tibetan and contained 25,000 entries. The correct description is found in Petech, *I missionari italiani*, vol. 1, xciii, where it is stated that the well-known Tibetan-Italian dictionary comprised the translations of about 35,000 words and was compiled between 1717 and 1732, also taking advantage of the Father's residence at the monastery of Se ra. In addition, Petech recognised that two separate manuscripts of an Italian-Tibetan dictionary kept at the Anglican Bishop's College in Calcutta (one written on Tibetan paper and another penned by different hands on English paper), were also likely to be outcomes of the labour of the Capuchin Father. However, at least in 1952, when vol. 1 of *I missionari italiani* was published, Petech had not personally seen any of these manuscripts, and his conclusions were based on a 1912 eyewitness account by the Reverend Felix of Antwerp ("Remarks on the Tibetan", 379-82). Today, a PDF copy of the catalogue of all the manuscripts kept at the Calcutta Bishop's College can be consulted online, and it can be seen that all three manuscripts (catalogued as XLIX, L, LI) were found to be missing already

“armed; a quantity or number of soldiers, an army; hired, having a salary”.²⁹ Here, the last definition is the closest one to this term’s literal meaning, which is ‘livelihood’ or ‘subsistence’ (*tsho ba*) by wages or remuneration (*zho shas*).³⁰ If we accept this expression’s literal meaning, it would entail that army soldiers were paid, or otherwise received some form of living provision. However, it was the opinion of Petech and others that the Tibetan-Italian dictionary of Della Penna was based on the Tibetan literary language he had studied during his stay at Se ra. This sows doubts as to the effective practice of remunerating soldiers in the seventeenth century, as it is more likely that the Fifth Dalai Lama here simply used a term he knew from his classical readings. Jäschke, for example, notes that the word appears both in the *Tengyur* (*Bstan 'gyur*) and in Tāranātha’s oeuvre.³¹

A source not too distant from the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, instead, asserts that soldiers were not paid, but conscripted by *corvée*. In his *Relazione*, Ippolito Desideri³² wrote:

As Tibet is a peaceful realm, it is not customary to have permanent standing armies, with the exception of a number of competent soldiers that are the guards and escort of the king [Lha bzang khan]. Another regiment, also of soldiers, is always kept at Gar-

in 1993; see <https://bishopscollege.ac.in/uploads/media/Manuscripts.pdf>. Several years later, the two that were handwritten by Della Penna (corresponding to ms. 2 and 3B of Petech’s *I missionari italiani*, vol. 1, xciii-xciv) were successively discovered in unspecified circumstances and in an undisclosed location in Calcutta and brought to Italy; see Lo Bue, “A Note”, 90 and Engelhardt, “Between Tolerance and Dogmatism”, 62 fn. 96; Bray, “Missionaries, Officials”, 35. In 2016 they were exhibited to the general public at an exhibit in Rimini, Italy; see <http://www.italiatibet.org/2016/01/05/un-trono-tra-le-nuvole/>); however, at the moment they appear to be inaccessible.

29 Schröter, *A Dictionary of the Bhotanta*, 383.

30 Gedun Tharchin, [*Tibetan-Tibetan Dictionary*] glosses *zho shas 'tsho ba* as “*gzhan gyi las ka byed mkhan ming ste / nus mthus 'tsho ba'am gla zan gyis 'tsho ba'o*”, while *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (1996), 2404, defines it as “*rang gi stobs sam nus pas 'tsho ba*”. Note that *zho sha* means both ‘capability’, ‘ability’ and ‘wage or salary’.

31 In addition, yet to be published entries for *zho shas 'tsho ba* in the *Wörterbuch der Tibetischen Schriftsprache* derive from the *vinaya* and other sections of the *Kangyur* (*Bka' 'gyur*), apparently confirming the literary origins of this term. I am grateful to Petra Maurer for checking these references for me.

32 The well-known Jesuit missionary whose sojourn in Lhasa, from March 1716 to January 1721, coincided with some of the most eventful political circumstances of the eighteenth century in Tibet. His travel diary has been edited and annotated by Petech, *I missionari italiani*, vols. 5, 6 and 7; for an English language biography, see Pomplun, *Jesuit*.

tok³³ and at Gna-rì-Giongár,³⁴ for fear of the invasions of the Tartars from Dzungaria, that is, independent Tartary. However, when there is the need to make war, every family has to provide a soldier, and if there is no one able to take arms, they must provide for one at their expense. In war time the soldiers do not receive a pay from the prince, and neither they are provided by him with weapons, munitions, horses and food; on the contrary all of this is the charge of each community and province, that must provide all.

Desideri's assertion contradicts squarely the literal meaning of the expression *zho shas 'tsho ba*, and without further data it is impossible to determine if the Fifth Dalai Lama used the term with reference to the militarily glorious imperial period or, for example, only to a portion of the troops.³⁵ In addition, given the tumultuous period that followed the death of the Fifth Dalai Lama, it may very well be possible that the army was organised very differently in 1667 and in the late 1710s-early 1720s.

Another item that requires further scrutiny is who provided the remuneration - if indeed there was any. The text indicates "the king" (*rgyal po*), but who was "the king" in this case? It is still imperfectly understood which figure, among the Dalai Lama, the Khoshud Khan and the regent or *dési*, effectively controlled political - and thus also military - authority within the Ganden Phodrang in this early period. Schwieger argues that the Fifth Dalai Lama definitely perceived himself "as the spiritual and secular ruler of Tibet",³⁶ as testified both by his writings and by the construction of the Potala on the same site where was situated the palace of Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po), the forefather of the Tibetan empire. To this must be added, however, that his first regent was originally appointed to relieve the Dalai Lama of part of the burden of managing both religious and political affairs,³⁷ and thus it is likely that the *dési's* involvement in secular matters was at a more detailed level than that

33 Sgar thog in Tibetan, situated at 31° 45' N 80° 22', was one of the main trade markets in Western Tibet, due to its position on the trade route between Central Tibet and Ladakh. Its commercial importance did not go unnoticed by the British, that, as a result of the Younghusband expedition, demanded its inclusion among the sites to be opened for international trade (together with Gyantse in Central Tibet and Yatung in the Chumbi Valley, near Bhutan).

34 This is to be read as a phonetic transcription of Mnga' ris Jungar, i.e. the northern portion of Western Tibet, near the territories controlled by the Dzungars, and thus in need to be protected.

35 In fact, there could have been various types of soldiers coexisting at the same time: some conscripted as *corvée* service and others receiving wages.

36 Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 52.

37 Richardson, "The Decree", 442, 444.

of the Dalai Lama himself, who may have intervened just in the final stages. In addition, within the context of the 'priest-patron relationship' (*mchod yon*) the regent was normally referred to as the 'priest'. Hence, it may be hypothesised that the "king" here may refer to the Khoshud khans, who had been heavily involved in the military conflicts sustained by the Ganden Phodrang in this period.³⁸ Concerning the Khoshud Khans, it is at least certain that their political authority diminished with time, particularly after the death of Gushri Khan (1655) and the subsequent dilution of the Khan's authority among multiple descendants.³⁹

The last piece of significant information about the army in this section concerns its ethnic composition, which was very heterogeneous, comprising people from different corners of Central Asia and of the Tibetan plateau. This was expected, as the unification of Tibet under the Dalai Lama was achieved thanks to the indispensable aid of the Khoshud Mongols. Thus, the troops are said to have included "Heroes moving as swift as lightning: Turushka, Hor, [warriors from] upper and lower Amdo and Kham, northern nomads, etc." (*glog ltar 'khyug pa'i dpa' bo tu ruška / hor dang mdo khams stod smad byang 'brog sogs*), all "having endless languages and customs" (*skad dang lugs srol mtha' klas*).

Interestingly, people from Central Tibet are not mentioned. It may be that the soldiers from "the two armies of the four districts" (*yan lag rnam bzhi'i dpung tshogs nyis*) cited in an earlier passage are taken for granted and therefore are not repeated here. Alternatively, their absence could perhaps be interpreted as a sign that the majority of soldiers came from Amdo, Kham, Northern Tibet, and the Turco-Mongol regions of Inner Asia rather than from Central Tibet.

(4) The central core of the text presents the actual contents of the armoury. Unfortunately this section is less factual than one would wish, and it may be presumed that indications such as the quantity of items stored, their condition, their material, and their quality would be listed in the actual catalogue of the armoury. Still, the preface gives at least a generic indication of what was stored in here, even though the items are recorded in a disorganised fashion. For clarity, we can divide them into four groups: a) armour and protective gear; b) weapons; c) other military implements; and d) non-military provisions.

³⁸ See Venturi, "To Protect and to Serve". Gushri Khan personally commanded the campaigns of 1642 and 1644, and his descendants participated in many of the following campaigns.

³⁹ Documents analysed by Schwieger testify to the fact that at least after the death of Gushri Khan, the Khoshud khans often acted "by the order of the Dalai Lama" (*The Dalai Lama and the Emperor*, 56).

To begin with, both new and old equipment were kept at Dorjéling. The preface lists by name the *rgya byi*, *dmār* (likely short for *dmār yu/g.yu*), and *'bal*, as well as the *g.ya ma*, *skya chen*, *li ting* and *me ru*, all apparently “handsomely arranged”.⁴⁰ These names identify the seven main typologies of lamellar armour [fig. 2], as listed in the sixteenth century manual known as *A Treatise on Worldly Traditions*,⁴¹ which also enumerates the various sub-typologies of each category.⁴² Today, the various kinds of typologies and sub-typologies are but names to us, and any differences between the numerous categories, either in construction technique, material, region of production, or aesthetic appearance remain unclear. Given the plentiful number of variations (the seven major types of lamellar armour include sixty-one different subtypes) it is possible that the distinctions among them were very minor and almost imperceptible to the non-adepts.

Lamellar armour was constructed by joining together small metal plates to each other with long, narrow strips of leather⁴³ and thus it is not surprising to read that the armoury also contained a store of straps (*sgrog*), presumably kept in case repairs were needed. Other protective equipment conserved there also included the ten kinds of rigid helmets [fig. 3],⁴⁴ of which the Dalai Lama, perhaps out of unfamiliarity with the topic, mentions explicitly only one, the *li gzha'*.⁴⁵ Finally, the armoury contained armour for the protection of horses [fig. 4], such as the *cang shes* breed, considered to be the finest in Tibet, and shields (*phub*) of various sizes [fig. 5].

⁴⁰ La Rocca, *Warriors*, 260, 265.

⁴¹ Completed in 1524, its full Tibetan title is *'Jig rten lugs kyi bstan bcos las dpyad don gsal ba'i sgron me zhes sgrags pa bzhugs so*. It discusses and evaluates the quality of different types of artefacts, from religious ones such as statues, books, cymbals and bells, to objects of daily use, including cloth, tea and porcelain. It also includes a section on weapons and armour, transcribed and edited from different versions in La Rocca, *Warriors*, 253-63.

⁴² All the sub-typologies are listed in La Rocca, *Warriors*, 265.

⁴³ See a technical description of their construction in La Rocca, *Warriors*, 51.

⁴⁴ The ten types of helmets are listed in *A Treatise on Worldly Traditions*; see La Rocca, *Warriors*, 266. Like armour, helmets were assembled with metal plates, in this case wedge-shaped and bent into an arch shape.

⁴⁵ According to *A Treatise on Worldly Traditions*, the correct name for this type of helmet is *gzha' li*.



Figure 2 Lamellar armour and helmet. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of George C. Stone, 1935 (36.25.53a,b)



Figure 3 The only known extant example of a Tibetan copper helmet. Private collection, USA



Figure 4 A rare complete example of classic Tibetan shaffron. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, The Collection of Giovanni P. Morosini, presented by his daughter Giulia, by exchange; Bashford Dean Memorial Collection, Funds from various donors, by exchange; and Fletcher Fund, by exchange, 1997 (1997.242d)



Figure 5 A typical type of Tibetan shield, made of concentric cane, slightly domed, and with a metal boss.
© The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, Ochs Sulzberger Gift, 2005 (2005.145)



Figure 6 Tibetan short sword or knife with a steep point, eighteenth-nineteenth century. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Bequest of George C. Stone, 1935 (36.25.1462a, b)

As for weapons, the first two items listed are *tségö* (*rtse rgod*) knives⁴⁶ [fig. 6] and daggers (*phur pa*). Mention of blades with short-handles, more useful in hand-to-hand combat than in a war context, and particularly of the last item, which is normally used in a ritual context, may betray to a certain extent the unfamiliarity of the Dalai Lama with the subject at hand. Further down in the text, after having discussed miscellaneous items, the list of arms continues, this time including the *'phrul sgyogs me*, a term that may be translated as 'matchlock' or, more generically, 'artillery' [figs 7a-7c], but that as with most other weapons' names, and particularly the terms for firearms, is liable to multiple interpretations depending on the context and the period. Luciano Petech, for example, translated it alternately as "artillery fire"⁴⁷ and also "cannon" [fig. 7b-c].⁴⁸ In his "Tibetan-English Glossary of Arms and Armor Terms", La Rocca interprets the cognate expressions *sgyogs* and *sgyogs kyi 'phrul khor* as "cannon, mortar, a war-like engine to shoot darts or fling stones".⁴⁹ In an early twentieth century context, it was translated as "artillery machine" giving emphasis to the production of the first automatic guns.⁵⁰

This term, then, brings to the fore the vast question of the identification of weapon names, that often remain unchanged even as technology progresses, rendering it difficult for the historian to visualise accurately what kind of object is exactly being described. The most apparent cases concern firearms and their evolution; as new mechanisms were introduced and found their way into Tibet, the terms often remained the same, and thus terms such as *me mda'*, possibly literally indicating an arrow ablaze with fire, came to signify various types of mechanic guns, from the early matchlocks to today's pistols.

The last armaments mentioned in the preamble are arrows [fig. 8] that can travel a mile (*dpag⁵¹ chen mda'*), weapons called *lcags zhol*, which according to La Rocca's glossary are a type of non-projectile, hand-held weapon,⁵² and swords (*ral gri*, [fig. 9]),⁵³ the glowing blue light of which, the Dalai Lama says, is considered an ornament of the troops (*ral gri'i 'od sngon 'phro la dpung rgyan*).

46 La Rocca, *Warriors*, 274.

47 Petech, *China and Tibet*, 16 (*me skyogs*).

48 Petech, *China and Tibet*, 132 (*me skyogs*). Notice, however, that *me skyogs* is also the name of a ladle used to add coal to the fire, or a "coal shovel" (Jäschke, *Dictionary*, 417).

49 La Rocca, *Warriors*, 280.

50 Venturi, "The Thirteenth Dalai Lama", 492, 502, 504.

51 From: *dpag tshad*, a measure of length generally translated as 'fathom' or 'mile'; *dpag chen* is, perhaps, a 'long fathom' (the form *dpag chung* also exists, and Jäschke, *Dictionary*, 326 defines it as "500 fathoms").

52 La Rocca, *Warriors*, 273.

53 On the variety of *ral gri* swords see the glossary in La Rocca, *Warriors*, 275-6.



Figures 7a-c

It is hard to identify specific types of artillery in Tibet; these illustrations show some of the different varieties used. Figure 7a: One matchlock wall gun. National Museum of Nepal, Kathmandu. Photo by Donald La Rocca | Figure 7b: Two Tibetan iron cannons, allegedly seized during the second Nepal-Tibet War. National Museum of Nepal, Kathmandu. Photo by Donald La Rocca | Figure 7c: A Tibetan leather cannon. National Museum of Nepal, Kathmandu. Photo by Donald La Rocca



Figure 8 Tibetan arrowheads. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Jeremy Pine, 2012 (2012.147.9-12)



Figure 9 A Tibetan sword with 'hairpin pattern' on the blade. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of George C. Stone, 1935 (36.25.1458a)

Also kept in the armoury were different types of non-combat military equipment. These included victory banners (*rgyal mtshan*), tassels (*dom*), and decorated drums (*rnga*); as well as division standards (*ru mtshon*) and pennants (*ba dan*). The existence of these items points to a certain level of sophistication and organisation in the military already at this early stage. It seems that the *dom* tassels, for example, used as a decoration for horses, may have pointed to different ranks among the soldiers. Drums point to the usage of instruments to call, rouse to arms, round up, etc., while pennants and division standards indicate there were platoons, etc. (possibly organised according to the Mongol system based on multiples of ten).⁵⁴

Last, the list includes a variety of non-military items that were nonetheless indispensable for the smooth operation of a campaign: beautiful white tents (*gur dkar lhun po*) to pitch in the centre of a camp (*phru ma*), other tents, canopies (*lding gur*),⁵⁵ and even bowls for food.

This portion illustrating the contents of the armoury concludes with a brief summary, almost a colophon, that explains the choice of the name Dorjéling for the armoury, referring to the catalogue as “the book to aid the memory of the well-filled by taxes (*dpya yi rab gtams pa*), meaningful and renown island [that is] solid like a vajra, the armoury of the universally respected (*mang bkur*) great government of the Land of Snow” (*gangs can mang bkur rgyal khab chen po yi / go mdzod rdo rje lta bur sra brtan gling / grags pa don ldan dpya yis rab gtams pa'i // brjed byang deb ther*). This raises the tantalising possibility that taxes in support of the army were already collected in 1667, but this question must also remain open until further research.⁵⁶

(5) The last part of the poem provides a rationale to justify Tibet's role as a military power. Two interconnected lines of reasoning accomplish this task. First, Tibet is recognised and praised as the repository of Buddhist religion, a fount from which genuine Buddhism springs. Secondly, the country's history is depicted in a way that supports a worldview according to which Tibet is the legitimate heir of the Buddhist traditions that have disappeared in India, and as such is the only country able to show to all nearby regions the correct path to salvation. Using quotes from canonical texts, the Fifth Dalai Lama

⁵⁴ Tibetan army divisions according to multiples of ten already appear in the mid-seventeenth century code known as *zhal ice bcu drug*; on this see Travers, “The Tibetan Army”, 258-9.

⁵⁵ An illustration of the *lding gur*, lit. ‘suspended tent’, can be found in Lange, *Atlas of the Himalayas*, 53; it shows a tent protected by a larger, suspended canopy.

⁵⁶ Detailed research on taxation in the earlier period of the Ganden Phodrang remains a *desideratum*. An initial analysis of official documents which may shed light on the topic suggests that military taxes were certainly levied in the eighteenth century, and that they could be so burdensome that taxpayers often preferred to flee the area; see Bischoff, “Right There”, 13.

establishes the factors that determine that Jambudvīpa was destined to dominate all other continents, such as its being the land where all the thousands of Buddhas of the good *kalpa* have appeared or will appear, as well as the place where a *cakravartin* arose.

Following this premise, he explains that armies arrived and inflicted such a heavy defeat onto India and Buddhism that even nearby places like Kashmir and Nepal became filled with wrong views and “at present the best system of the doctrine” (*deng sang bstan srol legs gnas*) can be found only in Tibet, where holy men have congregated. As Tibet is “the sole place where the doctrine of the *Jina* spreads” (*rgyal ba'i bstan pa'ang bod yul kho nar dar ba*) it is the point of reference for all neighbouring states that desire guidance in the Buddhist path. This confers on Tibet an especially powerful position vis-à-vis the nearby polities, that in their quests to originate governments “from which arise benefits and happiness without exception” (*phan pa dang bde ba ma lus pa 'byung ba'i gnas*) can only be guided by the Land of Snows.

Finally, Tibet is defined both from a mythological and a geographical viewpoint. First, the well-known myth that the country was once an ocean that eventually became covered with a forest of *Sāl* trees is reiterated. Then, the extent of Tibet is defined by enumerating its districts. The language of the text, however, is rather ambiguous, and the list could be interpreted either as indicating the districts that comprised Tibet at the time the country originated, i.e. when the ocean dried up and the areas covered with *Sāl* trees became manifest, or as a way to specify the districts that the author, the Fifth Dalai Lama, saw as rightfully belonging to Tibet. The question is intriguing, and I am inclined to suggest that both were the same in the eyes of the Fifth Dalai Lama: the borders of the country covered by *Sāl* trees at the dawn of the ages and the boundaries of the Ganden Phodrang coincided, in no small part thanks to him.

The list begins and ends in Central Tibet, as if to reiterate the fundamental historical role of this area. From here it turns to the west, grouping together Purang (Pu rangs), Mar yul (misspelled Mang yul) and Zanskar (Zangs dkar); a second group of three areas further north-west, including Khotan (Li), Gilgit (Gru sha, *sic*) and Baltistan (Sbal sde, *sic*); and the three districts of upper and lower Zhang zhung, around mount Ti se or Kailasa; altogether forming Ngari khorsum (Mnga' ris 'khor gsum). Moving east, in Dokham (Mdo khams) it counts one region, and names it “lower Kham” (Smad khams);⁵⁷ in Domé (Mdo smad), one region labelled Yarmo thang (G.yar mo thang), and another designated as the plain of Tsong kha (Btsong kha), all

⁵⁷ It appears that Mdo khams and Smad khams are synonyms. On the nomenclature of Kham and Amdo also see Yang, “Tracing the *Chol kha gsum*”.

three together comprising the three ranges of lower Dokham (Smad mdo khams). At last, returning to the centre of the country, he lists Wuru (Dbu ru) and Yoru (G.yo ru) in Ü, and Yéru (G.yas ru) and Rulak (Ru lag) in Tsang.⁵⁸ From this last group the focus narrows down to Lhasa, the place where the god of men would arise in the lineage of the Licchavi;⁵⁹ with its temple of the Rasa trulnang (Ra sa 'phrul snang), the eight-spoked wheel in the sky, the three hills of the protective lords of Lhasa,⁶⁰ Chakpori, Marpori and Bongwari (Lcags po ri, Dmar po ri, Bong ba ri),⁶¹ and most of all the high mountain of Avalokiteśvara with its mansion of complete victory, the Potala.

(6) Thus, this geographical portrait of Tibet appears to have two functions. First, it spells in specific detail all the regions that the Fifth Dalai Lama saw as part of Tibet. These rather strikingly coincide with the farthest extent of imperial Tibet, including areas that had not been within Tibetan control since the seventh century, such as the oasis of Khotan, and other remote regions whose contacts with Central Tibet were by this time extremely sporadic, such as Balti and Gilgit, which had been gradually Islamicised for several centuries. Notwithstanding this, the Great Fifth envisioned the Ganden Phodrang as the legitimate successor of the Tibetan empire, and throughout the rest of his reign acquiesced to several different military campaigns that were waged also in an effort to reclaim territories at the outer fringes of the plateau. Among these may be included the campaigns against Bhutan in 1668, Kham in 1674-75 and against Ladakh in 1679-84, all occurred after the inauguration of the Dorjéling armoury. Naturally every military campaign of the Ganden Phodrang was occasioned by distinctive sets of circumstances and different reasons, but judging from the Fifth Dalai Lama's description of the ideal extent of Tibet, it seems likely that an aspiration to reconstitute the glories and territorial magnitude of the Tibetan empire must be added to the mix.

58 The classic article on the four horns of Central Tibet is Uray's "The Four Horns"; for more work on this topic see Hazod, "Imperial Central Tibet".

59 This *kṣatriya* clan, originally active around the town of Vaiśālī and regarded as one of the first to follow the teachings of Śakyamūni (several important donors of the Licchavi clan supported the activities of Gautama), is held in special consideration in Tibet because it is believed that the first Tibetan kings, in particular Nyatri tsenpo (Gnya' 'khri btsan po), originated from this group. On this see for example Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, 36, 46; also Rockhill, *The Life of the Buddha*, 203, explains that the Licchavi clan was believed to be related to the Śākya clan.

60 These are respectively Vajrapāṇi, Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī.

61 The hill of Bong ba ri is also known as Bar ma ri; the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* only has an entry for Bar ma ri, mentioning that the Gesar temple is on its top, while Dungkar's *Dictionary* says the same thing of Bong ba ri. There is no mention in either of these dictionaries of the alternative name. I am indebted to Alice Travers (CRCAO, Paris) for pointing this out.

In second instance, this geographical description of Tibet also brings, by progressively decreasing concentric circles, the discourse back to the Potala and its armoury, in order to summarise again its main contents and conclude the preamble with a colophon. It is in fact in the Potala, the beautiful palace appointed by heaven on top of Marpori, that are kept the garments of lay government officials, the body and horse armour, both decorated with the symbols of the four great units of Ü; light armour fit for travelling; armours of the nomads of Hor, Sog and Kham who protect the government; swords, arrows and spears, guns (styled as *me mda'*; but notice that above the text earlier referred to *gyogs 'phrul skor*); large tents for the main camp, as well as canopies, large copper cauldrons, and a variety of necessary provisions (*tsho chas*). All, the colophon concludes, are stored here to be protected from the rain so that they would not get ruined and their arrangement would not be disturbed.

4 Conclusions

Several conclusions, then, can be drawn from this brief analysis of the preamble to the catalogue of military supplies in the Dorjéling armoury. While the Fifth Dalai Lama, unlike Pope Pius II, did not go as far as to name weapons after himself or his mother, the text gives us an idea of his understanding of and approach to the question of warfare and provides some answers to the three questions posed earlier. First, concerning his level of involvement with military affairs, the text does not reveal much about it; it remains unclear whether he actually participated in the decision to found the armoury or just endorsed it by writing the preamble. However, he was cognisant of what was happening and had formed a rationale in his mind on how to justify this action, a rationale that he expounded in this text. This was based on the importance of preserving Tibet as a bastion of genuine, unsullied Buddhist teachings. Neighbouring countries, either where Buddhism had existed but was in decline at the moment, or where Buddhism was unknown, could all profit from their geographical closeness to Tibet and from the possibility of tapping from its inexhaustible source of salvific knowledge. Thus, it was imperative to protect, militarily if needed, the integrity of all the regions of Tibet under the control of the Ganden Phodrang, the most apt government for the preservation and dissemination of Buddhist teachings. If military intervention should prove necessary, then it made perfect sense to store and maintain in good working order all the necessary supplies for fighting.

A second important consideration in regards to the Fifth Dalai Lama's knowledge of and involvement with military affairs, concerns his knowledge of weaponry in general. Unsurprisingly, this seems to

have been very superficial; the first weapons he mentions in the list of the contents of the armoury are knives and *phur pa*, which typically are everyday tools (the former) and ritual weapons (the latter) and not arms intended for warfare. However, he seems to have been at least somewhat familiar with the above-mentioned *Treatise on Worldly Traditions*⁶² or with similar texts that discussed the various classifications of arms and armour, since he lists several specific names of body-armour and helmets.

As for his awareness of the importance of weapons in the wider political context of which he was part, the text illustrates that he understood it very well. In fact, the section on the justification of the preeminence of Tibet is the longest and best developed one in the whole text, and is intended to validate the Ganden Phodrang's right to sustain an army with enterprises such as a well-organised armoury. Last, it should be added that this preamble was taken as a model by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in 1916, when he also composed four preambles to catalogues of weapons in possession of the Ganden Phodrang. These were analysed a few years ago without realising that they were modelled on this text by the Fifth Dalai Lama.⁶³ However, although the two incarnations of Avalokiteśvara had different knowledge of military matters and different levels of awareness of Tibet vis-à-vis the surrounding countries, both could and did share together the narrative of Tibet as the country destined to guide spiritually its neighbours, and consequently of the existence of an army as a safeguard, either to impose Gélukpa predominance, or to prevent foreign interference.

62 See introduction to this volume.

63 See Venturi, "The Thirteenth Dalai Lama".

5 The Text and Its Translation

(p. 275) *Pho brang chen po po ta la'i go mdzod rdo rje gling gi g.yul chas rnam kyis deb ther le tshan gyi 'go brjod sdeb sbyor rgyun chags dang po gtum po'i char 'bebs sogs*⁶⁴

Binayamaraṇatoshirāṇāṃmalāntrodzanabaukritaṃtsāpinotriṅptara ktārbhakashra

Bika hitsa sutsa rma ba i bhūṣa ṇeṣu bya ra ut wa nytsa mā dzībapanggābatakrāntata

log 'dren bsad pa'i mgo 'phreng rgyu ma ga shar byas kyang ma tshim par / khrag 'dzag pags rlon lding stabs gyon nas bam ro 'dam star brdzi ba yi //⁶⁵

Atirabaṇasharīrakālasayashatraubilāityamanydzoshtsabadzrendraga krotashastika

Hiharitanaṃdzwalaiṣṣhatrubhinytsakraṣhirṣeṃr. yugāsatyabhūmaupatityaṃkuru /

srin po'i gzugs kyis dus dgrar rnam rol 'jam dpal rdo rje khro bo'i dbang // mtshon rnon 'bar bas dgra dpung mgo bo cig car sa la lung bar mdzod / (234ba) bsams pa tsam gyis 'dod pa'i dngos grub kun // 'bad med rtsol la yongs 'du'i mched gyur kyang // yid srubs gshed du gnam lcags rdo rje thog // dmag zor lhag pa'i lha des rtag tu skyongs // gya gyu'i sems ldan rgol ngan glang po'i mgor // gsod rtags ka ra wa ra'i me tog 'phreng // rab 'god 'jigs med rgyud kyis nga ro can // beg tse lcam dral bla tshe srog gi bdag // zhe sdang nyi ma 'char ka ltar dmar mig // zlum por blta ba'i zol gyis dgra bo'i bla / 'gugs mdzad sprul pa'i chos rgyal sde lnga [p. 276] po // gsang yum sprul blon tshogs kyis mthu dpung skyed // gang gi bka' gnyan btsan rgod gnod sbyin che / dkar nag las rnam 'byed pa'i mel tshe mkhan / gangs can chos srid bstan 'dzin phas rgol gyi / srog snying khrag dron ro bda'i skyems su gsol / dkar nag rtsis kyis lo zla zhag gi lha / gza' skar spar sme sa bdag rgyal blon 'bangs / thugs kar sum brgya drug cu la sogs pa / stobs ldan dgra lha'i tshogs kyis rtag tu srungs / yid can yongs kyis phan dang bde ba'i gzhi / don kun grub pa'i ring lugs bla na med / yun du gnas 'phel rtsa lag gnam bskos lha'i / khriṃs gnyis zung

70 The text is in volume nineteen (*ma*) of the collected works of the Fifth Dalai Lama; here I follow the page numbering of the online version retrievable on the Buddhist Digital Resource Centre website, catalogued as W1PD107937 (<https://www.tbrc.org>).

65 Cf. these lines with those in a *sādhana* dedicated to Hayagrīva and composed by the young Sixth Dalai Lama:

ri-nga mgo-bo rgyu-mar brgyus-pa'i 'phreng /

'phral bsad lpags rlon lding stabs gos-kyis kyang /

These were translated by Dan Martin as “your necklace is made of putrid heads threaded on intestines; even as your clothing, forming a loose canopy around you, is a fresh skin of one suddenly slain”. See Martin, “Secularity Divinized”, 99 fn. 12.

du 'jug pa'i srid kho na / skye rgu'i bde skyid 'phrog pa'i chom rkun
mun / mthar byed 'jig rten gsum gyi sgron me che / rgyal thabs yan
lag rnam bzhi'i dpung tshogs nyis / rdzogs ldan gsar pa'i snang ba
ches cher sbar / gsar 'gros gom gsum 'dzoms pa rta rmig gis / bsnun
pa'i sa chen 'dar ba rdul gyi 'tshub / bskal ba'i 'thor rlung rjes 'gro'i
shugs drag (235na) dpung / lha dmag rtsub 'gyur tshal du bsgrigs
pa bzhin / pha rol dgra de srog phral grangs de snyed / khro gnyer
smin mtshams bsdu pa'i ri mo ru / 'dri ba'i dpa' gtum rtsal ldan tsho
chen zhes / rgyal po'i zho shas 'tsho ba'i stag shar tshogs / glog ltar
'khyug pa'i dpa' bo tu ruška / hor dang mdo khams stod smad byang
'brog sogs / skad dang lugs srol mtha' klas rnam thos bus / g.yar mo'i
thang du mngon sum bkug pa bzhin / mi bsrn sbyor ngan rtsom la
zhe sdang me / gser srang stong gis brngan yang zhi min pa / rab
khros blo de yid srubs lus phra ma'i // mngon 'dod rtse dga'i 'phrul
gyis 'drid nus min / rgya byi dmar bal g.ya' ma skya chen dang / li
ting me rur grags pa gsar rnying bar / legs byung sgrog phyis kha
thi sha dom gsham / bkod mdzes srog skyob ches btsan rdo rje'i go /
li gzha' la sogs rigs bcu sra mkhregs rmog / rgyal mtshan rgod phur
dom ru ang seng dang / gzha' ris rnga bcus la sogs brjid ldan pa / 'jigs
med dpa' bo'i ring rtags mtshar du dngar / cang shes srog gi bsrung
ba lcags gzhibs go / che chung phub dang lcags zhol rnga chas sogs /
dbang gzhu ltar bkra 'chi med dpung tshogs [p. 277] rnam / lha min
'dul phyr g.yul du zhugs pa bzhin / ru mtshon ba dan phyar ba srid
rtser snyeg / dpag chen mda' dang 'phrul sgyogs me yi mtshon / ral
gri'i 'od sngon 'phro la dpung rgyan du / spud pas dgra snying shubs
nas lkog mar thon/⁶⁶ phru ma'i dbus na gur dkar lhun po ltar / mtho
brjid yol ba'i (235 ba) lcags ri khor yug can / lding gur bza' btung
spyod pa'i yol go sogs / mkho dgu'i 'byor ba gnod sbyin mdzod bzhin
gtams / log 'dren srog bral mgo bo med pa'i ro // 'dab chags sha za'i
gsos su bkram pa'i gtam / thos pa'i mod la gya gyu'i sems ldan gyi /
yid la gnag pa'i dam bca' ring du dor / chen po rtul phod sgyu rtsal
'phong skyen po / stobs ldan rā ma ṅa yi rjes 'gro bas / rgyal rnga lan
brgyar brdung dang lhan cig par / bstan byus yid bzhin tog mdzes
rgyal mtshan 'phyar / rang srid bstan dang de rjes 'brang kun gyi /
byus legs rdo rje'i srog shing rab tshugs par / dkar phyogs dga' ba'i
lha rgyal 'then pa dang / skyid pa'i dbyangs snyan sgrog la gcig tu
brel / gangs can mang bkur rgyal khab chen po yi / go mdzod rdo
rje lta bur sra brtan gling / grags pa don ldan dpya yis rab gtams
pa'i // brjed byang deb ther yi ge'i 'phreng mdzes spel / zhes shis pa
brjod pa'i tshig gis sngun bsus te / 'jigs rten khams ler / gling ni zla
ba 'od dkar can dang rab mchog ku sha dag ni mi'am ci dang khrung
khrung dang / drag po yang ni longs spyod pa ste bdun par dzambu'i

66 This quatrain was quoted in the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's preamble to the book of Tibetan-made guns. See Venturi, "The Thirteenth Dalai Lama", 487 and 496.

mi rnams gnas pa dag ni las kyis / zhes spyir gling bcu gnyis po thams cad 'dzam gling chen por bshad cing / de'i nang nas dzambu'i ljon pas nye bar mtshan pa'i lho gling 'di la 'dzam gling chung ngur grags pa ni / gdan bzhi las / dzambu gling du legs skyes pa / dngos grub sa par shes par bya / gling gsum por ni skyes pa ni // 'bras bu 'byung ba'i bsod nams gnas / zhes dang/ bde (236na) mchog mkha' 'gro rgya mtsho'i rgyud las / 'dzam bu gling ni chen po yi / dum bu bcu gnyis kyi ni dbus / 'dzam bu gling ni chung ngu 'dir / bdag gi shākya'i rigs rjes 'gro / zhes lho 'dzam bu gling 'dir bskal bzang gi sangs rgyas stong rnams byon cing 'byon par 'gyur pa'i gnas // [p. 278] mi rnams kyang dbang po rno zhing grims pa / dam pa'i chos sgrub pa'i rten khyad par can du gyur pa dang/ rdzogs ldan gyi dus su 'khor los sgyur ba'i rgyal po byung ba'i tshe / gling 'di nyid nas 'go brtsams te gling gzhan rnams la dbang sgyur bar bshad cing / gling 'di'i lte ba rgya gar 'phags pa'i yul gyi ma ga dha rdo rje gdan yin na'ang / khro phu lo tsā bas kha che pañ chen la phul ba'i zhu yig tu / ma ga dha sogs rig 'byung gnas na sdig to yis / dmag tshogs kyi⁶⁷ bcom skyon kha che bal yul yang / log spyod kyis khengs deng sang bstan srol legs gnas ni / bod yul 'dir zad skyes chen byang phyogs zhabs bskyod zhu / zhes dus kyi dbang las phan pa dang bde ba ma lus pa 'byung ba'i gnas / rgyal ba'i bstan pa'ang bod yul kho nar dar bar gsungs shing / yul de ni 'jam dpal rtsa rgyud du / nga yi dus nas lo brgya na / kha ba can du mtsho bri nas / sã la'i nags ni 'byung bar 'gyur / zhes gangs kyi rwa bas yongs su bskor ba'i sã la'i ljons chen po ru bzahir grags pa ste / de yang pu rangs / mang⁶⁸ yul zangs dkar gsum skor gcig / li / gru⁶⁹ sha / sbal sde⁷⁰ gsum skor gcig / zhang zhung / khri sde / stod smad gsum skor gcig ste stod mnga' ris skor gsum / mdo khams la smad khams btags pa (236ba) khams gcig / mdo smad la g.yar mo thang btags pa khams gcig / btsong kha la gyi thang btags pa khams gcig ste smad mdo khams sgang gsum / dbus na dbu ru dang g.yo ru / gtsang na g.yas ru dang ru lag gis dbus gtsang ru bzahir grags pa'i nang nas / 'jam dpal rtsa rgyud las / lha ldan yul zhes bya ba 'dir / rgyal po mi yi lha zhes pa / li tsa bi rnams rigs su 'byung / zhes lung bstan pa'i lha ldan ni / ra sa 'phrul snang gi gtsug lag khang ngam / yongs su grags pa chos 'khor dpal gyi lha sa 'di yin la / yul 'di ni gnam 'khor lo rtsibs brgyad / sa padma 'dab brgyad / logs bkra shis rtags brgyad de dge mtshan phun sum tshogs pa'i dbus na / rigs gsum mgon po'i bla ri gsum yod pa'i nang tshan / spyen ras gzigs kyi bla ri glang po che dres⁷¹ la btags pa lta bu dmar po ri'i rtser gnam bskos rgyal po'i pho

67 Read: kyis.

68 Read: mar.

69 Read: bru.

70 Read: sti.

71 Read: bres.

brang mdzes sdug rnam par rgyal ba'i khang bzang la rngam brjid langka mgrin [p. 279] bcu'i grong khyer lta bu'i rgyal khab chen po'i go mdzod rdo rje'i gling du gsol go'i⁷² rim pa / drung 'khor gyi gyon khrab ta⁷³ go dang bcas pa / dbus tsho chen bzhi'i gzabs mchor dang / thang ring du bgrod pa'i yang chas gyi go cha dang / gzhung skyong gi hor sogs⁷⁴ khams 'brog gi go cha / mdor na ral gri / mda' mdung / me mda' sogs mtshon cha / dkyil sgar gyi gur chen / yol skor / lding gur / lding zangs sogs char skyob 'tsho chas kyi nyer mkho ji snyed pa rnams yod pa chud mi 'dza'⁷⁵ zhing / go rim mi 'khrugs par byed pa'i ched du 'phags yul ba pra wanggar 'bod cing / rgya nag gi yul du ting wal zhes pa 'byung ba sum (237na) ldan me lug⁷⁶ hor zla bdun pa'i tshes bcu dgu dmag dpon tha skar gyi 'grub sbyor thog gsar du bsgrigs pa'i deb ther g.yul las rnams par rgyal ba 'dzad pa med pa'i gter gyi sgo 'phar phye ba la /

72 *Gsol go* is an honorific form of *go*, 'armour'. See also Venturi, "To Protect and to Serve", 39 fn. 78.

73 Read: rta.

74 Read: sog.

75 Read: za.

76 It corresponds to the year 1667.

A Fierce Rain Shower. The First Uninterrupted Poetic Preamble⁷⁷
to the Book Chapter on Military Supplies (*g.yul chas*) of the Dorjéling
Armoury of the Great Potala Palace

[Sanskrit text transliterated in Tibetan]

Not being satisfied by just making necklaces with the heads and garlands with the entrails of the killed enemy; [you] wear [their] skins drenched in dripping blood in the guise of a canopy (*lding*),⁷⁸ and trample on the crushed mud of their corpses.⁷⁹

[Sanskrit text transliterated in Tibetan]

Power of the wrathful Vajra Mañjuśrī ('Jam dpal rdo rje), manifested as Vajrabhairava with the body of a *rākṣasa*; Make immediately fall to the ground the heads of the enemy troops with shining sharp swords! Even though you became [like] a sibling that gathers effortlessly⁸⁰

All the accomplishments that one desires just by the mere thought [of you], With a *vajra* of meteoric iron [thrown] at the enemy devils | [You], supreme deity Dmag zor rgyal mo, protect [us] forever.⁸¹ [With] a garland of *ka ra wa ra*⁸² flower like a mark of slaughter on an elephant's head [For] the wicked and deceitful sentient beings | The lion of the fearless and fully installed (*rab 'god*) [= *rab tu 'god*] lineage, Beg tse brother and sister, ruler of the vital life-force,⁸³ | [His] eyes, red as a rising sun of hatred, Summon the *bla* of the enemy through a trick of circular vision [and] [p. 276] | Raise the magically

⁷⁷ The expression *sdeb sbyor rgyun chags* refers to the particular style of poetic composition and metric style used here. I am grateful to Gedun Rabsal for this explanation.

⁷⁸ I am interpreting this as a short form for *lding gur* or *lding khang*, employed in order to respect the requirements of the metric.

⁷⁹ The two initial poems, i.e. this and the one that follows the next mantra, follow a metric of fifteen syllables each.

⁸⁰ From this line the metric changes to a nine-syllable rhythm.

⁸¹ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for suggestions that helped improve the translation of this passage dedicated to extol Dmag zor rgyal mo, and the following one praising Beg tse lcam dral.

⁸² The closest word I have found is *ka ra bi ra*, which may mean either 'oleander flowers' or another synonym for 'garland' (it renders the Skt. *karavīra*; I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out). Beg tse's iconography traditionally depicts him with a necklace of severed heads, rather than flowers, and red-coloured oleander buds may be interpreted as a poetic license.

⁸³ The god of war, a later deity probably introduced in the sixteenth century after contact with the Mongols. On this deity, see the ample discussion in Heller, "Etude", as well as a chapter in de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons*, 89-93.

powerful army of the five emanated Dharma Kings,⁸⁴ | Their secret consorts, and assembly of ministers.⁸⁵

I pray that whoever among the great fierce commanders, demons, or *yakṣa*, | The sentinels who differentiate between white and black actions, | Drink the delicious warm blood, the life essence of the enemies [of] | The doctrine holders of the religious government of the Land of Snow.

The deities of years, months and days⁸⁶ of astrology (*dkar/skar rtsis*) and Chinese divination (*nag rtsis*), | Planets and stars, *spar [kha]* and *sme [ba]* astrological diagrams,⁸⁷ | Always protect, through the host of powerful war deities (*dgra lha*), | The three-hundred and sixty,⁸⁸ etc. in [your] heart: | The lords of the soil, kings, ministers and commoners!⁸⁹

Only the government with the two indivisible [temporal and spiritual] laws | Of the god appointed by heaven, [with] branches and roots [that] extensively grow | The basis of happiness and benefit of all living beings, [and] | The supreme tradition of the Buddha [is] | The great lamp of the three worlds, destroyer of | The darkness of robbers who steal joy and happiness from the living beings.

The two armies of the four districts of the kingdom | Will ignite evermore the appearance of the new golden age (*rdzogs ldan*) [Skt. *krtayuga*]; | [Their] horses' hooves, combining the three gaits: fresh,⁹⁰ walk and trot, | Will rise dust (*rdul gyi tshub*) [= *rdul tshub*] by making shake the ground they hit. The mighty troops, like a hurricane of [this] era; | Like a formation of the army of the gods in a charnel ground, | Will release the life force of the enemy in such large numbers!

84 This refers to Pehar and his retinue, which includes Brgya byin, Mon bu putra, Shing bya can and Dgra lha skyes; see de Nebesky-Wojtkowitz, *Oracles and Demons*, 94-133, and especially 107-33.

85 I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this reading.

86 These are deities connected with the Kālacakra tantra.

87 *Spar kha* and *sme ba* are units of time used to finesse a divinatory calculation. On this see Maurer, "Landscaping Time", 109-10.

88 These are the three-hundred sixty zodiac days.

89 On the connection of the *sa bdag* to chronomancy, or time divination to determine the best moment for an enterprise, see Schuh, "Die *sa-bdag*". Here, on the basis of an examination of Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's chapter on *sa bdag* in the *Vaidurya dkar po*, Schuh established that these beings (whose name, he suggests, would be better translated as "lords of time and divinatory space") are especially important for religious practices aimed at pacifying, increasing and exercising power, as well as rituals to destroy the enemy. In general, *sa bdag* dwell in time, and depending on the category, their abode is fixed in time (i.e. does not change with the passing of time), or changes depending on the year (in the cycle of the twelve animals), month, day, or even hour.

90 This refers to the gait of a young horse that has just been saddled. See *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, 1063, s.v. "rta gсар".

A large group of fierce and strong heroes, depicted (*'dri ba*) [= *'bri ba*] as an image composing a frown between the eyes, | A host of young men who live with a royal stipend, Heroes moving as swift as lightning: Central Asians (Tu ruška) Hor, [warriors from] upper and lower Amdo and Kham, northern nomads, etc., | With endless languages and customs; just as Vaishravana⁹¹ | Summoned [them] directly in the plain of G.yar mo⁹² | [Their] wrathful fire toward [people who] commence ruthless actions; | Could not be calmed even by paying thousands of gold pieces. [Their] extremely angry minds could not [even] be enticed by the pleasant diversions of desire of a lovely woman of Kamadeva.

As for the old and new [equipment]: | The famed *rgya byi, dmar (yu/g.yu), 'bal, g.ya' ma, skya chen, li ting, and me ru;*⁹³ | Well obtained cloth (*phyis*), straps (*sgrog*), gunpowder holders (*kha*),⁹⁴ match cords

91 Well known as a deity connected with wealth, Vaiśravaṇa also has a role as protective deity (*lokapāla*) inasmuch as he is the king of the north and of the northern continent of Uttarakuru, and in this position he is at the head of armies of *yakṣa*. His role as protector is especially emphasised in the common depictions of this deity at the gate of temples.

92 Spelled both G.yar mo and G.yer mo, this plain is in an area of Mdo smad which includes Tsong kha.

93 These are the seven major types of lamellar armour. They are listed in La Rocca, *Warriors*, 265.

94 I am interpreting *kha* to be a shortened form of a term connected to arms and armour. The possibilities are several: 1) it may be an abbreviation of *sha kha*, a word used to denote a gunpowder holder made of horn; 2) *gri kha*, the edge of a knife or sword; 3) *me mda'i kha*, the muzzle of a gun; 4) *me mda'i tsha kha* or *so kha* the gunsight, a 'bead' or 'leaf'-shaped sight "found on the top of the muzzle of a gun barrel" (La Rocca, *Warriors*, 282). Given that items 2) and 3) and 4) identify specific parts of a larger item, parts that cannot be stored separately from the item to which they belong, I propose that the full word abbreviated here is *sha kha*.

(*thi*);⁹⁵ | Saddle ropes (*sha*),⁹⁶ horse tassels (*dom*),⁹⁷ [and] tassels (*gsham*);⁹⁸ | Handsomely arranged, greatly life-protecting, strong, indestructible armour; | Ten kinds of rigid (*sra mkhregs*)⁹⁹ helmets, such as *li gzha'*;¹⁰⁰ | Victory banners, knives (*rgod*),¹⁰¹ daggers (*phur*),¹⁰² tassels (*dom*),¹⁰³ *ru ang seng* [?]¹⁰⁴ and | Magnificent [objects] such

95 I am interpreting *thi* to be a short for *sbi thi* (also spelled *sbi sdi* and *sbi ti*), a “slow burning match cord that is used to ignite a matchlock gun” (La Rocca, *Warriors*, 281). This meaning also would agree with the interpretation of *kha* as *sha kha*, identifying an equipment necessary to shoot muskets. An alternative possibility to the interpretations offered in this and the preceding footnote has been offered by an anonymous reviewer, who suggests that *kha thi* could be taken all together as a term that indicates a type of luxury fabric silk known as *lampas*. Although I concur with the reviewer’s observation that the abbreviation *kha* and *thi* for *sha kha* and *sbi thi* may simply have been too cryptic for most readers, making their identification nearly impossible, I also wonder what was the purpose of a luxury material such as *kha thi* in a military context. The question, then, should remain open for the moment. A description of the *kha thi* fabric may be found in Karsten, “When Silk was Gold”, 6-7. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion and its related reference.

96 Likely this is another abbreviation of a longer term. It could be a short form of *sha thag/rtag*, “the front and back rope that keeps a saddle in place on the horse” (Goldstein, *Dictionary*, 1090, and also *Bod rgya tshig mdzod*, 2823; but it is spelled *sha stag* in Das, *Dictionary*, 320). Alternatively, it could be the short form of *sha rkang* / *sha rkang mchog*, a sub-type of the *dmay yu* type of armour; it might also be a short form for *snga sha*, a word that denotes the front part, or pommel, of a saddle (on this word see the discussion in La Rocca, *Warriors*, 284), or even for *phyi sha*, the back (or curving part) of a saddle; however, the armour is a sub-type of a kind that has already been mentioned, and the front and back of a saddle cannot be stored as separate items from the saddle itself, so I have chosen to interpret *sha* as ‘saddle rope’.

97 This seems to be the short form for *dom dom*, “red tassel put on the neck of horses of high-ranking officials” (Goldstein, *Dictionary*, 547, and also La Rocca, *Warriors*, 285-7).

98 This may be short for *gsham 'dzar*, a type of tassel.

99 The term *sra* is also used within the phrase “*mtshon khar sra*”, literally meaning ‘hard upon a weapon’ and translated by La Rocca, *Warriors*, 275 as “proof against cut and thrust”.

100 A type of helmet made of “bell metal”, see La Rocca *Warriors*, under *gzha'i li*.

101 This may be a short form of *rtse rgod*; see La Rocca, *Warriors*, 274 after Das, *Dictionary*, 1012. Notice also that the least common meaning for the word *rgod* in Goldstein, *Dictionary*, 251, is “military” (this meaning does not appear in *Bod rgya tshig mdzod*).

102 Alternatively, *phur* of the text may be a mistake for *phub*, ‘shield’.

103 It seems strange that the same item would be repeated twice in the space of a few lines, however, La Rocca, *Warriors*, 285-7 shows that several cognate terms, all including the word *dom*, were used to identify tassels hung from the harness on horses’ neck and chest (*snying dom*, *dom dom*, *dom dom nyis brtsegs* and *og dom*).

104 These are possibly abbreviations of longer military terms, though it is hard to determine with certainty what their full form would be. *Ru*, ‘horn’, may be for *me ru*, a type of armour (already mentioned above, thus less likely as an option here); for *rdzas ru*, a horn to hold gunpowder; or for *ru kha*, the horn brace of a Tibetan gun; or finally for *me mda'i ru*, “a gun rest made of two prongs attached to the gun stock near the muzzle” (La Rocca, *Warriors*, 282). I cannot determine the meaning of *ang* in this context; *seng*, normally ‘lion’, may refer here to *seng mgo*, a sub-type of the ‘*bal*’ armour (see La Rocca, *Warriors*, 265).

as rounded drums [with] rainbow designs; | Properly arranged as marvellous symbols during the time (*ring* [?]) of the fearless heroes; | Horse¹⁰⁵ armour, iron protection of the life of thoroughbred (*cang shes*) horses; | Large and small shields (*phub*), and *lcags zhol* weapons,¹⁰⁶ drums, equipment, etc. The immortal troops, as splendid as a rainbow, [p. 277] | As [they] go to battle (*gyul du zhugs*) to subdue the *asura* | Pursue the pinnacle of cyclic existence¹⁰⁷ by hoisting¹⁰⁸ banners (*ru mtshon*) and standards (*ba dan*). They are adorned with [these] war ornaments: arrows [that reach] a mile¹⁰⁹ and weapons (*mtshon*) with | Mechanic¹¹⁰ (*phrul*) artillery fire [*sgyogs me*]; swords glowing with blue light; | So the heart of the enemy is torn out from its casing to the throat.¹¹¹

In the middle of the military encampment (*phru ma*), like a white tent Mount Meru (*lhun po*), | Surrounded (*khor yug can*) by a screen of high, resplendent curtains | The large canopy is filled with necessities [and] wealth | Like a *yakṣa*'s treasure: bowls, etc., for eating and drinking. [With] reports of scattering, as nourishment for flesh eating birds, | The headless corpses [of] the dying wicked ones | The dishonest living beings, immediately [upon] hearing [this], | [Will] give up the black intentions in [their] mind.

105 I am reading the text's *gzhibs* as *chibs*, an honorific term for 'horse'.

106 Das, *Dictionary*, 398, simply identifies this term as "name of a weapon". La Rocca, *Warriors*, 273, defines it as the name for a non-projectile, hand held weapon.

107 Skt. *bhavāgra*, the highest level of the three realms.

108 Note that this sentence was later transposed by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in his preamble to the catalogue of weapons produced in Tibet; see Venturi, "The Thirteenth Dalai Lama", 487, 496-7.

109 The word *dpag chen* is said to mean 'great skill' or 'force (in archery)', thus can also be found translated as 'skilled archer'. Note, however, that Jäschke, *Dictionary*, 326 gives *dpag chen* as a synonym of *dpag tshad*, a geographical mile. An alternative translation could be 'powerful arrows'.

110 Cf. this translation with the one of the same passage transposed by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. There, '*phrul*' is translated separately as 'machinery', while another possibility offered here is that '*phrul sgyogs me*' is to be taken as an entire word, indicating 'mechanic' or 'magic' artillery fire, possibly cannons or matchlocks wall guns, similar to the so-called *jingals* or *gingals* described by English soldiers that participated in the Younghusband expedition.

111 Also this section was transposed in the preamble composed by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama; see Venturi, "The Thirteenth Dalai Lama", 496-7.

[Our] great champions, capable (*sgyu rtsal*),¹¹² skilled archers¹¹³ | Emulate the powerful Rāmaṇa,¹¹⁴ therefore, | Together with beating the drum of victory a hundred times, | [They] hoist a beautiful victory banner [as a] wish-fulfilling teaching strategy. Having established the excellent, fortunate vajra-tree-of-life | Of our own government, teachings and all that follows after that, | [They] Celebrate the victorious gods (*lha rgyal 'then*) [and] rejoice in virtuous activities | While (*gcig tu brel*) [= *gcig tu sbrel*] proclaiming happiness with melodious voice.

I promulgate this beautiful string of words, the book to aid the memory | Of the well-filled by purposeful taxes (*dpya*), the famous | Island that is solid like a vajra, the armoury | Of the universally respected (*mang bkur*)¹¹⁵ great government of the Land of Snow.

Thus, with an introduction of auspicious words,¹¹⁶ in the section on the physical world:

“As for [this] continent, white-lit moon and excellent *kusha* grass; as for purity, *kiṃnara*¹¹⁷ and cranes; and even [its] strength is beneficial; as for [its] inhabitants, the people of Jambudvīpa in the seventh¹¹⁸ [continent], through *karma* [their fate is determined]”, thus in general are explained all the twelve continents of the great Jambudvīpa. Among these, concerning what is known as the lesser Jambudvīpa on this southern continent well-adorned [with] Jambu (rose apple) trees, from the *Catuḥpīṭha*: “Those well-born in Jambudvīpa are known as the dwellers (*sa pa*) of accomplishment; as for those born in the three continents,¹¹⁹ [they] establish the merit of generating results”, thus [it

112 *Sgyu rtsal* is a name for ‘art’ in the sense of ‘skill’ or ‘technique’. There is a list of the sixty-four arts, which comprises thirty arts spread in early India, eighteen musical arts, seven arts of song, and the nine arts of dance. Fencing, *ral gri'i thabs*, is mentioned in La Rocca, *Warriors*, 276 as one of the sixty-four arts.

113 Das, *Dictionary*, 851, defines ‘*phong rkyen*’ as a term encompassing the five distinguishing features in archery, i.e. to hit an object 1) from a great distance; 2) without perceiving it; 3) with great force; 4) at the main point, or target; 5) with a sound. The spelling *skyen* here may represent a variant; the expression ‘*phong skyen pa*’ is used to describe a skilled archer (Goldstein, *Dictionary*, 705).

114 King Rama is known for his abilities as an extraordinarily competent archer, and one of his epithets is ‘*phong skyen*’.

115 This is derived from the entry *mang bkur rgyal po* “king of universal respect”, a term of praise; see Goldstein, *Dictionary*, 789.

116 The nine-syllable stanzas conclude here; the rest of the text does not seem to follow a strict metric.

117 These mythical beings are celestial musicians represented as partly human (human body and horse head, or also human head on a bird's body) and regarded as a class that protects the Dharma.

118 Jambudvīpa “is said to be the central of seven continents that surround Mount Sumeru”; see Buswell, Lopez, *Dictionary of Buddhism*, 377.

119 The *ni* after *gsum por* is not rendered here; it may be placed there just for metrical reasons.

says]; and from Cakrasamvara's *Ocean of Ḍaka Tantra*: "In the lesser Jambudvīpa, at the centre of the twelve parts of greater Jambudvīpa, I shall follow the lineage of the Shākya", thus, here in this Jambudvīpa of the south have appeared and will appear (*'byon par 'gyur pa'i gnas*) thousands of Buddhas of the good *kalpa*. [p. 278] Also the men, being clever and sharp, became excellent support for the practice of the true doctrine; and it is explained that when a *cakravartin* arose in the golden age [Skt. *satya-yuga*], he began from this very continent, and [then] ruled on other continents. The navel of this continent is the Vajrāsana in the Magadha [region] of the holy country of India, but, in a letter given to Kha che paṅ chen¹²⁰ [1127-1225] by Khro phu lotsāwa¹²¹ [1172?-1236?], [it is said that] "In the birthplaces [of] knowledge such as Magadha, armies [caused] destruction and damage with sinful deeds; even Kashmir [and] Nepal are filled with wrong views. Presently, as for places with a good system of the doctrine, they are reduced to here in Tibet; I humbly ask [you], great saint (*skyes chen*), to travel north", thus because of the changing times,¹²² it is said that the place from which arise benefits and happiness without exception (*ma lus pa*), and the doctrine of the Jina spreads is only in Tibet. As for this place, in the root tantra of Mañjuśrī, "One hundred years from my time, after the lakes in the Land of Snow will diminish, a forest of Sāla trees will appear", thus it became known as the four horns, the great country of Sāla trees completely surrounded by a fence of snow. In this regard, the three areas of Pu rangs, Mar yul, Zangs dkar [form] one; the three areas of Li, Bru sha [Gilgit], and Sbal ti, one; the three areas of Zhang zhung, Khri sde,¹²³ Stod smad,¹²⁴ one; i.e. Stod Mnga' ris skor gsum,¹²⁵ in Mdo khams, one region desig-

120 A common epithet for Śākyaśrībhadrā, the last abbot of the monastery of Nalanda. He was originally from Kashmir and was invited to teach in Tibet by Khro pu lotsāwa.

121 A twelfth-thirteenth century saint celebrated for having invited Tibet and translated for several influential Indian sages, such as Mitrāyogin and Śākyaśrībhadrā. For his biography see <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Tropu-Lotsawa-Jampa-PeL/6405>.

122 *Dus kyi dbang las = dus dbang*, see Goldstein, *Dictionary*, 536.

123 Khri sde is said to be the cradle or heart of the region of Zhang zhung. See Vitale, *Gu.ge Pu.hrangs*, 158.

124 Zhang zhung stod and smad are already indicated as two areas of Zhang zhung in Dpa' bo gtsung lag 'phreng ba, *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, 188.

125 The Fifth Dalai Lama utilised this particular division of Stod Mnga' ris in these three specific areas in several of his writings, see Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, 252 fn. 36 and *Preliminary Report*, 71-5. Tucci thought that this classification retained a tradition going back to the period of the Tibetan empire during the period of its largest expansion, and it is certain that here the Fifth Dalai Lama is listing territories that he evidently saw as being in the legitimate purview of the Dga' ldan pho brang. The geographical view of Tibet illustrated here was later reprised in the *A mdo chos 'byung* (see Shabkar, *The Life of Shabkar*, 459 fn. 22; Tuttle, "The Oceanic Book", 139 ff.).

nated (*btags pa*) Smad Khams; in Mdo smad one region labelled Gyar mo thang [and] one region labelled the plain of Tsong kha, i.e. the three ranges of Smad Mdo Khams; in Dbus, Dbu ru and G.yo ru; in Gtsang, G.yas ru and Ru lag, [i.e.] what is known as the four horns of Dbus and Gtsang. Among these, from the root tantra of Mañjuśrī: “In this place known as Lha ldan [Lhasa], the king, known as god of men, arose in the lineage of the Licchavi”.¹²⁶ Thus Lha ldan was prophesied, [and that is] the Ra sa ‘phrul snang gtsug lag khang [self-manifested temple of Ra sa], or else the universally known Lhasa (*chos 'khor dpal gyi lha sa*); as for this place, in the sky there is an eight-spoked wheel, on the ground an eight-petalled lotus, on the sides eight auspicious symbols.¹²⁷ In the midst of [these] wondrous signs, are the three ‘soul-mountains’ (*bla ri*) of the three protectors,¹²⁸ one of which is the soul-mountain of Avalokiteśvara, Dmar po ri, that resembles an elephant stretched out,¹²⁹ [and] on top of which is the beautiful palace of the heavenly appointed king. In [this] mansion of complete victory (*rnam pa rgyal ba'i khang bzang*) is [p. 279] the series of armour (*gsol go*) at the Rdo rje gling armoury of the great capital, which is like the city of the terrifying king of the Rakṣasa. [It holds]: lay government officials’ garments (*gyon*), together with body armour (*khraab*)¹³⁰ and horse armour (*ta go*) [= *rta go*] decorated (*gzabs mchor*) [= *gzab mchor*] with the four great units of Dbus,¹³¹ and light (*yang chas*) armour (*go cha*) to travel far; armours of the nomads¹³² of Hor, Sog and Khams who protect the government; in brief, weapons such as swords (*ral gri*), arrows (*mda'*), spears (*mdung*), and matchlocks (*me mda'*); large tents for the main camp; cloth curtains

126 Also spelled *Lī tsa bī*, it is the name of the Indian clan of the Licchavi, that was installed in the area of Vaiśālī; several of its members contributed with generous donations to the diffusion of the Dharma during the lifetime of Siddharta Gautama.

127 Compare with a similar passage from the *Bka' chems ka khol ma* translated in Sørensen, *The Mirror*, 557: “It was reckoned that the site [of lHa-sa] resembles the eight leaved-lotus, the sides [of the plain i.e. the surrounding mountains resemble] the eight [Buddhist] auspicious tokens, and in space the eight-spoked wheel [would be found]”. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this reference to me.

128 Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapani. On the idea of *bla ri*, see Maurer, “Sa dpyad”, 74-7.

129 On the idea that Dmar po ri looks like a sleeping, stretched-out elephant see Sørensen, *The Mirror*, 537.

130 See La Rocca, *Warriors*, 51-66; 267-8.

131 It is possible that armours were already marked with symbols that helped to distinguish which particular division of soldiers was allowed to use them. Markings that seem to identify division name and even the catalogue number of pieces of armour have been identified and discussed in La Rocca, *Warriors*, 64, 66; and by the same author in this issue.

132 Alternatively, ‘*brog* here stands for *byang' brog* as in a passage above (page 276 of the Tibetan text), and thus identifies the geographical area of the northern plains and its generally nomadic inhabitants.

(*yol skor*) [= *yol sgo*];¹³³ canopies (*lding gur*); large copper cauldrons (*lding zangs*),¹³⁴ etc. There are as many articles (*tsho chas*) as necessary to protect from the rain; so [the equipment] cannot get lost (*chud mi za*) and its arrangement cannot be disturbed. In order to do [so], on the nineteenth day of the seventh Hor month of the fire-sheep year [1667], that has three elements,¹³⁵ those from the holy land (*'phags yul ba*) [India] call [it] "*pra wanggar*";¹³⁶ and in China "*ting wal*";¹³⁷ this book, compiled at the highest new junction of Ashvini and Mars,¹³⁸ opens the doors of the treasury that will not squander complete victory in war.

133 Goldstein, *Dictionary*, 1009, defines *yol sgo* as "a cloth fence set up on all four sides (usually in the park for privacy by those picnicking)".

134 Alternatively, this may be yet another type of tent.

135 This might refer to the traditional denomination of Tibetan years, that is characterised by three components, an element, a gender and an animal, as opposed to the Indian and Chinese systems. I am very grateful to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this hypothesis.

136 Unidentified.

137 For the correspondence of the Tibetan and Chinese years, see Korosi Csoma, *Grammar of the Tibetan Language*, 149 and von Staël Holstein, "On the Sexagenary Cycle", 299.

138 The terms *dmag dpon* is a synonym for *mig dmar*, Tuesday, and the astrological conjunction called *grub sbyor* is found in the correlation of the day of the week and the longitude of the moon (see Schuh, *Kleine Enzyklopädie*, 1326).

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