



MILITARY CULTURE IN TIBET  
DURING THE GANDEN PHODRANG PERIOD (1642-1959):  
THE INTERACTION BETWEEN TIBETAN AND OTHER ASIAN  
MILITARY TRADITIONS

MONDAY 18<sup>TH</sup>, JUNE 2018

CONFERENCE  
ORGANISED BY GEORGE FITZHERBERT AND ALICE TRAVERS

WOLFSON COLLEGE, HALDANE ROOM

LINTON ROAD, OXFORD OX2 6UD



## MORNING

09.00

Tea/Coffee

09.15

Welcome by **Ulrike Roesler** (Oriental Institute, Oxford)

09.30

*The History of Tibet's Military Relations with her Neighbours from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries: An Overview*

**George FitzHerbert** and **Alice Travers** (CNRS, CRCAO, Paris)

## SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

Chair: **Nicola Di Cosmo** (Institute for Advance Study, Princeton)

10.00

*A Tibetan Banner System? Making Sense of the Tibetan Military Institution during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*

**Qichen (Barton) Qian** (Columbia University, New York)

10.30

*Mongol and Tibetan Armies on the Transhimalayan Fronts in the Second Half of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*

**Federica Venturi** (CNRS, CRCAO, Paris)

11.00

Tea/Coffee

11.15

*Zunghar Military Techniques and Strategies in Tibet*

**Hosung Shim** (Indiana University, Bloomington)

11.45

*Tibetan and Qing Troops in the Gurkha Wars (1788-1792)*

**Ulrich Theobald** (Tubingen University, Tubingen)

## AFTERNOON

### NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

Chair: **Charles Ramble** (EPHE, CRCAO, Paris)

14.00

*Qing Garrison Temples in Tibet and the Cultural Politics of the Guandi/Gesar Synthesis in Inner Asia*

**George FitzHerbert** (CNRS, CRCAO, Paris)

14.30

*The Career of a Tibetan Army General, Zur khang Sri gcod tshe brtan, after the 1793 Manchu Military Reforms*

**Alice Travers** (CNRS, CRCAO, Paris)

15.00

*The Presence of Qing Troops in Tibet as Represented in Different 19<sup>th</sup> Century Sources*

**Diana Lange** (Humboldt University, Berlin)

15.30

Tea/Coffee

15.45

*Zhang Yintang's Military Reforms in 1906-1907: The Introduction of Militarism in Tibet*

**Ryosuke Kobayashi** (Kyushu University, Fukuoka)

16.15

*Japanese Travellers to Tibet and Tibetan Military - Yasujiro Yajima (1882-1963)*

**Yasuko Komoto** (Hokkaido University, Sapporo)

16.45

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

**Nicola Di Cosmo** (Institute for Advance Study, Princeton)

17.00

END OF THE CONFERENCE

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# Military Culture in Tibet during the Ganden Phodrang Period (1642-1959): the Interaction between Tibetan and Other Asian Military Traditions

Wolfson College, Oxford, 18 June 2018  
Conference Abstracts

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## Qing Garrison Temples in Tibet and the Cultural Politics of the Guandi/Gesar Synthesis in Inner Asia

S.G. FitzHerbert (CNRS, CRCAO, Paris)

In 1792, after a Qing army had successfully repelled the Gurkha invasion of central Tibet, a temple to the Chinese god of war Guandi was established on Par ma ri/Bar ma ri, a small hill at the foot of the Potala Palace in Lhasa. This temple, which was supervised by monks of the neighbouring Kundeling monastery (also founded at the same time) was until modern times known by local Tibetans as the “Chinese temple” but also as the “Gesar Lhakhang”, referencing the deified hero of the Tibetan epic, Ling Gesar (*gling rje ge sar rgyal po*), a legendary figure quite distinct from Guandi.

In the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Guandi temples and shrines would be established in all the major billeting points of Qing imperial forces on Tibetan territory, and each of these temples and shrines were likewise referred to by local Tibetans as Gesar temples.

In this paper, I plan to sketch the evolution and significance of this Guandi-Gesar syncretism in the context of the Sino-Manchu-Mongol-Tibetan cultural politics under the Qing. This will involve looking at the manner in which Guandi (Tib: Kwan lo ye/ Sprin ring rgyal po) was incorporated into the pantheon of Tibetan Buddhist protectors; the significance of the adoption of Gesar/Gesar as a “warrior deity” (*dgra lha*); the functions of the Guandi/Gesar temples in Tibetan territory as garrison temples; and the function of the Lhasa temple in particular as a *locus* for diplomatic ceremonies between the Qing Imperial representatives and officials of the Ganden Phodrang government.

I also hope to address the connections (and their military significance) between Gesar/Guandi and the cult of Drapchi Lhamo, the protector of the Tibetan army regiment of the same name, whose own temple also housed Tibetan ritual texts for divination associated with Guandi and Gesar.

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## Zhang Yintang's Military Reforms in 1906-1907: The Introduction of Militarism in Tibet

Ryosuke Kobayashi (Kyushu University, Fukuoka)

In modern Tibetan history, it is well known that the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's military reforms in the late 1910s planned to introduce a modern military system modeled after influential powers such as Britain, Russia, and Japan, to reinforce the Tibetan army amid military tensions with the Republic of China. However, it has not been fully recognized that, prior to the Dalai Lama's modernization project, Zhang Yintang, a Chinese official newly-appointed to Lhasa as imperial high commander, had earlier attempted to implement military reforms in Tibet from 1906-07, in the wake of the British invasion of Lhasa. These were aimed not only at enhancing the Qing's military presence, but also at strengthening the Tibetan forces. This presentation will examine Zhang Yintang's attempts at military reforms in Tibet, as well as its influence upon the Tibetan army.

After the defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and the ensuing foreign military intrusions during the Boxer War in 1900, the Qing initiated its military reforms emulating German- and Japanese-style military models. Moreover, Chinese intellectuals also proposed the introduction of a militaristic education system inside China, which was called "Soldier-Citizen" (Jun-guomin) education. Zhang Yintang's military reforms in Lhasa were in line with this movement. He attempted to expand the recruitment of Tibetan soldiers, upgrade their equipment, and provide them advanced military training to enable them to cope with the threat of foreign intrusions. Furthermore, he was planning to introduce this so-called "Soldier-Citizen" education model to Tibet in order to spark their "martial spirit" (Shangwu) and promote greater patriotism towards the Qing.

His attempts at reform did not seem to have a significant impact on the Tibetan army, however, since Zhang was transferred in 1907, so his plans were not fully implemented. Nevertheless, my paper will highlight how the potential of his policies to produce a stronger Tibetan army for the sake of supporting Qing dominance was later used, ironically, as a justification for the Lhasa government to mobilize its army in resistance to the Qing's subsequent military campaigns in Eastern Tibet.

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### **Japanese Travellers to Tibet and Tibetan Military—Yasujiro Yajima (1882-1963)**

Yasuko Komoto (Hokkaido University, Sapporo)

The objective of this presentation is to make clear the achievements of Yasujiro Yajima, one of the Japanese instructors in charge of training the Tibetan army after Tibetan government officials asked him to visit the country, especially his relationship with constructing the Tibetan army barracks.

Regarding Yajima, there are few extant records describing his stay in Tibet. Therefore, the presentation will concentrate on his experiences with the Japanese army in order to estimate the range of activities he was likely engaged in while staying in Tibet. By reproducing this as precisely as possible, the study may benefit other experts in Tibetan military history in their future research in the field.

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## The Presence of Qing Troops in Tibet as Represented in Different 19<sup>th</sup> Century Sources

Diana Lange (Humboldt University, Berlin)

In the late 1850s a British official engaged a Tibetan lama to produce the largest panoramic map of Tibet of its time – which later ended up as part of the “Wise Collection” in the British Library. Topographical characteristics are depicted on the maps as well as detailed information on infrastructure, including illustrations of Qing garrisons and Chinese residences. Thirty years later Sarat Chandra Das (1849-1917) published three narratives based on journeys he undertook to Tibet between 1879 and 1882 – as a spy on behalf of the British government. Das not only provided a detailed account of his travel routes but also gave comprehensive descriptions of countless aspects of Tibetan culture, religion and history, including the presence of Qing troops in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Tibet. In my talk, I want to compare the visual representation of Qing troops in the Wise Collection maps with the representations in Sarat Chandra Das' publications, and with selected Chinese sources from the same period. I will discuss the significance of these different historical sources for studying the representation of Qing troops and the perception of their presence in Tibet.

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### A Tibetan Banner System?

#### Making Sense of the Tibetan Military Institution during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries

Qichen (Barton) Qian (Columbia University East Asian-History Department, New York)

This paper aims to explore possible connections between Manchu and Mongol military culture and Tibetan military institutions and society in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In 1642, a joint Mongol and Tibetan army defeated Tsangpa Desi and swarmed into Shigatse. It is widely known that Gushri Khan, the king of Qoshot Mongols, offered the entire Central Tibet to the Fifth Dalai Lama. While recognizing Gushri Khan's military might, the Fifth Dalai Lama also realized the significance of military institutions to Tibet. By creating the *Military Registers of the Tsang Four Horns*, the Ganden Phodrang government actively established and organized its military institutions with four colors: yellow, red, blue and white. This four color-coded organization strikes interesting similarity with the Manchu banner system. Is this color-coded system an original creation or influenced by the Manchu or Mongol banner systems? Is this system seen in the 18<sup>th</sup> century? What are the Manchu and Mongol influences on the Tibetan military in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries?

This presentation seeks to investigate the multi-faceted foreign influence on the Tibetan military in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries by utilizing Tibetan language military registers collected from 1693 to 1720, the five language Qing Pentaglot Dictionary (Tibetan, Manchu, Mongolian, Chinese, vernacular Chagatai) in 1797, and other relevant Tibetan, Manchu and Chinese language sources.

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## **Zunghar Military Techniques and Strategies in Tibet**

Hosung Shim (Indiana University Department of Central Eurasian Studies, Bloomington)

During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Oyrat people and the states they built were one of the most significant powers in Central Asia. By employing efficient military strategies and advanced weapons, they were able to defeat many of their politico-military rivals; hence, successfully establishing themselves as a major military power-holder in Central Asia of the time. Therefore, their military presence and influence were conspicuous especially in Central Asia and the adjacent regions. However, the military activities of the Oyrads were not limited to Central Asia. In fact, Tibet also witnessed heavy military influences from the Oyrat side.

The Oyrat people had direct military engagements in Tibet at least two times. The first was carried out under the leadership of Güüshi of the Khoshuud, and the second was led by Cheringdondob, the famous general of the Zunghar ruler Tsewang Rabtan. Although Güüshi and his successors left indelible imprints in Tibetan history in various aspects, their military influence on Tibetans is difficult to trace due to the dearth of sources. In contrast, the military influence of the second event is more easily traceable because the Qing government produced an ample amount of historical documents concerning this military conflict.

By drawing upon various Qing archival sources, this paper will examine the military strategies and techniques which the Zunghar armies employed during the battles in early eighteenth century Tibet and their possible influences on Tibetan military culture. The Zunghar forces led by Cheringdondob attacked Tibet, killed Ladzang Khan, and occupied the region for about three years (i.e., 1717-1720) before they were finally expelled by the Qing armies. For the battles in Tibet, the Zunghar armies utilized their traditional military tactics and techniques, which they had also used elsewhere. At the same time, the Zunghars introduced several new elements into their military practices to customize their military operations for the environment of Tibet. Considering that the Zunghars actively utilized Tibetan people during their military campaigns in Tibet, it is possible to assume that Zunghar's military presence had considerable ramifications in Tibetan military culture. In addition, the memory of Zunghar's military advance to Tibet also made lasting repercussion regarding the deployment of Tibetan armies during the Qing period.

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## **Tibetan and Qing Troops in the Gurkha Wars (1788-1792)**

Ulrich Theobald (Tubingen University, Tubingen)



Under the reign of Bahadur Shah (r. 1785-1794), who hailed from the principality of Gorkha, the Nepalese twice invaded Tibetan territory on the pretext of disputes over coinage and with the support of some factions in Tibet. The Tibetan government appealed to the Chinese Qing dynasty for aid, which was sent, in 1791, in the shape of a considerably large body of troops (70,000 against the Gorkha army of c. 20,000). As result of the Qing victory, Nepal was transformed into a tributary state, and Tibet incorporated into the Qing empire, yet with a special status.

The spontaneous dispatch of Manchu elite troops from the extreme northeast to the Himalayan border brings up the question why the Qing government did not trust the ability of the Tibetan military to defend their territory, but preferred to expel the invaders by their own superior power. We will therefore scrutinize the progress of the first Gorkha war and its aftermath (1788-1791), and see if and how, in this stage of the conflict, Qing troops cooperated with the Tibetan army to stabilize the situation before the Treaty of Kerung was concluded (2 June, 1789). Official (the chronicle *Qinding Kuo'erka jilüe*) and archival (*Kuo'erka dang*) sources in Chinese language reveal that the absence of a standing army in Tibet surprised the Qing. On the other hand, they understood quite well the instrumentality of religion and appealed to Tibetan troops to fight against the Hindu invaders. Moreover, when the peace talks were concluded, the Qing envisaged a restructuring and training of the Tibetan army, measures aimed at creating a force that would be able to defend Tibetan territory against a further invasion. Yet the conflict continued and made rigorous measures against the Gorkhas unavoidable.

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### **The Career of a Tibetan Army General, Zur khang Sri gcod tshe brtan, after the 1793 Manchu Military Reforms**

Alice Travers (CNRS, CRCAO, Paris)

As shown in previous works (Chayet 2005, Jagou 2013), in the aftermath of the Gurkha wars the Manchu authorities drew up a famous reform of the Tibetan government in 29 Points, in which several articles concerned the Tibet army of the Ganden Phodrang. These reforms attempted to modernise the Tibetan army by increasing its professionalism and introducing a meritocratic principle in the appointment of the military officers (Travers 2015). Whether or to what extent these reforms, in their entirety, were actually enforced, has so far remained an open question.

A source has recently appeared which allows us to look precisely into the military career of a Tibetan army general (*mda' dpon*) in the years immediately following these 1793 reforms, namely the autobiography of Zur khang Sri gcod tshe brtan (1766-1822?), an aristocrat who was later appointed as a minister in the Tibetan government (*bka' blon*), before ultimately retiring from government service to become a monk. After presenting this valuable source, this paper will analyse the military career of Zur khang Sri gcod tshe brtan and look at how it illuminates the application of some of the 29 Points. It will examine Zur khang's life and military career in light of his family history and the socio-political context of the time; and finally it will suggest ways in which the Zur khang family case can exemplify the



significant renewal of the highest military ranks precisely at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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### **Mongol and Tibetan Armies on the Transhimalayan Fronts in the Second Half of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century**

Federica Venturi (CNRS, CRCAO, Paris)

During the first period of its establishment, the dGa' Idan pho brang engaged in numerous wars, both to quell internal turmoil and to confront neighboring powers that were perceived as threatening. These conflicts often saw the engagement of Mongol troops alongside Tibetan soldiers, and the employment of Tibetan and Mongol generals alike, sometimes working in conjunction. Through the use of sources composed at the same time as or not long after these conflicts, such as the autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama and the *Mi dbang rtogs brjod*, the proposed paper will examine questions related to the amalgamation of these different armies, briefly illustrating historical examples of their collaboration and especially considering the questions of whether dGe lugs pa hierarchs, and the Fifth Dalai Lama in particular, expressed a preference toward utilizing one or the other, or displayed an awareness of how the two worked in conjunction.



<https://tibarmy.hypotheses.org/>  
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Photo credits:

The Ya sor led cavalry representing Gushri Khan's troops assembled for the Gra bzhi rtsis bsher, during the Lhasa New Year ceremonies.

Photography by Ernst Schäfer 1938/1939 (Bundes Archiv Bild 135-S-16-18-08) (front page);

Bon grong sras as Ya sor spyi khyab (Mongol title of the two army commanders leading a wing of cavalrymen representing Gushri Khan's troops) during the Lhasa New Year ceremonies.

Photography by Ernst Schäfer 1938/1939 (Bundes Archiv Bild 135-S-15-43-11) (back cover).