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To cite this version:

Solomon George Fitzherbert. The Geluk Gesar: Guandi, the Chinese God of War, in Tibetan Buddhism from the 18th to 20th Centuries. Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines, 2020, Asian Influences on Tibetan Military History between the 17th and 20th Centuries, 2020 (53), pp.178 - 266. hal-02507175

HAL Id: hal-02507175

https://hal.science/hal-02507175v1

Submitted on 12 Mar 2020

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The Geluk Gesar: Guandi, the Chinese God of War, in Tibetan Buddhism from the 18th to 20th Centuries*

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1. Introduction

Lord Guan occupies a prominent place in traditional Han Chinese culture, and the historical evolution of his cult spans nearly two thousand years. This historical-figure-turned-deity is known under a number of names: the personal name Guan Yu (trad. 關羽; simp. 关羽); the courtesy name Guan Yunzhang (trad. 關雲長; simp. 关云长 "Guan Long Cloud"); and the honourific titles Guan Laoye (關老爺 "Old Guan" or 官老爺 "Old Official");[1] Guan Gong (trad. 關公; simp. 关公 "Lord Guan"); and from the 17th century,

* Research for this article was funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement 677952 "TibArmy"). The content reflects only the author's views and the ERC is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains. The author would particularly like to thank Jamyang Phüntsok/Jiayang Pincuo (Southwest Minorities University, Chengdu), Prof. Zhaluo/Tashi Döndrup (Beijing), Alice Travers (CNRS, Paris), Nyamochir (National Library, Ulaan Baatur), Amgalan Lama (Gandentekchenling, Ulaan Baatur), and Vincent Durand-Dastès (Paris) for assistance and encouragement. The author would also like to thank Tamdrin Yangchen (Minzu University, Beijing) and Yuewei Wang (EPHE, Paris) for translation assistance with Chinese-language materials. All translations from Tibetan are the author's own, unless otherwise stated.

1 The term Guan Laoye exists in two Chinese orthographies, using different homophonous characters for *guan*. The first (*guan* 關) is the family name as found in the range of titles for Lord Guan above. The second (*guan* 官) is an honourific word meaning "official", so that Guan Laoye in this second orthography simply means "respected official", and is not a title exclusive to Lord Guan. When the Tibetan title of Lord Guan was coined by Changkya Rölpé Dorjé (Tib. Lcang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje, 1717–1786) as "Long Cloud King" (Tib. Sprin ring rgyal po), being a Tibetan translation of Guan Yunzhang (關雲長 "Guan Long-Cloud"), this involved a conflation of these two forms. The "Guan" in the title was taken, not as an untranslatable family name *guan* (關), but rather in the latter form (官) which was rendered as *rgyal po,* meaning "king" or more loosely "lord".

S.G. FitzHerbert, "The Geluk Gesar: Guandi, the Chinese God of War, in Tibetan Buddhism from the 18th to 20th Centuries", *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 53, mars 2020, pp. 178–266.

Guandi (trad. 關帝; simp. 关帝 "Emperor Guan"). The cult of Lord Guan, and his adoption as an official deity of state, first under the late Ming and then under the Qing dynasties, are subjects addressed in a number of western-language articles and monographs.[2] But the peculiar fate of this deity in Tibetan Buddhist culture has tended to fall outside the remit of such studies, and as a result is less well-charted. The process by which this prominent Chinese martial deity (Ch. *wu sheng* 武聖)[3] was accepted, albeit with adaptation, into the pantheon of Geluk (Tib. Dge lugs) Buddhist protectors from the mid-18th century, reflects the close political and military relationship between the Qing imperium and the ruling Geluk church[4] in Inner Asia during this period. It also offers a window onto the kind of cultural diplomacy—or politics of symbols—which maintained this alliance and sustained the *pax manjurica*[5] in Buddhist Inner Asia. The Geluk acceptance of Lord Guan as a deity in the Tibetan class of "war-gods" or "warrior deities" (*dgra lha / dgra bla*) is also interesting for the light it sheds on how the politics of war-magic—which had long played a significant role in both Tibetan and Chinese political history more broadly—[6]was adapted to the

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2 An early seminal article on the evolution of Lord Guan in Chinese culture is Duara 1988. This has been supplemented by the recent monograph of Barend ter Haar 2017. Ter Haar's treatment is particularly informative on the early (pre-17th century) development of the cult. On later developments under the Qing, see for example Taylor 1997; Goossaert 2015. For a survey of the voluminous secondary scholarship on Lord Guan in Chinese and Japanese see ter Haar 2017: 8–11.

3 ter Haar has questioned the simple designation of Lord Guan as a "god of war", arguing that the designation *wu sheng* was more about Lord Guan's exorcistic function as a demon-vanquisher in popular religion (ter Haar 2017: 12–13). Lord Guan has also long been popular as god of wealth favoured by merchants and businesspeople. However, in the context of the present discussion, which relates to the period in which the cult of Lord Guan was spread in Inner Asia explicitly through the establishment of temples serving military garrisons, the characterisation as "god of war", or at least "martial deity" seems merited. The Tibetan ritual texts for Lord Guan from this period also reflect this, by framing him in Tibetan language as the great "war-god (or great 'warrior deity') of China" (*maha tsina yul gyi dgra lha che*, and other formulations). On the Tibetan term *dgra lha* rendered here as "war-god" or "warrior deity" and its Mongolian cognate *dayisun tngri,* both of which literally translate as "enemy-god", see note 134 below.

4 The word "church" is used advisedly here. For a defence of the use of this term with regard to the institutions of Geluk Buddhism in this period, and its preferability to the term "school", see Oidtmann 2018: 9, 247 fn 17.

5 The term *pax manjurica* is used in Newby 2011, which presents a useful survey of recent contributions to Qing-era historiography.

6 On the politics of war magic in the establishment of the Ganden Phodrang state in the mid-17th century, see FitzHerbert 2018. For background on the politics of ritual warfare in Chinese tradition during the Yuan and Ming eras, see Meulenbeld 2015: 98–167. As Qing influence grew in Tibet from the 1720s, the imperial centre tried to assert control over the Tibetan culture of war magic, a culture which had been carefully cultivated with his own imprimatur by the Fifth Dalai Lama. In 1726 [or

context of the Qing's military protectorate in Tibet.

What little has been written about Lord Guan in a Tibetan or Inner Asian context, has focused on his apparent conflation during the Qing era with Gesar Gyelpo (Tib. *ge sar rgyal po*/Mo. *ġeser khaġan*),[7] an Inner Asian martial culture-hero with a quite distinct folkloric background.[8] This identification of Guandi with Gesar/Geser appears to have been pervasive at Qing garrison temples across Buddhist Inner Asia (encompassing both Tibetan and Mongolian regions) from the mid-18th century.[9] After the demise of the Qing in the early 20th century, this superscription intensified during the period of Mongolian and Tibetan independence that followed, so that by the mid-20th century the original identity of this Chinese deity had been almost entirely forgotten

1723 according to some reckonings], amidst ongoing factionalism within the Tibetan-Mongolian-Geluk establishment concerning exorcistic practices, the Yongzheng Emperor tried to ban outright the performance of all Nyingma (Tib. Rnying ma) wrathful rituals and to severely curtail the Nyingma school in general (this followed soon on the heels of the Zunghars' violent onslaught on the Nyingma school in central Tibet 1717–1720, which had been supported by some powerful Geluk factions). The Yongzhen initiative to ensure the Nyingma remained in a subdued state was however thwarted by Pholhané (Pho lha nas Bsod nams stobs rgyas, 1689–1747), who in 1727 established himself as the secular ruler of Tibet and defender of the Ganden Phodrang. Pholhané had himself been educated at Mindroling (Tib. Smin sgrol gling) monastery, the most important centre of the Nyingmapa in central Tibet which had been founded with support from the Fifth Dalai Lama. On Yongzheng's decree as reported in Pholhané's biography, see Mdo mkhar ba Tshe ring dbang rgyal (1697–1763) 1981: 482. For an English translation see Petech [1950] 1972: 106.

7 Known in Tibetan as *gling rje ge sar rgyal po* ("King Gesar, Lord of Ling") and in Mongolian as *ġeser khaġan* ("King Geser") among other formulations. Henceforth referred to simply as Gesar/Geser.

8 That Guan Yu was a historical figure from northern China in the 2nd-3rd centuries CE is well-established. The question of the historicity of Gesar/Geser remains less settled. Based on mentions of Gesar and his companions in the Tibetan mythohistorical text known as the *Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru*, which probably underwent its final redaction in the 15th century, many Tibetan and Mongolian scholars concur that the historical kernel of the Gesar heroic legends lie in far northeastern Tibet and the inner Asian trade routes during the 11th century. The folklore and historicisation of Gesar/Geser is entirely distinct from that of Guan Yu. Several articles offer introductions to the Gesar epic cycle and its variants. See for example Stein 1981; Karmay [1992] 1998; Karmay [1993] 1998; Samuel [1992] 2005; FitzHerbert 2017.

9 Our earliest concrete evidence of Lord Guan being identified as Gesar/Geser at Inner Asian temples is M. Pallas' detailed account of his 1772 visit to the garrison temple at Kiatka in northern Mongolia. However, based on the comments in the *History of Buddhism in China* (*Rgya nag chos 'byung*), which dates to the 1730s (discussed later in this article), it is clear that this association had already been widespread for some time in Inner Asia by the time Pallas made his observations; Pallas 1793: 163. See note 48 below.

at many shrines and temples across Inner Asia known locally as "Gesar Temples" (Tib. *ge sar lha khang*; Mo. *geser sum*).

Lying at the conjunction of popular culture with elite political, military and religious history, the Guandi-Gesar/Geser conflation has understandably attracted the interest of historians. The most thorough treatment of the subject to date is still that of the Mongolian scholar Tseten Damdinsuren (writing in Russian),[10] though it has also been discussed by a number of scholars writing in French,[11] German,[12] English[13] and more recently in Chinese.[14] Damdinsuren's influential Marxist interpretation was that the merging of the religious cult of Lord Guan with that of Jamsring/Bektsé (Tib. Lcam sring/Beg tse), and the further association of this figure with the folkloric complex of the Gesar/Geser epos, was a deliberate strategy of conflation pursued by the feudal political and religious elites under the Qing. This general interpretation has been echoed in several later treatments by western scholars.[15] However questions remain, not only regarding Damdinsuren's

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[10] Damdinsuren 1957: 15–30.

[11] The main source for R.A. Stein's brief comments and information on the subject was Damdinsuren (cited above); Stein 1959: 8, 33, 39, 112–114, 133. Another important French-language source on this issue is the 1958 article by the Mongolian scholar Bambyn Rintchen (Rintchen 1958). However, Rintchen's work, though valuable for the material it presents, is premised in such a way as to perpetuate the confusion between Guandi and Geser rather than clarify it. By taking the identification of Guandi with Geser (Guessour) as its basic premise, and making no distinction between these two figures, Rintchen's article itself is a clear example of the degree to which the Guandi/Geser identification had become an internalised feature of Mongolian Geluk tradition by the 20th century.

[12] Walther Heissig's three-page treatment of the Guandi-Geser/Gesar conflation has been the most influential to date for western scholarship, and has been echoed in several later works (see below); see Heissig (trans. Samuel) 1980: 98–101. For the original German (1970), see the bibliography.

[13] The treatments of this subject in English-language scholarship tend to follow Heissig (above). For example, Rawski 1998: 259; Crossley 1999: 243–244, 284–285; Zhang 2016: 581–584. Crossley's main sources are the works by Heissig and Rintchen (cited above). Zhang bases her discussion largely on Crossley and Heissig.

[14] The groundbreaking study of this topic in Chinese is the 2016 monograph by Prof. Jamyang Phüntsok (Jiayang Pincuo 2016). This work looks in greater detail than ever before at the Tibetanisation of the *cultus* of Guandi as "Gesar". The weakness of this otherwise exemplary work, is that it gives insufficient acknowledgement to Mongolian sources, and focuses only on Tibet. The present author would like to express his personal indebtedness to Prof. Jamyang Phüntsok for his help with sources while researching this article. He would also like to thank Yuewei Wang (EPHE, Paris) for her translations from his Chinese-language monograph.

[15] Heissig (trans. Samuel) 1980; Rawski 1998; Crossley 1999.

sources,[16] but also about the precise parameters of this apparent cultural-political strategy. Do the available sources really merit the assertion that the merging of Lord Guan and Gesar/Geser was deliberately cultivated by the Manchu/Qing imperial centre, as suggested by Heissig and others?[17] Or was it instead, as suggested by several Chinese scholars, a popular misconception based on the imagination of

[16] Damdinsuren asserts for example that "the first initiator of the identification of Guandi with Jamsring (Lcam sring) was the Panchen Palden Yeshé [i.e. Panchen 03/06 Blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes, 1738–1780]. In order to increase his authority, he also used various folk legends and Buddhist myths with great skill". By way of example, Damdinsuren describes how the Panchen "used the legend of Shambhala to manoeuvre himself into the first rank among the Buddhist clergy […] he also began to develop the theory of the unity of the Manchu god of war Guandi with his patron-deity Bektsé or Jamsring". Damdinsuren also credits this Panchen with asserting the identification of Guandi with Dzongtsen (Tib. Rdzong btsan), the local deity of Yarlung Shel (Tib. Yar klung shel); Damdinsuren 1957: 18–19. However, no source citations are provided for these accreditations, which are queried later in this article.

[17] Following Heissig, Crossley for example, emphasises that the policy of fusion between Lord Guan and Geser/Gesar appears to have been more marked in the latter part of the Qing or the "post-Qianlong" era—during the reigns of the Jiaqing (r. 1796–1820) and Daoguang (r. 1821–1850) emperors in particular. Other scholars who have supported this general interpretation include the present author in an earlier article which uncritically echoed the view that the Qing made a "deliberate attempt to merge or assimilate the deified Tibetan-Mongolian epic figure of Gesar/Ge-ser […] with the Chinese martial deity and Imperial protector Guan-di"; FitzHerbert 2015: 7. This may have been the case, but it is interesting to observe that the concrete textual evidence for this is surprisingly thin. Only two pieces of textual evidence are presented by Heissig to support the claim that this was an official policy of the Qing (and the same two pieces of evidence are referenced by later scholars like Crossley). The first is the observation by Stein (1959: 75) that the 1716 Mongolian-language xylograph edition of the Geser epic sponsored by the court of Kangxi carried on its title page the "Chinese initials [Fr. sigle chinois] San-Kouo-tche (Histoire des Trois Royaumes)" thus referencing the literary foundation for the exploits of Guan Yu (*The Three Kingdoms* being the classic literary account of the exploits of Guan Yu, see note 26 and 27 below). This would therefore indicate that an identification between Geser/Gesar and Lord Guan was already active at the imperial court as early as 1716. The second is the late 19th century transcription by Aleksei Pozdneyev of a trilingual inscription (in Manchu, Chinese and Mongolian) at the "Chinese temple honoring Kuan-lao-yeh" at Sair usu, in central Mongolia on the way between Urga and Uliastai (Uliyasutai). The Mongolian text of this inscription evokes "the holy Geser khaan, belonging to the family of Kuan […] (*Güwan oboγtab Boγda Geser Qaγan*)"; Pozdneyev (trans. Shaw and Plank) 1971: 114–116. Heissig interprets this overt merging of the two figures as "a step entirely consonant with the policy of fusion pursued during the Chia-ch'ing [Jiaqing] and Ta'o-kuang [Daoguang] eras"; Heissig 1980: 100, citing Pozdneyev 1896–8, *Mongoliya i Mongoly. Resul'taty poezdki v Mongoliyu, ispolnennoi v 1892–1893 gg*, St. Petersburg: 175–6. However, it is notable that the mention of Geser in this dedication to Lord Guan is found only in the Mongolian language version of the inscription, and not in the Manchurian or Chinese versions, suggesting something rather less than a full-throated imperial endorsement, and perhaps something more like a tolerance

uneducated locals?[18] How might these two views be reconciled? The conclusion of the present article is that although the association between Lord Guan and the ferocious tantric deity Jamsring/Bektsé and the association with the protector-deity Dzongtsen Shenpa (Tib. Rdzong btsan shan pa)—a local deity propitiated at various locales in central Tibet whose origins were said to be Chinese and to date back to the Tang dynasty—were demonstrably cultivated and promoted by Geluk tradition (as shown in this article), the further conflation between Lord Guan and Gesar/Geser remains a more complicated matter, and is not textually-attested in the same way. On this basis it is suggested here that the Gesar/Geser superscription was itself not a creation of the Geluk elite, but rather something inherited from popular culture and only then subsumed by an imperially-aligned political and cultural agenda. It is further suggested here that the popular culture in which the origins of this superscription were embedded, was not just that of uneducated locals, but rather of the multi-ethnic Qing imperial army, through whose translocal networks the notion spread throughout Buddhist Inner Asia. If this suggestion is correct, then the further question remains as to how this conflation was taken forward by the Tibeto-Mongol Geluk religio-political elite. Ultimately, were the

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or a "sop" towards Mongol sensibilities regarding this deity. These two examples are the only concrete citations we have of officially-sponsored documents or inscriptions making a public equivalence between Gesar/Geser and Guandi. Alone, these two examples (one of which comes from the early and one from the late period of Qing rule) might be considered sufficient evidence on which to accept the thesis. But neither of these pieces of evidence are conclusive. Stein's observation of the Chinese gloss on the cover page of the 1716 Geser edition seems only to be true of the version of the xylograph print which he consulted at the Bibliothèque de l'Institut, Paris. The title page of the exemplar held at the National Library of Mongolia in Ulaan Baatar, by contrast, carries no Chinese characters. So it is possible that this Chinese gloss may not have been part of the original 1716 production. This is a question which requires further paleographic enquiry. Also, the testimony of Pozdneyev, being so late in the 19th century, might only reflect the *fact* that the two figures (Gesar and Lord Guan) were by then so closely associated, rather than indicating anything about an official policy or strategy of state as the origin of such a conflation.

18 Jamyang Phüntsok (Jiayang Pincuo) presents a table with quotes from various Chinese scholars who have presented the Guandi-Gesar conflation as a mistake or misunderstanding (Ch. *wu*) of the common people. For his citations of Wang Yao 2008; Zhang Husheng and An Yuqin 2001; Feng Zhi 2004; Lin Jifu 2004; Chen Chongkai 1999; and Liu Haiyan 2002, see Pincuo 2016: 2–3. The problem with this thesis is that if the source of the association was a mix-up by uneducated local people, then why was the same confusion found in so many locales across the Qing's Inner Asian empire? The regularity with which Guandi and Gesar/Geser were identified across the Tibetan and Mongol regions, itself indicates that a translocal network was at work. It remains moot whether this translocal network was Qing officialdom, the imperial army, or the Geluk church, or (perhaps most likely) all three working in informal concert.

strategies at work here official, top-down, imperial strategies of statecraft? Or were they subaltern strategies of appropriation, dissimulation, and obscuration? Or were both strategies in play at once among a Geluk elite navigating the role of middlemen between the Qing imperium and its Inner Asian subjects?

In order to help adjudicate such questions, the present article looks in some detail at the testimony provided on this topic by the available Tibetan-language sources. By surveying these sources, the article hopes to provide a more informed foundation on which to base discussion of this intriguing aspect of Qing-Tibetan-Inner Asian cultural history.

This survey of the history of Lord Guan in Tibet, and more broadly in Tibeto-Mongol Geluk Buddhism is presented through two related themes: a) the *institutional* history of shrines to Lord Guan established in Tibet[19] from c. 1720–1912, predominantly to serve the presence of (mostly Han Chinese) Qing imperial troops; and b) the development over the same period of a substantial Tibetan-language *ritual* corpus devoted to this deity, authored by high-ranking Geluk lamas, all of whom occupied positions of considerable religio-political authority as brokers of the Geluk-Qing Inner Asian *pax manjurica*.

Briefly stated, the significant findings of this survey are that:

i) The development of a Tibetan-language ritual corpus for the propitiation of Lord Guan as the Long Cloud King (Tib. Sprin ring rgyal po) closely mirrored the contemporaneous establishment of the Qing military presence in Tibet and the establishment of garrison temples to this deity across Buddhist Inner Asia in the wake of the Qing defeat of the Zunghars in the mid-18th century.

ii) The primary cultic associations of this deity were with a) the wrathful protector and tantric deity Jamsring/Bektsé, and b) the central Tibetan local protector-deity Dzongtsen Shenpa.

iii) The seminal figure in elaborating the Geluk ritual cult of the Long Cloud King, establishing its cultic associations, and asserting its authoritative practice lineages, was Tukwan Lobzang Chökyi Nyima (Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi

[19] A limitation of the present study is its exclusive focus on Lord Guan temples established within the jurisdiction of the Ganden Phodrang (the focus of the TibArmy project) rather than the wider Tibetan cultural region, which would include garrison temples in parts of Amdo which were outside the formal control of the Ganden Phodrang. In fact many of the Geluk figures who authored the Tibetan-language ritual texts for Lord Guan (surveyed later in this article) were actually from the Tibeto-Mongolian borderlands of Amdo.

ma, 1737–1802).

iv) The central locus for this ritual cult was the Yonghegong monastery in Beijing.

v) The vast majority of Geluk figures who contributed to this cult were either Amdowas or ethnic Mongols, most of whom had connections to the politically-powerful Gomang College (Tib. Sgo mang) of Lhasa's Drepung (Tib. 'Bras spungs) monastery, and with the Qing imperial court at Beijing.

vi) While the cult of this protector (whose most visible popular practice was the drawing of lots) gained considerable popular traction in the Sino-Mongolian and Mongolian regions, especially during the 19th century, in Tibet itself the deity remained marginal, localised only at Chinese "garrison temples". And finally,

vii) In all the Tibetan-language sources, both concerning institutional history and ritual history, the identification of this deity (Long Cloud King/Lord Guan) with the Inner Asian epic hero Gesar/Geser was *not* made explicit, and the distinct legendary and folkloric background of Gesar/Geser was assiduously ignored.

This last finding came as a considerable surprise to the present author, since we know that the custom of referring to Lord Guan as Geser/Gesar at Qing garrison shrines in Inner Asia was widespread from the mid-to-late 18th century at the very latest,[20] and that this custom persisted into the 20th century in both Tibet and in Mongolia. So why is there no mention of Gesar/Geser in these Tibetan-language Geluk sources concerning Lord Guan/Long Cloud King? The layering of identities for deities is a common theme in Tibetan Buddhism (and in Indic religions more broadly), so why was this association with Gesar not made explicit in these voluminous writings? This absence is particularly surprising if the merging of these two figures was, as historians such as Damdinsuren, Heissig and others have suggested, an official policy or strategy of the Qing-Geluk political ascendancy. Any one of the authoritative lamas (or "Beijing *kūtuktus*" in the coinage of Max Oidtmann)[21] discussed below could have asserted (or "recognised") that Lord Guan and Gesar/Geser were, for example, of the same mindstream (*thugs rgyud*), or that one was the incarnation of the other, or

[20] Pallas' description of the Kiatka garrison temple relates to the year 1772. See Pallas 1793: 163. It is very likely that the custom of calling Lord Guan "Geser/ Gesar" started in the early or mid-18th century, if not before. See note 9 above.

[21] Oidtmann 2018: 162.

that both were emanations (*sprul pa*) of the same enlightened being. However, none of them did so. Instead, in the entire Geluk corpus of the Long Cloud King, which includes several versions of the deity's mythic backstory or "history" (*lo rgyus*), all mentions of Gesar/Geser and his associated popular folklore are eschewed. So although the popular custom of identifying this deity as Gesar/Geser was certainly *tolerated* by the Geluk and imperial elites (they never sought to stamp it out nor saw fit to refute it), the textual record also quite clearly indicates that the identification of these two distinct objects of folklore was never formally embraced or celebrated.

How is one to understand this? It seems that what we are looking at here was less a policy of *fusion* on the part of the Geluk elite, and more a policy of dissimulation and of cultural *displacement*. In effect, a new form of "Gesar" was being forged by Geluk tradition for popular consumption. And this "Geluk Gesar", on the basis of the textual record, while piggy-backing on the popularity of the Inner Asian martial culture hero ("Epic Gesar"), in fact had nothing to do with him, but was quite simply Lord Guan. The informal nickname "Gesar/Geser" was thus tolerated as no more than a cipher which flattered popular sentiments, while the deity actually being formally propitiated at the Geluk-curated "Chinese temples" across Inner Asia through these Tibetan-language ritual texts was unequivocally Lord Guan, the "great war-god of China" (Tib. *ma ha tsi na'i dgra lha che*).

The present article argues that in order to understand the development of this historical phenomenon, one has to contextualise it within contemporaneous Inner Asian *military* history. For it is only in light of this often-missing strand of the historical record that this peculiar chapter in Tibetan cultural history starts to make clearer sense. Based on the findings of this article, the historical narrative might be reconstructed as follows:

A culture of militarism predisposed the Manchus towards an interest in the martial symbols and icons of their subjects. The early Qing thus took an active interest in both the Han Chinese Lord Guan and in the Mongolian Geser, and supported the publication of their respective associated literatures.[22] It is likely that an informal labelling of Lord Guan as a kind of "Chinese Geser/Gesar" was incubated among the many Inner Asians (especially Mongols) involved with the Qing imperial army during this early period. When, from the early decades of the 18th century, Qing military dominance was being asserted across

[22] With the translation of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* into Manchu in the 1640s, and the xylograph publication of a Mongolian-language version of the Geser epic in 1716.

Inner Asia, the main Lord Guan icon at garrison temples was identified by the elite Mongol soldiery of the imperial army as Geser Khan, and through the trans-local network of the Qing's multi-ethnic army, this superscription spread across the vast geographical area of Buddhist Inner Asia. It was only with the (relatively late) incorporation of Tibet within the Qing's sphere of military dominance and the establishment of the earliest shrines to Lord Guan in central Tibet during the time of the Kangxi Emperor, that any interest was taken in the figure of Lord Guan by the Geluk elite (there appear to be no Tibetan-language sources even mentioning this deity before 1736).[23] This indicates the very close relationship between military and religious history in this regard.

It is interesting to observe that it was also during the earliest phase of Qing military activity in central Tibet and the establishment of the first shrines to Lord Guan in those areas (i.e. from c. 1720–1750), that one also finds a tentative interest being taken by the Tibetan political elite in the court of the Pholha dynasty (ruled 1727–1750) in the figure of Ling Gesar and his associated epic traditions. This can be seen in the Gesar-related texts authored by the senior (Nyingma-leaning) Geluk incarnation Lelung Zhepé Dorjé (Sle lung 05 Bzhad pa'i rdo rje, 1697–1740), who had close connections to the court of Pholhané. These texts, it seems, represent an effort to harness the symbolism of Gesar to the rule of Pholhané (r. 1728–1747), who was also depicted by Lelung as an incarnation of the enlightened protector-deity Bektsé.[24] It seems likely, given the Gesar-Guandi association (as noted in the 1736 *History of Buddhism in China*), that these tentative religio-cultural-political developments under Tibet's last secular ruling family were related to Pholhané's Qing alliance, and hinged in turn on the association between Bektsé and Lord Guan. However, the violent demise of the Pholha dynasty with the murder of Pholhané's son and successor Gyurmé Namgyel (Tib. 'Gyur med rnam rgyal) by the Manchu *ambans* in 1750, brought such efforts at cultural construction to an abrupt end.

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[23] The Fifth Dalai Lama (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617–1682) did pen two short texts for propitiating the local deity known as Dzongtsen Shenpa (Rdzong btsan shan pa—a deity discussed later,) but in these, the association between this deity and Lord Guan is not mentioned. However, in one of the texts, the sites at which Dzongtsen is propitiated are listed, and do indeed include "the red Zang thang plain of China" (*rgya yul zang thang dmar po*)". This appears to be an allusion to the Chinese "origins" of this deity. But if the Fifth Dalai Lama was aware that this deity corresponded to the Lord Guan of Chinese tradition, he did not state it as such; see *Lha chen yar lha sham po dang shel brag rdzong btsan gnyis la gsol mchod* in Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) 2009: vol. 12: 394.

[24] Lelung's recognition of Pholhané as an incarnation of Bektsé is mentioned both in his own writings and in the biography of Pholhané by Dokharwa Tsering Wanggyel; see Bailey 2016: 24.

Consequently, as power moved decisively towards the Qing and Gelukpa allies after 1751, the Gesar/Geser element in this matrix of cultic association was henceforth relegated to the status of an informality.

It was in the period after 1751 that Tibet was brought more formally under the wing of Qing military control; that the anti-Nyingma strand of Geluk tradition (associated with Gomang College in particular) became increasingly ascendant in Lhasa; and that Geluk Buddhism was further institutionalised at the Qing imperial centre (especially through Yonghegong). In the same period, we start to see the development of what we might call the "Geluk Gesar"as a new Tibetanised form of Lord Guan.

That the promotion of Lord Guan as a Geluk protector deity was at the same time accompanied by a marginalisation or disparagement of the epic of Gesar, was noted by R.A. Stein in his 1959 *magnum opus*, but not discussed further:

> Il est curieux que les mêmes dignitaires lamaïques qui identifièrent Gesar et Kouan-ti et contribuèrent ainsi au développement de leurs cultes sous une forme sinisée, étaient par ailleurs hostiles à l'épopée.[25]

We may now look in greater detail at this process. Who is Lord Guan, and how and by whom was he admitted by stages into the fold of Tibeto-Mongol Geluk Buddhism?

2. *Lord Guan and the Qing Imperium*

As a historical figure, Lord Guan was born around 162 CE in what is now modern Shanxi province in northern China during the twilight years of the Later Han dynasty, a time of warlordism and numerous rebellions. Along with Zhang Fei, he was among the earliest followers of Liu Bei, a pretender to the succession of the embattled Han throne. He swore undying loyalty to Liu Bei and fought many battles on his behalf. Although the heroic triumvirate of Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei were not historical victors, they lived on as the subject of historical

[25] Stein 1959: 115. As we will see, in fact the lamas who embraced Lord Guan as a Geluk protector did not formally associate him with Gesar, although a popular or informal association can be taken as a background context to their textual productions.

writing,[26] popular storytelling, folklore and literature.[27]

According to the historical record, it was during an ill-fated campaign in 219 or 220 CE that Guan Yu was captured along with his son Guan Ping, and the pair were summarily executed by beheading on the bank of the Ju river (a tributary of the Yangtze), where Guan Yu's headless corpse was buried. Some forty-five years later (c. 265 CE) his entire family were also executed. In the decades and centuries that followed, the charismatic spirit of Guan Yu became the object of propitiatory rites. The contemporary scholar Barend ter Haar has suggested that the very absence of direct descendants of Guan Yu (and thus the absence of an ancestral cult in his honour), may have helped pave the way for the development of his popular cult.[28] Having died a bitter and violent death when his life force (Ch. *qi*) was still strong, it was said that Guan Yu lived on in the form of a powerful spirit which haunted the mountains around the place of his execution. The cult of this spirit-general gradually spread, and during the Tang dynasty (618–908) was already fairly widespread across northern China.[29]

It is hard to ascertain with precision when he was formally adopted as a Daoist and Confucian deity, but his adoption as a protector deity in Chinese Buddhism is easier to chart, and is said to date to the 6th century CE. According to a seminal telling of the Buddhist conversion myth (as found in an 11th century inscription)[30] the restless spirit of Guan Yu was tamed and converted into a *dharma*-protector by the Buddhist master Zhuyi (智顗, 530–598),[31] a seminal founding figure in the

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26 The earliest textual record concerning the life of Guan Yu is Chen Shou's *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi*) written in the late-3rd or early-4th century CE, only some sixty to a hundred years after Guan Yu's death. This is not to be confused with the much later *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo Yanyi*).

27 The popular folklore concerning this period was the subject of Yuan-era stories (*ping hua*) and there were also early dramas featuring Lord Guan. But his life only received its classic literary treatment over a thousand years after his death, with the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo Yanyi*) attributed to the 14th century author Luo Guanzhong. This is considered one of the four great historical novels of classical Chinese literature. Centring on the heroics of the three oath-sworn "brothers" Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* continues to be a mainstay of East Asian popular culture even today, inspiring films and television series, as well as computer games and comic books. Yokoyama Mitsuteru's award-winning Japanese *manga* series, *Sangokushi*, provides an accessible entry into this elaborate historical epic.

28 ter Haar 2017: 6.

29 *Ibid.*: 28–29.

30 The definitive account of Guan Yu's conversion into a Buddhist protector is found in an inscription by Zhang Shangying 張商英 (1043–1122) to commemorate the restoration of the Jade Spring temple in 1080–1081; ter Haar 2017: 30.

31 ter Haar argues that this Buddhist conversion narrative was likely constructed as a conflation of two originally separate narratives local to the area: one concerning

Tiantai Buddhist tradition.

By the 12th century, temples and shrines to Guan Gong ("Lord Guan") were widespread across China. Some scholars have assumed that this early spread took place largely on the back of his adoption as a Buddhist temple-protector, but ter Haar argues that it probably owed more to popular oral traditions and to his acceptance as a deity in Daoism[32] in which he was deified as a demon-subduing spirit-general invoked for a variety of exorcistic and weather-making ritual purposes.[33] As such, a widespread and popular temple cult to Lord Guan long predated the first publication of the classic historical novel *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo Yanyi*) composed in the late 14th century.[34]

The worship of Lord Guan as a political cult expressive of loyalty to the imperial centre was an even later layer in his apotheosis. It was under the Ming that the cult of Guan Gong—and the saga of the *Three Kingdoms* more generally—began to be adopted as the object of concerted imperial patronage.[35] And it was also in this period that his identity as a martial deity (*wu sheng*), propitiated particularly by soldiers at garrison shrines, became more pronounced. In 1615,[36] under the Wanli Emperor, Lord Guan was formally promoted in the celestial chambers to the status of *di* (帝) or "emperor" (hence Guandi "Emperor Guan"), with a full title which reflected the belief in a numinous

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Zhuyi's taming of a dragon-spirit in the establishment of the Jade Spring monastery, and the other concerning Guan Yu's afterlife as a restless spirit propitiated at the nearby site of his execution and burial. In this way, suggests ter Haar, the Buddhist monastery retrospectively appropriated the local cult of Guan Yu some time after the monastery's original establishment; *ibid*.: 32–34. In its broad outlines, this is the narrative followed by 18th-century Tibetan-language "histories" (*lo rgyus*) of the Long Cloud King, as shown later in the article.

32 *Ibid*.: 38–44.

33 Chapter 3 of ter Haar's study (2017: 47–74) traces the career of Guan Yu as a demon-subduing spirit-general in Daoist tradition, based on ritual sources from the 11th century onwards. Such ritual texts are found for example in an early Ming compilation entitled the *Compendium of Rituals of the Way* (*daofa huiyuan* 道法會元), which ter Haar dates to *circa* 1400; *ibid*.: 52.

34 Commonly attributed to Luo Guanzhong, though this remains a matter of debate. With regard to this classic text, ter Haar states that "the cult influenced the narrative traditions rather than the other way around"; *ibid*.: 76–77.

35 As cited by ter Haar, Idema has argued that prior to the Ming dynasty, the saga of the post-Han transition (i.e. the *Three Kingdoms*) was far less popular than the alternative saga of the Qin-Han transition: "Idema suggests that the Ming court carried out a conscious policy to suppress the Qin-Han saga, because it was highly satirical about Liu Bang, the rather uncouth founding emperor of the Han. The founder of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang, was likewise of humble origins and extremely sensitive to criticisms about himself, however oblique. Instead of the narratives of the Qin-Han transition, the early Ming therefore successfully promoted the saga of the Three Kingdoms"; *ibid*.: 77–78.

36 Duara 1998: 778.

power transcending Daoist, Confucian and Buddhist registers:

> *San jie fu mo da shen wei yuan zhen tian zun guan sheng di jun* (三界伏魔大神威遠震天尊關聖帝君): "Subduer of Demons of the Three Realms, Great God whose Awe Spreads Far and Moves Heaven, Sage Emperor Guan".[37]

Under the Qing, the position of Guandi as an official deity of state was further strengthened. When the Manchus gained control over China in the mid 1640s, the remnants of the (largely Han) Ming soldiery were incorporated within the ranks of the Qing imperial army as the "Green Standard troops" (*lu ying bing* 綠營兵),[38] and the Manchu elite were quick to co-opt the martial symbolism of Guandi—and the devotion he enjoyed amongst the rank and file soldiery—to their rule. As early as 1647 the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* was translated into Manchu language and published "at least partly" according to Crossley "to more familiarize bannermen with the character of the 'Guandi' image they knew had been worshipped at Ming military garrisons".[39] In addition, in 1652, the Shunzhi Emperor (r. 1644–1661) officially re-issued the deity with the highest-status title *di* or "Emperor".

That the Manchu embrace of Guandi was inspired by the devotion he already inspired among the Han soldiery of the Green Standard troops, is confirmed by an anecdote in a diary entry of a Manchu soldier translated by Di Cosmo. After a successful operation against a rebel village by the Green Standard troops in 1680, the soldiers were suddenly gripped by a devotional fervour towards Lord Guan, who had apparently "descended" into a guardsman.[40] "From that moment", reports the diarist, "the [Manchu] general carried with him an image of

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[37] This full title is given by Zhang 2016: 582–583, citing Lu, Xiaoheng *Guan Yu, Guangong, and Guansheng: Seminar Papers on Guan Yu in Chinese History and Culture*. Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe: 95.

[38] In its final form, established in the 1640s, the core Qing army comprised three sets of eight "banners" each, divided along ethnic lines (Manchu, Mongol and Han). These were further supplemented by the predominantly Han and Hui "Green Standard troops" made up of Ming soldiers and officers who had surrendered during the conquest of China. In terms of troop numbers, the Green Standard troops actually outnumbered the bannermen from the mid-17th century. For further details on the structure of these various components of the imperial army, see Di Cosmo 2006: 19–25.

[39] Heissig (trans. Samuel) 1980: 99; Crossley gives the date of the first publication of the Manchu-language version (*Ilan gurun-i bithe* by Kicungge) as 1650; Crossley 1999: 244–245. The figure of Guandi would not have been entirely unknown to the Manchus even before their conquest of China, since his cult had already been promoted in Manchuria under the late Ming; Zhang 2016: 583.

[40] "We were resting for a couple of days [after a successful battle conducted by Green Standard troops] when the whole body of a *bayara* guard of the Bordered White

the god Guandi, and prostrated every day".[41]

Cementing his place as a protective deity of the state, the worship of Guandi was formally instituted as a mandatory official cult in every county and prefecture of China from 1725 at the latest, and perhaps earlier.[42] This level of official patronage of the cult bolstered and augmented its already widespread popularity.[43] By 1765 a Korean diplomat travelling across northern China could observe that "the worship of Lord Guan exceeds even reverence for the Buddha[…] in every village they will first build a Guan temple".[44] And another would write in 1803–1804 that "from here to the imperial city, if there is a village there is definitely a temple for Emperor Guan".[45]

It was also in the 18th century that Guandi temples started to appear across the Mongolian, Uighur and (what most concerns us here) the Tibetan regions of Inner Asia, as the Qing by stages established a military presence in these areas, typically accompanied by some level of Chinese commercial activity. According to a Mongolian chronicle cited by Heissig, by 1787 some sixty-five temples for Guandi had been

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[Banner] changed, and [he] said that the Great Ancestor Guan had descended. General Manggitu came and asked the reason for [the people's] kneeling. From that moment the general carried with him an image of the god Guandi, and prostrated every day"; Di Cosmo 2007: 52. This translation suggests Lord Guan descended into the body of a guardsman. It is an interesting contrast to the more well-attested Inner Asian belief (especially prominent in Mongol customs) of war-deities descending into the regimental banners or standards (Mo. *sülde*) themselves.

41 *Ibid*.

42 Romeyn Taylor writes: "Despite the salience of the official cult of Guan Yu from the Wanli reign (1573–1620) of the Ming through the Qing, however, it has proven difficult to determine when his temples were first made mandatory at the county level. This cannot have been later than 1725 when liturgical rules for the rites were promulgated to all the prefectures and counties, and this is taken here as the beginning date for the official local cult"; Taylor 1997: 103. He adds in a note however that "the establishment of the county-level cult may have been as early as 1614"; *ibid*.: fn 23.

43 In his article on official religion under the Ming and the Qing, Taylor makes an eight-fold categorisation of temples and shrines based on the formal and informal level of official support they enjoyed. Guandi temples fell into the top two (i.e. most official) rungs of this classification. Namely, fully-official temples and altars (i.e. those at which official government-sponsored services were mandated in every county and prefecture), and "quasi-official" lay temples to spirits who were also served by an official temple in the same county, but were not themselves used for official rites. Many Guandi temples, he says, fell into this latter category; *ibid*.: 96–97.

44 ter Haar 2017: 97, citing Hong, *Damheon yeongi*, with text edited by G. Dudbridge, p. 8–9.

45 *Ibid*.

built with state subsidies in Gansu, Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet,[46] at which he was "worshipped as a protective deity of the state and military god of the Manchurian soldiers and functionaries".[47]

In both Mongolian and Tibetan regions, Guandi temples quickly came to be known as "Geser/Gesar temples". Our earliest literary reference to this identification is the *History of Buddhism in China* (*Rgya nag chos 'byung*) authored around 1736 (discussed further in section 4 below). The earliest traveller-observation of the custom dates from 1772, when M. Pallas visited the garrison temple at Maimatchen of Kiakta in northern Mongolia.[48]

3. *Institutional History*: *Guandi Shrines and Temples in Central Tibet (ca. 1720–1800)*

The establishment of shrines to Lord Guan in Tibet closely tracks Qing military involvement in the region. According to Chinese sources, the first shrines in central Tibet dated to the reign of Emperor Kangxi, when imperial troops briefly sojourned there in 1720–1721, after the rout of the occupying Zunghars.[49] The contemporary scholar Feng Zhi

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46 Heissig (trans. Samuel) 1980: 100, citing the entry for the year 1787 in *Erdini-yin erike*, a Mongolian chronicle by Tayiji Galden (1859) and edited by Nasanbaljir (1960). Damdinsuren, in his 1955 article, appeared to be working from the same source when he wrote "after the Manchus conquered Mongolia, East Turkestan and Tibet, there were numerous Manchu-Chinese garrisons in these countries, for which they erected temples to the god of war Guandi. In all of these countries conquered by the Manchus such temples were numerous. *In Gansu province alone*, located between Mongolia and Tibet, there were 65 government-sponsored idols dedicated to the god Guandi"; Damdinsuren 1955: 54 (translation from Russian by the present author, italics added). Damdinsuren gives no citation for this information, which is why Heissig's version has been preferred.

47 Heissig (trans. Samuel) 1980: 100.

48 In describing this temple, Pallas writes: "The principal idol is seated in a niche in the middle between two columns interlaced with golden dragons and carries the name Guedsour or Guessour-Kan. The Chinese call him Lou-Ié [i.e. *lao ye*] the Manchus Gouan-Loé [i.e. *guan lao ye*]". Pallas adds in a note: "It is the Mongols and Kalmouks who have given him the name Guessour-Kan; and although they don't rank him among their divinities they regard him as a hero, born, or so they maintain, near to the source of *Choango*…These people possess a very detailed history of his heroic deeds. Here is the title of that work written in Mongol language: Arban Ssoughi Guessour Bogdo-Kan" [this being a reference to the title of the Mongolian-language version of the Geser epic xylographed under the imperial sponsorship of Kangxi in Beijing in 1716, see note 208]; Pallas (trans. M. Gaulthier de la Peyronie) 1793: 163.

49 Kangxi's first expedition to confront the Zunghars in Tibet in 1718 was disastrous, with the Qing forces all but annihilated at Nagchuka (Ch. Heihe); Chen 2005: 46. See also the contribution of Hosung Shim in this volume. A second larger force of some 4,000 troops was then sent two years later (1720), which was successful and

for example suggests that three such shrines or temples were established at this time—one near Tashilhunpo at Shigatsé, another in Tsethang, and another at "Jiā lí" (嘉黎) just north of Lhasa.[50]

It was only after the Tibetan civil war of 1727–1728 and during the rule in Tibet of Pholhané Sönam Topgyé, that a permanent (but fluctuating in size) Sino-Manchu imperial garrison was estalished at Lhasa.[51] Pholhané welcomed the Qing alliance, but maintained a clear Tibetan military autonomy. In 1733, at his insistence, the number of Chinese imperial troops at Lhasa was formally reduced, and a purpose-built barracks was constructed for them on the Trapchi plain (Tib. Grwa bzhi thang) just north of Lhasa.[52] These barracks (Ch. *zhu jun ji di*), designed to house 500 troops, were constructed with substantial material

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oversaw the enthronement of the Seventh Dalai Lama. This imperial force was however quickly withdrawn. When the Qoshot-led "Lobzang Tenzin/Lobjang Danjin Rebellion" against Qing rule erupted in Amdo in 1723, there were no imperial troops remaining at Lhasa; Petech [1950] 1972: 95–96.

50 Feng Zhi 2006: 39. While the first two of these may not have had an overt military connection, the third, he says, was established by the Green Standard troops. Feng Zhi suggests that this "Jiali" indicated the same location at which an imperial military garrison was later built in 1733 (i.e. Trapchi); *ibid*. citing *Lhasa Cultural Relics Record*: 121. Feng Zhi's assertion appears to be based on the suggestion made in the *Wei zang tong zhi* (quoted later) which implies that there was a Guandi shrine already established north of Lhasa before the imperial barracks were built there in 1733.

51 A small force had been sent in 1727 in response to the murder of the Tibetan minister Khangchenné (Khang chen nas) and the ensuing Tibetan civil war. This force did not engage in any fighting since it arrived only after the civil war had already been won by Pholhané, but it gave imperial imprimatur to the peace and oversaw the trial and public execution of the perpetrators of Khangchenné's murder. This brutal spectacle (Petech [1950] 1972: 148–149) took place at the foot of the Barmari hill, where the Guandi/Gesar temple would later be established in 1792/1793. After protracted negotiations between Jalangga (the Manchu commander) and Pholhané, it was agreed that 2,000 imperial troops would henceforth be stationed at Lhasa. In Pholhané's biography, this agreement is presented as a concession to Pholhané's tough negotiating stance (Mdo mkhar ba Tshe ring dbang rgyal 1981: 687–689). However as shown by Petech, Chinese documents indicate that these negotiations were something of a charade, since the decision to fix the imperial force at 2,000 had apparently already been taken by the Qing court several months earlier, based on considerations of the difficulties of supply; Petech [1950] 1972: 156, citing *Shih-tsung Shih-lu*, chap. 72, fol. 12a–b.

52 Reduced to maximum of 500 soldiers to be rotated every three years. The reason for this change was that the presence of the foreign soldiers in Lhasa was putting a strain on the town's resources. Petech cites a letter of Fr. Gioacchino da S. Anatolia dated 1731, which states that the cost of basic staples in Lhasa had risen by fifty percent since the Chinese soldiers had taken up quarters in the town. Pholhané's biography also says that the soldiers' habit of killing and cooking all kinds of animals in the streets was ruining the character of the holy city; Mdo mkhar ba Tshe ring dbang rgyal 1981: 832; Petech [1950] 1972: 169; Feng Zhi 2006: 39.

and manpower assistance provided by the Tibetan government.[53] The *Wei zang tong zhi*, the important early 19th century source compiled by the *ambans*' office in Lhasa,[54] suggests that this area had already served as a billeting point for Chinese soldiers since the time of Kangxi, and that a Guandi temple had already been established there prior to the contruction of the barracks, though this is not confirmed in Tibetan sources.[55] It is likely that the origin of the Tibetan toponym Trapchi (spelled variously in Tibetan as *gra bzhi* and *grwa bzhi*) lies in a borrowing from the Chinese *zhaji* (扎基), which may be translated literally, according to Murakami, as "the foundation of a garrison".[56] For almost two hundred years henceforth (until the expulsion of the remnant of the imperial garrison from Tibet in 1912), Trapchi would remain the main centre of Chinese military presence in Tibet. It would also be a primary *locus* for the worship of Lord Guan in Tibet, and for such "Chinese" practices as the drawing of "sacred lots" (Ch. *ling qian*), and annual military processions with the idol of Lord Guan.[57]

It was also in this period that the first Tibetan-language treatment of the "history" (*lo rgyus*) of Lord Guan was composed. For despite the prominence of Lord Guan in Han Chinese folklore and popular religious culture over many centuries, there do not appear to have been any prior Tibetan-language treatments of this figure.[58] This earliest Tibetan-language account is found in the *History of Buddhism in China*

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53 Mdo mkhar ba Tshe ring dbang rgyal 1981: 832.

54 On the debate over the precise authorship of the *Wei zang tong zhi*, see Liu Yuxuan 2013: 64–70.

55 According to the *Wei zang tong zhi*: "during the Ming dynasty Tibet was called Wu Xizang, and during the reign of Emperor Shenzu Ren Huangdi [i.e. Kangxi], it became a territory of the Qing dynasty, and the army stayed at Zhashi city. The "emperor temple" (*di miao*) had already been constructed there and was very effective"; as cited by Jiayang Pincuo 2016: 15. Tibetan sources, notably Pholhané's biography, make no mention of a pre-existent Guandi shrine at the site; see Mdo mkhar ba Tshe ring dbang rgyal 1981: 832.

56 Tibetan scholars have suggested that the origins of the term *grwa bzhi* lie in the original "four monks" (*grwa pa bzhi*) who inhabited a temple there. There does not however seem to be any documentary evidence for this. It seems more likely that the origins of the Tibetan name lie in a phonetic borrowing from this originally Chinese designation; Murakami 2013: 35.

57 It is hard to say with certainty when the annual public procession of the Guandi statue seated on a sedan chair and carried through Lhasa began. But Jamyang Phüntsok, citing the modern source *La sa li shi wen hua* (*Lhasa History and Culture*), suggests it was around this time; Pincuo 2016: 15.

58 Even in the 18th and 19th centuries, the penetration of this figure into Tibetan literary tradition appears to have been very slight. There does not appear to have been any Tibetan-language translation of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* until it was published in a two-volume edition in 2013; Lu'o kon krung (trans. Nam mkha' seng ge) 2013. Only very recently has the saga become widely-known to Tibetan audiences through Chinese television serials dubbed into Tibetan. It seems the

(*Rgya nag chos 'byung*) by Gönpojap (Mgon po skyabs, c. 1690–1750)[59] probably completed in 1736.[60] The author of this *History* was himself a very good example of the trans-ethnic Inner Asian elite at the Qing court (or what Perdue has called the Qing's elite cohort of "trans-frontiersmen")[61] who led the adoption of Lord Guan as a Geluk protector. Gönpojap was a Chahar Mongol whose family had been granted ducal rank (Ch. *gong* 公) under Emperor Kangxi. In 1709 he himself married into the Manchu royal family, and boasting mastery of four languages (Mongolian, Tibetan, Manchu and Chinese), took employment at the imperial court as the head of the "Tibetan School" (Cf. Tanggute Xue 唐古特学 or Xifan Xue 西番学).[62] Gönpojap's *History of Buddhism in China* would remain the seminal (and for many Tibetan readers, the only) Tibetan-language reference for the history of Chinese Buddhism right up until the 20th century, and would serve as the main template for later Tibetan-language "histories" of Lord Guan, as will be seen below.

Here the Chinese name Guan Laoye is transcribed in Tibetan as Ku'an lo'u and he is described as "China's great *dharma*-protector of religion and state" (*tsi na'i yul gyi bstan srid spyi'i chos skyong chen po*):

> Regarding China's great *dharma*-protector of religion and state in general, he is called Guan Lao Ye (Ku'an lo'u ye), and was bound by oath by this Buddhist master [i.e. Zhuyi]. He was a prominent general of the Great Han at the time when its dominion was in decline. With only his own strength and skill [to rely on], he fell into the hands of the enemy. And like the example of the righteous Buddhist King Aśoka who died suddenly in a state of despair and was thus reborn as a sea monster, so in the same way, although in general Guan Lao Ye's own intentions and actions were not to blame, because he was in an intense state of hatred at the time of his execution, he was reborn as a local guardian water-spirit (*zhing skyong gi klu*) and lived in that state for four hundred years.
>
> Then, when the great master (*slob dpon*, i.e. Zhuyi) came to the Lu Chuan mountain (*lus khyu'an ri*) to meditate in a thatched hut, he [the spirit of Guan Yu] transformed into huge and terrifying snake which

folklore of the *Three Kingdoms* penetrated Mongolian popular culture at an earlier period, but this has been outside the scope of the present research.

59 Following the dates suggested by Zhang 2016.

60 There is uncertainty about the exact date this text was completed. Wang-Toutain (2005: 82) dates it to 1735. Uspensky (2008: 61) and others date it to 1736, and others still to the 1740s. For further references see Zhang 2016: 571 fn 19.

61 Perdue 2005: 110.

62 He refers to himself in his own writings as "the *upāsaka* Gönpojap from the Land of Winds who speaks four languages" (*skad bzhi smra ba'i dge bsnyen rlung khams pa*); Zhang 2016: 571, citing Uspensky 2008: 59.

> wrapped itself around his body and made various other fearful manifestations. But finding that these did not disturb the master even a tiny bit, [the spirit] disappeared again in a gust of wind. Then that same night he re-appeared, dressed in all his armour and weapons and accompanied by an army of spirit-soldiers of the Eight Classes.[63] Paying respects to the master, he tested him with questions. The master answered his questions, and having explained the *dharma* to him, conferred on him the lay vows of an *upāsaka*, and appointed him as a guardian of the *dharma*. Thus he became chief among the common *dharma*-protectors who protect the *dharma* and ensure the harmony of religion and state (*bstan srid thun mong ba'i chos srung gi gtso bo*), and he is much beloved for the great sharpness with which he distinguishes [fortunes].
>
> There are oral traditions (*gtam rgyud*) which suggest that Dzongtsen Shenpa who followed [the Tang princess] Wenchen Kongjo (Wan cheng kung cu) to Tibet, and the one known as Gesar King of Armies (Ge sar dmag gi rgyal po), are both him (*'di nyid yin cing*), and that he is of the same mind-continuum (*thugs rgyud*) as *yakśa* Bektsé.[64]

This final paragraph is of particular interest here, since its assertion that Lord Guan was one and the same as the local deity Dzongtsen Shenpa[65] and was "of the same mind-continuum" as the enlightened protector Bektsé,[66] are both prominent tropes in the later development of the Geluk cult of Lord Guan, as we shall see. This is also the earliest textual attestation we have to the association between Lord Guan and Gesar, though it is worth noting here the association drawn is with Gesar King of Armies (*ge sar dmag gi rgyal po*) rather than with Ling Gesar (*gling rje ge sar rgyal po*) the hero of the epic tradition.[67] All three of these associations—with Dzongtsen Shenpa, with Bektsé, and with Gesar—would

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63 *sde brgyad kyi dmag dpung chen po*. The Eight Classes of Spirits (*lha srin sde brgyad*) is a common classification for the teeming spirit world of Tibetan folk-religion, though its enumeration varies and the numbers of spirit-classes found in Tibetan sources (both in folklore and ritual texts) far exceed eight. For an examination of the early origins of this classification see Karmay 2003.

64 Mgon po skyabs [1983] 1998: 125–126. A somewhat more abbreviated translation of the same passage is found in Zhang 2016: 582. The final paragraph runs: *bod du wan cheng kung cu'i rjes su 'brangs pa'i rdzong btsan shan pa dang / ge sar dmag gi rgyal por grags pa yang 'di nyid yin cing / gnod sbyin beg tse dang thugs rgyud gcig pa'i gtam rgyud kyang snang no /*.

65 For Tukwan's succinct explanation of this identification, see later in the article.

66 This identification with Bektsé is further elaborated in Ilgugsan Hutuktu's "history", also discussed later.

67 Although "Gesar King of Armies" (*ge sar dmag gi rgyal po*) is occasionally an epithet one finds used of Ling Gesar (the hero of the epic tradition), in general these two figures with the name "Gesar" reference two distinct figures in Tibetan myth and legend. The former was the name (along with *'phrom / khrom ge sar*) given to one of the Kings of the Four Directions during the Tibetan imperial period (7th-9th centuries) and was generally associated with Turks or Mongols (Dru gu or Hor) to the

be re-iterated a decade or so later in Sumpa Kenpo's *Wish-Fulfilling Tree* (1748).[68] Gönpojap's assertion that these associations lay in "oral traditions" (*gtam rgyud*) also clearly implies that these were neither his own surmises nor based on the authoritative statements of earlier scholars, but rather indicates they were based on casual or informal oral traditions. One suggestion of this article is that these were oral traditions with origins in the translocal network of the Mongol soldiery in the Qing military.

Given the context of the nascent Qing protectorate in Tibet and the associations Lord Guan already carried in this period with both Gesar and Bektsé, it is probably not a coincidence that it is also in this period that we see an interest being taken in these figures by the court of Pholhané, as mentioned earlier. In the 1730s there was a discernable uptake in Tibetan cultural production—both literary [69] and religious[70]—related to the figure of Gesar, while Pholhané himself was

north of Tibet. Ling Gesar on the other hand, the hero of the popular Inner Asian epic traditions, said to be based on a historical kernel in the north-eastern part of the Tibetan plateau during the 11th century. On the distinction between these two figures, see for example Dmu dge bsam gtan 2004: 3–12. As discussed later, it was certainly Ling Gesar who was superimposed in popular imagination onto the figure of Guandi in Inner Asia.

68 Stein 1959: 112.

69 Pholhané Sönam Topgyé is mentioned by name, for example, in the colophon of the classic Gesar epic text *The Struggle between Hor and Ling* (*Hor gling g.yul 'gyed*) produced at Dergé (Tib. Sde dge) during the period of his political ascendancy. This two-volume text remains the most seminal text of the eastern Tibetan literary corpus of the Gesar Epic. Its original author was Ngawang Tenzin Phüntsok (Ngag dbang btsan 'dzin phun tshogs, dates unknown) a minister of the Dergé kingdom (he is referred to as the *sde dge zhabs drung*) in the period contemporaneous with Pholhané. He composed his text on the basis of the oral recitations of "around twenty bards from *mdo, khams* and *gling*". This text was re-edited by a team of eminent eastern Tibetan scholars in the late 1950s–early 1960s; *Hor gling g.yul 'gyed* vol. 1 (*stod cha*): 2.

70 In the same period, the Fifth Lelung Rinpoché, Lelung Zhepé Dorjé, who had close links to Pholhané's court, developed a short corpus of offering rituals to Gesar based on his own visionary experiences. Lelung's theogonic vision of Gesar is dated to the year 1727. The text recounting this visionary encounter, i.e. the *Dag snang ge sar gyi gtam rgyud le'u 'o* in Sle lung rje drung Bzhad pa'i rdo rje (1985: vol. 12, fol. 1–28) prefaces the theogony with the statement: "the many accounts (lit. 'hagiographies' or *rnam thar*) of the hero known as the Great Noble One (*skyes bu chen po*) Gesar Dorjé Tsegyal known throughout the Three Realms, are deep and hard to fathom, beyond our ability to comprehend. For to each ordinary disciple, the story will fall [differently] according to their own abilities and destinies. Thus [the story of Gesar] comes in many different forms, in Do-kham and U-tsang and so on, in all directions without distinction, and such tales continue to be told even today. And although these various *namthars* differ in style and content, they need not be considered contradictory, since this is the *namthar* of a 'thus-gone' *tathagata* [i.e. a 'passed-beyond' Buddha]". In the idiosyncratic theogony of Gesar which follows, he is born as the 15th son after the sexual union of a primordial goddess of

also recognised by Lelung Zhepé Dorjé (perhaps his most prominent Geluk ally) as an incarnation of Bektsé.[71]

The next stage in the formalisation of the Qing military protectorate in Tibet came after the dramatic events of the "murder at the *yamen*" in 1750.[72] In the wake of these events there was an attempt by the Qing authorities to formalise political and military arrangements in Tibet[73] and—at least to some degree—to integrate the Tibetan army with the imperial military forces stationed there.[74] To this end a permanent Tibetan military garrison was constructed next to the Chinese' garrison at Trapchi. A thousand Tibetan soldiers under two Tibetan generals or *dapön (mda' dpon)* were henceforth to be garrisoned at Trapchi alongside the imperial troops, while a further two thousand were to be stationed at Shigatsé.[75]

Although the precise details of the relationship between the Tibetan army garrisons and their imperial counterparts in this period (and

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light with a worldly mountain deity named Ger mtsho. Ger mtsho, in various spellings, is well-known as the name of Gesar's *gnyan* (mountain deity) spirit-father in many eastern Tibetan tellings of the epic. Lelung's Gesar text thus refers directly to the already widespread living epic traditions concerning this figure.

71 Bailey 2016: 24.

72 After Pholhané's death in 1747, his son and successor Gyurmé Namgyel ('Gyur med dbang rgyal, d. 1750) was intent on diminishing what remained of Qing influence in Tibet and reducing its military presence there. Though he succeeded in having the imperial force reduced to 100 men, the political tension this created reached its apex in November 1750 when the two *amban*s invited the Tibetan ruler to their *yamen* in central Lhasa and murdered him. The *ambans' coup d'état* however failed in its immediate aims, since in response to this murder a crowd of Tibetans—likely including members of Gyurmé Namgyel's large Tibetan army (Shakabpa 2010: vol. 1, 469–470)—surrounded the *yamen*, burnt it down, and killed them both.

73 For a treatment of the "Thirteen-article reform of 1751" and its content as far as the military is concerned, see Travers 2015: 251, 253, 255, 257, 258, 260.

74 Initially it was decided that a force of 3,000 would be sent immediately, with a further 2,000 to follow soon afterwards. However, on news that peace had already been re-established, these numbers were heavily revised downwards. Eventually a force of just 200 men from Sichuan under the command of the Qing General Cereng entered Lhasa in March 1751, by which time the leaders of the mob responsible for killing the *ambans* had already been publicly executed under the supervision of another (less senior) Qing official, Bandi, who had arrived earlier from Xining; Petech [1950] 1972: 221–225.

75 This seems to constitute a significant demilitarisation since the time of Gyurmé Namgyel. The Chinese documents used by Petech indicate that the strength of the Lhasa garrison was finally agreed upon at 1,500 men. This number appears to be the combined strength of the Tibetan soldiers (1,000) and the imperial soldiers (500), though some uncertainty remains on this question; Petech [1950] 1972: 231, 257. It is notable that by the time of the first Gorkha invasion (1788) the standing troops available at Lhasa and Shigatsé did not conform to this neat scheme. See the contribution of Ulrich Theobald in the present volume.

henceforth) remain somewhat elusive,[76] it may be surmised that from this time the Tibetan army had daily contact with their Sino-Manchu counterparts and began to be influenced significantly by their culture, including their formal religious observances such as the cult of political loyalty centred on the figure of Lord Guan. It is not surprising therefore that it was also in this post-1750 period that Lord Guan's admission as a deity in the Geluk pantheon proceeds apace (as we shall see in the next section).

During roughly the same period, there was a further institutionalisation and foregrounding of Lord Guan at Yonghegong, the iconic Geluk institution in the heart of the imperial capital. In 1744 Qianlong had his father Yongzheng's former palace converted into a Geluk monastery, known in Tibetan as Ganden Jinchak Ling (Dga' ldan byin chags gling). The establishment here of a large Lord Guan temple (Ch. *Guandimiao*) in around 1750 is likely what provided the direct context for the composition of the first Geluk Tibetan-language ritual for this deity, namely the *Supplication to Lord Guan* (Tib. *Kwan lo ye gsol mchod)* by the Third Changkya Hutuktu, Rölpé Dorjé (Lcang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje, 1717–1786). This prayer (examined in greater detail below) is the first textual attestation of the Tibetan name for Lord Guan as the "Long Cloud King" (Tib. Sprin ring rgyal po) being a Tibetan rendering of "Guan Yunzhang".

In 1760, some ten years after the garrison area at Trapchi was expanded to include the Tibetan troops, a small Geluk monastery[77] was also built within the military enclosure there with funds raised by the *amban*s. A bi-lingual Tibetan and Chinese inscription on a wooden board memorialised this foundation.[78] Although that inscription did not explicitly mention Lord Guan, it seems that the pre-existent Guandi chapel at the barracks was now placed under the control of this new temple, thus bringing this deity under Tibetan Geluk curatorship for the first time in Tibet itself. Established just a few years after Changkya Hutuktu's *Supplication* had been distributed across the Qing Empire, it is likely that the newly-Tibetanised cult of the Long Cloud

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[76] Shakabpa (2010: vol. 1, 473) states that in addition to the 1,000-strong Tibetan Lhasa garrison, a 2,000-strong Tibetan garrison was also established henceforth at Shigatsé, also under two *dapön*. The number of imperial troops to be stationed alongside them however is unclear. An imperial document dated 1789 (Sgrol dkar *et al.* (eds.) 1995: doc. 46) refers to the renovation of the barracks at the "Green banner camp" near Tashilhunpo, which suggests the imperial army barracks there may have dated to this time (1751), if not before.

[77] Called Grwa bzhi Brtan bzhugs chos 'khor gling.

[78] The Tibetan text of this inscription is transcribed and translated in Richardson 1974: 25–27. His photographs of the wooden board are included in the "Tibet Album" photo archive of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford; Tibet Album ref: 2001_59_2_94_1-O and 2001_59_2_95_1-O-2.

King as a Geluk protector was observed there, alongside the Chinese divinatory custom of drawing lots in front of the deity. Certainly, in the 19th century, the Lord Guan chapel at Trapchi, referred to in documents as the "Trapchi Gesar Lhakhang", appears to have been its main popular draw.[79]

The next significant aggrandisement of the Lord Guan *cultus* in Tibet was again spurred by developments in the military field. The background and course of the Gorkha wars of 1788–1792 has been well-covered by other scholars.[80] In 1791, during their second punitive invasion, the Gorkhas penetrated Tibet as far as Shigatsé, where Tashilhunpo monastery was looted and the Lord Guan temple there was ransacked. This led to the largest military action ever undertaken by the Qing in Tibet.[81] In the spring of 1792, Qing forces advanced to the Nepalese frontier,[82] routed the Gorkhas decisively and pursued them as far as the Kathmandu valley. With Qing supply lines thus heavily extended, the surrender of the Gorkhas was accepted by the Manchu general and confidant of the Qianlong Emperor, Fuk'anggan

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79 There are many references to the "Trapchi Gesar temple" (*gra bzhi ge sar lha khang*) in the Kündeling archive. See for instance doc. 012 1–1/#/8/1/4, also known as doc. 71(K) (last accessed at www.dtab.uni-bonn.de on 03/06/2018). This accounting notebook, which I believe dates to the 19th century, mentions it six times. Richardson notes: "at some stage an image of Kuan-ti or Ge-sar and one of Lha-mo appear to have been installed in a side chapel of the [Trapchi] *dgon-pa* […]. Perhaps by this time [the early 19th century] the Kuan-ti chapel had become the best-known feature there, just as more recently […] it was generally described as Grwa-bzhi Lha-mo"; Richardson 1974: 25.

80 See Oitmann 2018, and the contribution of Ulrich Theobald to the present volume. See also Richardson 1974: 27–36, who lists a number of secondary treatments of the conflict based on Chinese and Nepali sources. See also Shakabpa 2010: vol. 1, 507–546. Shakabpa's main source is the detailed account of events given in the autobiography of Doring Pandita Tenzin Peljor, the Tibetan cabinet minister who was one of the main Tibetan protagonists in the events themselves; Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor 2006.

81 An imperial force of some 17,000 troops led by the Manchu general Fuk'anggan (Ch. Fukang'an; a nephew of the *amban* Fu Qing killed in Lhasa in 1750) and a Sichuanese minister called Hui Ling. Though mostly composed of Green Standard troops, this force also included a crack contingent of around one thousand "Solun" troops composed mostly of ethnically Evenk and Daower soldiers, and also some veterans of the bitter Jinchuan (Tib. Rgyal rong) campaigns. This "Solun" contingent was led by the experienced Evenk general Hailingcha, and entered Tibet from the north. Thanks to Professor Zhaluo, Beijing, for emphasising the significance of these facts (personal communication). The various contingents of imperial troops converged on central Tibet in the mid-winter of 1791/2; Chen 2005: 49.

82 By the time the imperial forces arrived, the Gorkhas were already weakened by an epidemic and harrassments from the Tibetan army, and had withdrawn to the southern Himalayan border districts; Shakabpa 2010: vol. 1, 531.

(Ch. Fukang'an 福康安, 1753–1796). This was considered a great victory, and in Chinese historiography the Gorkha wars are counted among what Qianlong himself described as the "Ten Great Military Victories" (Ch. *shi quan wu gong* 十全武功) of his reign.[83]

The Qing's imposing military success in 1792 had far-reaching consequences for Tibetan political and military history, as summarised in the so-called *Twenty-Nine Articles* of the Water-Ox Year (1793) nine of which relate to military matters.[84] Henceforth the size, structure, billeting, salary and promotion arrangements of Tibet's army were laid out explicitly by imperial order. Three thousand troops in total (i.e. an increase of 500)[85] were to be stationed across four garrisons, namely Lhasa (1,000), Shigatsé (1,000), Gyantsé (500) and Dingri (500),[86] with each garrison overseen by a resident imperial officer,[87] and military affairs in general placed under the joint supervision of the Tibetan council of ministers (*bka' shag*) and the *ambans*.[88] The *amban*s were also to undertake bi-annual inspections of the troops during the Chinese spring and autumn festivals.[89] This involved (in Lhasa at least) a public procession of the Lord Guan idol from the garrison temple. These extensive reforms marked the beginning of the high point of the Manchu

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83 Waley-Cohen 2006: 21 and *passim*. Qianlong himself formulated the scheme of the "Ten Great Military Victories" as his main legacy.

84 Sgrol dkar *et al.* (eds.) 1995: Document 50. For more analysis on the content and significance of the 1793 reforms on the Tibetan military, as well as references to prior scholarship on the subject see Travers 2015; Theobald in the present volume; and Travers in the present volume. 1793 was also the year when Qianlong sought to bring the reincarnation process of senior Geluk lineages under imperial supervision through the institution of the Golden Urn, as asserted in Qianlong's edict known as the *Lama shuo* or *Discourse on Lamas,* which was inscribed in four languages (Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolian and Manchu) on a stele installed at the Yonghegong complex in Bejing. The quadrilingual inscription can still be seen there today. For an early translation of the text of the *Lama shuo* see Lessing 1942: 58–61. The background and implementation of the Golden Urn policy is also the subject of an illuminating recent monograph: Oidtmann 2018.

85 For a comparison between the state of the Tibetan army as per the imperial reforms of 1751 and 1793, see Travers 2015; and in the present volume.

86 Sgrol dkar *et al.* (eds.) 1995: Document 50. Article 4.

87 In addition to the hierarchy of Tibetan officers who had practical command of the troops, Article 4 also stipulates that the garrisons should be supervised by resident imperial officers. An officer of the rank *youji* was to supervise the garrison at Lhasa, and officers of the rank *tusi*, the garrisons at Shigatsé, Gyantsé and Dingri; *ibid.*: Article 4.

88 Henceforth all significant military arrangements, including the provision of weapons and promotions, were placed under this joint command: "Two muster rolls for the army shall be maintained, one for the Office of the Resident Ministers [*amban*s] in Tibet, and one for the Kashag"; *ibid.*: Article 4.

89 *Ibid.*: Article 13.

protectorate in Tibet, during which Tibet was more closely incorporated than ever before into China's imperial administration.[90]

Not surprisingly 1792–1793 also marks a further institutionalisation of the place of Lord Guan within Tibetan Geluk Buddhism. Immediately after the military success construction began on a new, large and prominently-placed temple for Lord Guan in Lhasa. Meanwhile the Shigatsé Guandi temple, which had been looted by the Gorkhas, was refurbished. At some unknown later date further temples or shrines were also established at each of the garrisons at Dingri,[91] and Gyantsé,[92] as well as at Chamdo[93] and elsewhere.[94]

The new temple for Lord Guan at Lhasa was built not at the military suburb of Trapchi, but on Barmari (Ch. Mo pan shan), the hillock at the foot of the Potala palace (see Fig. 1) close to the site where Qing officers had previously supervised the execution of Tibetan conspirators in 1728. This was the most prominent temple for Lord Guan ever built at Lhasa, and its construction was clearly intended to be symbolic. Since the time of Songtsen Gampo there had apparently been a small Manjuśri (Tib. 'Jam dpal dbyangs) shrine on this hill,[95] making it particularly suitable as the locus of a temple symbolising the authority

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90 This period is described by Petech as the "semi-colonial era corresponding to the 19th century"; Petech 1959: 387.

91 The "Gesar temple" (as it was known in the early 20th century) at Dingri is treated in some detail by Jamyang Phüntsok (Jiayang Pincuo), who infers that it was established at the end of the 18th century to serve the newly-established military garrison there; Pincuo 2016: 29–32. In the early 20th century, even after the end of the Qing dynasty and the expulsion of the remnants of Chinese military presence, this temple was known locally both as the "Chinese temple" (*rgya lha khang*) and as the "Gesar temple" (*ge sar lha khang*). Personal discussion with Thubten Samphel, Director of the Tibetan Policy Institute, Dharamsala, who spent his early childhood in Dingri in the 1940s, Nov. 2017.

92 Anecdotal evidence gathered by Jamyang Phüntsok (Jiayang Pincuo) indicates there was a "Gesar *lha khang*" at Gyantsé in the early 20th century. Personal communication, April 2018. No further details about this have so far been forthcoming.

93 Anecdotal evidence based on local interviews; Jiayang Pincuo 2016: 38.

94 In addition, there was a temple at Tsethang (Tib. Rtsed thang), which according to the field research of Jamyang Phüntsok was established by Chinese trading families without a military connection; *ibid*.: 37. However this may not be entirely correct, if it refers to the same place observed by the Fathers Huc and Gabet in 1842. They noted the existence of a Guandi temple at Gyamda (near Tsethang), where there was also "a small detachment of Chinese troops"; Richardson 1974: 54. This may not have been the same temple. In Amdo, where Gesar's distinct identity was well-known and thus less likely to be used as a casual place-filler for Guandi, it seems that Guandi garrison temples at both Rebkong and Trika (Tib. Khri ka, Ch. Guide) were instead indigenised as temples to a local deity known as Triké Yulha (Khri ka'i yul lha); see Buffetrille 2002.

95 Jiayang Pincuo 2016: 19.

of the "Manjuśri" Qing emperor.[96] We know about its establishment in considerable detail, since its construction is described in a number of Tibetan and Chinese sources.[97]

Fig. 1. The "three hills" at Lhasa. To the left is Chakpori (Tib. Phyag po ri). Barmari (Tib. Bar ma ri) or the "middle hill" with the Guan/Gesar temple on top, is seen on the right (below part of the Potala in the foreground). This photograph was taken in 1904 by Claude White from the roof of the Potala Palace. British Library T00059–56.

At the foot of the same hill, Kündeling (Tib. Kun bde gling) monastery was established at the same time to curate the new temple[98] and to serve as the Lhasa seat for the newly-appointed Regent, the Eighth Tatsak Tulku Yeshé Tenpé Gönpo (Tib. Rta tshag sprul sku Ye shes bstan pa'i mgon po, 1760–1810), known in Tibetan sources as Jedrung Hutuktu (Tib. Rje drung Hu thog thu) or Kündeling Gyeltsab (Tib.

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96 The association of the three hills (Dmar po ri, Bar ma ri and Lcags po ri) with the Three Bodhisattva Lords (*rigs gsum mgon po*: Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāni) reflected the favoured religio-political symbolism of the period concerning unity and complementarity of Tibetans, Manchus and Mongols within the Qing imperium.

97 Namely, the *namthar* (*rnam thar*, religious biography) of the Eighth Tatsak, the serving Regent of the time (*Rgyal tshab rta tshag rnam thar*: fol. 182a–184a); *amban* Helin's 1794 bi-lingual Kündeling inscription (translated in Richardson 1974: 61–63); and the *Wei zang tong zhi*, based on additional Chinese sources, some of which are no longer extant.

98 The bi-lingual Kündeling inscription of 1794 suggests, as Richardson puts it, that "the new *lha-khang* [on Barmari] appears to have been the origin of the wealthy monastery of Kun-bde-gling"; Richardson 1974: 61. That Kündeling was built as a support for the Barmari temple (rather than *vice versa*) is also what is implied in the Eighth Tatsak's *namthar*, quoted later.

Kun bde gling rgyal tshab), a figure with close connections to the imperial court (see Fig. 2).[99]

Fig. 2. Thangka of Eighth Tatsak Tulku or Jedrung Hutuktu, the Regent of Tibet into whose care the Barmari temple was entrusted in 1794. Part of the Kündeling series of paintings depicting the successive Tatsak incarnations. Rubin Museum C2011.2.1.

[99] The Eighth Tatsak or Jedrung Huthuktu was appointed regent in the midst of the Gorkha conflict, then swiftly demoted and recalled to Beijing in the wake of the bungled negotiations with the Gorkhas (1790), only to be sent back to Tibet the following year after the untimely death of his experienced (and just-reinstated) predecessor (Ngag dbang tshul khrims of Co ne 1721–1791). The Eighth Tatsak then served as regent until his death in 1810; Petech 1959: 385–387.

Two inscriptions memorialised the foundation. The first was a stone inscription in Chinese dating from 1793 which is no longer extant, but is discussed by Richardson based on its citation in the *Wei zang tong zhi*. According to that source, victory in the Gorkha war had been due to the support of Guandi, whose temple at Tashilhunpo had been pillaged by the invaders in 1791.[100] In addition, it stated that in the wake of the victory, two new Guandi temples were established. One to the south of Tashilhunpo in Shigatsé founded by *amban* Helin, and the other on Barmari, founded immediately after the war by General Fuk'anggan.[101] The second is the bi-lingual Tibetan and Chinese Kündeling inscription of 1794 authored by *amban* Helin and translated by Richardson. Attesting to the centrality of the military endowment in this temple's foundation, the Tibetan text of this inscription stated:

> After [the routing of the Gorkhas], the generals, in fulfilment of their pledge to god (*lha la khas len mdzad nas*), made a thanks-offering to the precious deity (*lha dkon mchog la btang rag phul*).[102] They made an offering-contribution of 5,000 *srang* of silver, and a temple was established on Barmari. After consultation, it was decided that Jedrung Hutuktu would henceforth be in charge of it. After one year's work the temple was completed. The many images installed there were very splendid. For ten thousand years, so long as the temple remains the peaceful dwelling of the Jedrung Hutuktu, may it be a means for preserving peace at the frontier. On the auspicious day in the ninth month of the Wood Tiger year, in the 59th year of the reign of Qianlong (Lha skyongs), reverently composed by the interior minister (*nang blon*) Helin.[103]

These accounts are largely consonant with the description in Tatsak Jedrung's biography, though the emphasis in the latter source is somewhat different. There, the temple is presented not simply as a monument to the Sino-Manchu military victory dedicated to Lord Guan, but

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[100] According to *Wei zang tong zhi*: "the Gorkha listened to Zhamarpa and invaded Tsang and because Zhamarpa had many soldiers and the official soldiers there [in Tsang] were very few, the official soldiers fled. When the emperor heard about this he felt very angry. He dispatched Fuk'anggan and Hailancha and a Sichuan minister named Huiling, and they led the Solun soldiers. At last they succeeded, not only because of the soldiers but also because of Guandi's blessing"; *Wei zang tong zhi*, 1982: roll 6, 279–280, as cited by Pincuo 2016: 21–22.

[101] Richardson 1974: 53–54.

[102] The god in question here seems to be Guandi. The implication is that the generals, having made pledges to Guandi on the eve of battle, were bound to give him thanks-offerings in the wake of the victory.

[103] After the translation of Richardson 1974: 63. Richardson provides a transcription of the Tibetan text (*ibid*.: 62), but does not make any attempt to decipher the Chinese titles at the end which accompany the name Ho-lin [Helin].

rather as a "Chinese-Tibetan temple" (*rgya bod lha khang*) established under the authority of both imperial and Tibetan government officials.

The description as a "Chinese-Tibetan" temple is perhaps a tacit indication of the Gesar superscription, but this is not made explicit in the source. Also, rather than Lord Guan being presented as the central devotional focus of the temple, it is instead described as a temple to the Rigsum Gönpo (*rigs gsum mgon po*)—the "Three Bodhisattva Lords" namely Avalokiteśvara, Manjuśri and Vajrapani, a primary symbolism of which in this period was the unity and complementarity of Tibetans, Chinese and Mongols respectively within the Qing imperium. Meanwhile Lord Guan is described in only a secondary position as the temple's protector. And rather than crediting the financial endowment for the construction of the temple to the imperial army's officers (as in the inscription cited above), here the emphasis is on the donations made by senior Tibetan religio-political hierarchs—the Dalai and Panchen Lamas and the Regent. It also gives some detail on the combination of Tibetan and Chinese officials who supervised the construction:

> Then on a date discerned as auspicious, a formal royal feast was held to celebrate the military victory, attended most prominently by the Lord Protectors Father and Son [Dalai and Panchen Lamas] and the [Tatsak] Jedrung and the Senior Imperial Minister (*mi dbang krung thang chen po*, i.e. Fuk'anggan) and his officers, and other senior and junior Chinese officials (*rgya dpon*) sent by the Emperor, as well as Tibetan nobles (*bod kyi mi drag*). All the lamas and patrons made copious offerings to the Imperial Minister (*krung thang*) and so on to ensure his full satisfaction. And likewise the Chinese and Mongol soldiers (*rgya sog gi dmag mi*) were given a feast, and all were fully satisfied.
>
> The great Senior Minister-General (Tib. *krung thang cang jun gung*)[104] Fuk'anggan sent by the Emperor, and the consummate courageous Senior General Hailingcha (*gung cang jun chen po he ling mtsho*), and furthermore the Interior Minister Sun (*nang blon sun krung thang*) and Hus *tsong thu* and so on, all the senior and junior Chinese officers, and all the Manchu (*man ju*), Solun (*so long*) and Mongol commanders, together with their soldiers—all those who had brought those abovementioned plunderers [i.e. the Gorkhas] to heel—were praised extensively and given gifts.
>
> Furthermore, led by the great *dharmaraja* Emperor together with the Father and Son Lamas [Dalai and Panchen] and the Lord Protector [Tatsak Jedrung], in order to benefit the faithful, promote the Buddhist teachings, bring benefit to beings, and spiritual wealth to the living, 7,000 *srang* of silver were donated to establish a new Chinese-Tibetan temple (*rgya bod lha khang*) together with a monastery (*dgon sde*) on the Bongwari, also known as Barmari, holy mountain of Manjuśri, which

[104] Tib. *cang jun*= Ch. *jiang jun* 将军 "general".

> was to be offered to the oversight of the [Tatsak] Jedrung Hutuktu […] and in this way a new temple, along with a monastery, was established at this place […].
> [So to summarise:] In the 57th year of the reign of the great *dharmaraja* Divine Protector Emperor, when the All-seeing Victorious Lobzang Wangchuk Jamphel Gyatso [Eighth Dalai Lama] had been seated on the golden throne for 33 years, and in the second year since the Lord *dharmaraja* Yeshé Lobzang Tenpé Gönpo [Eighth Tatsak/Jedrung Hutukhtu] had again taken up responsibility for the "two systems" [*lugs gnyis*, religion and politics] on behalf of the Victorious Lord [the Dalai Lama], in this year of the water-male-rat [1792] on the auspicious date of *rahu* […] work was commenced. And those who actually undertook the construction work were: the Chinese Imperial Representative (*rgya'i sku tshab*) and Military Paymaster (*phogs dpon*) Li San Taye; the Secretary (*mgron gnyer*) of the Dalai Lama *depa* Ngakrampa Kelzang Namgyel; the Cabinet Secretary (*shod drung*) *depa* Nang Rakpa; the foreman (*las bya ba phyag nang*) Tshephel and so on, together with many skilled and trustworthy stonemasons and carpenters and large numbers of corvée labourers (*'ul mi*). Thus the work began.
> And as for this construction, as stated in a verse by the Lord Regent himself:
>
> At the very centre of Purgyel
> Stand three earthly sites
> Manifested by the Three Bodhisattva Lords.
> At the holy place of Manjuśri,
> [Let there be] A great temple,
> Large enough for monks to gather,
> Along with a temple to the Three Lords,
> With the warrior-deity (*dgra lha*) of China, Kwan Yunchang
> (*tsi na'i dgra lha kwan yun chang*)
> As its protector.[105]

The description here of Lord Guan as the "warrior deity of China" (*tsi na'i dgra lha*) reflects his designation in Tibetan ritual texts from the mid-18th century, as illustrated at greater length below. The Tatsak Regent himself would already have been well-familiar with the imperial cult of Lord Guan, since he had spent much of his youth as a protégé of the Qing court.[106] He would also have been aware of the Geluk

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[105] *Rgyal tshab rta tshag rnam thar*: fol. 182b–183b. Jamyang Phüntsok cites the same passage from its published Chinese translation, Pincuo 2016: 20–21. Dungkar, in his encyclopaedia entry on the temple, gives the same basic information, clearly based on the same source.

[106] The Eighth Tatsak spent a decade (1771–1781)—from the ages of 11 to 21—as a student of Changkya Rölpé Dorjé in Beijing. When the Sixth Panchen Lobzang Palden Yeshé visited China in 1780, the young Tatsak was presented to him as a pro-

adoption of Lord Guan as a protector, since it was his own incarnation-predecessor, the Seventh Tatsak Lobzang Palden Gyeltsen (Rta tshag Blo bzang dpal ldan rgyal mtshan, 1708–1758) who had requested Chankya Rölpé Dorjé to write his famous *Supplication* several decades earlier (see below). It is notable however that in the biography of the Eigth Tatsak just quoted, no mention is made of the Tibetan name Long Cloud King (Sprin ring rgyal po), used for Lord Guan in Tibetan-language rituals.

It is also notable that in all of the sources cited above there is no mention of Gesar. As we shall see, this is also true of all the Tibetan-language ritual sources relating to Lord Guan. This might be taken as an indication that the superscription as Gesar only gained popular traction in Tibet somewhat later, during the 19th century.[107] However circumstantial evidence indicates that the custom of calling Lord Guan "Gesar" in Tibet was already commonplace by the time the Barmari temple was established. Prof. Jamyang Phüntsok (Jiayang Pincuo), for example, argues persuasively that the mention in just this period of a "Gesar shrine" (*ge sar lha khang*) on the third floor of the house of Doring Pandita Tenzin Peljor (Rdo ring Btsan 'dzin dpal 'byor, b. 1760),[108] likely "had the same meaning" as a shrine to Lord Guan. This is indicated by the fact that a few pages after the domestic shrine is mentioned in Doring Pandita's autobiography, he also mentions a *thangka* of a "Han-style Gesar" (*rgya lugs ge sar*), which seems to refer to a Tibetanised painting of Lord Guan, possibly akin to those presented in Figs. 3 and 5 below.[109]

No further textual sources on the establishment of Lord Guan temples at the other garrisons of Gyantsé and Dingri have so far come to the attention of the present author.

Thus concludes our survey of the "institutional" history of Lord

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tégé of the court. According to Jamyang Phüntsok, when the Eighth Tatsak departed the imperial capital in 1781 he preformed a *bsang* fumigation offering to Guan Yu; Pincuo 2016: 49.

[107] In light of the uncertainty about when the Gesar-Guandi association became commonplace in Lhasa, it is worth noting that in 1811 Thomas Manning, the first and only Englishman to visit Lhasa in the 19th century, referred to "a large temple dedicated to the Chinese god of war at the Chinese military station near Lhasa", with no mention of Gesar. Richardson surmises that Manning was here referring to Trapchi, rather than the Barmari temple; Richardson 1974: 25. And when Tsenpo Nomihan described the Barmari temple in his *Geography of the World* (*'Dzam gling rgyas bshad*, c. 1830), he described it in terms fully consonant with the Tatsak Jedrung Hutuktu's *namthar* cited earlier, namely as a temple on the holy hill (*bla ri*) of Manjuśri devoted to "the war-god of China, Guan Yunchang", with no mention of Gesar; 'Jam dpal chos kyi bstan 'dzin 'phrin las (Tsenpo Nomihan 1789–1839) 2013: 180.

[108] In Doring Pandita's autobiography: Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor 2006: *smad cha:* 1005.

[109] Jiayang Pincuo 2016: 23–24.

Guan shrines in central Tibet over the course of the 18th century, illustrating, not surprisingly, the very close connection between the establishment of these temples and the consolidation of the Qing military protectorate in Tibet. This survey could be usefully supplemented by a similar survey of Qing garrison temples in Amdo, but this has been beyond the remit of this paper.

It now remains to outline, based on the Tibetan-language ritual texts, the contemporaneous adoption of Lord Guan as a protector of "religion and state" (*chos dang srid*) within Geluk Buddhism. Like the establishment of the military protectorate in Tibet, this process of acculturation developed gradually during the latter half of the 18th century, and then became fully elaborated in the period after 1792. As we shall see, it was led throughout by Geluk lamas with close ties to the Qing imperial court. However, as this survey shows, the cult of this deity does not appear to have put down strong roots in Tibetan culture, but was more widely embraced and practiced in Mongolian Geluk tradition.

4. Ritual History: Lord Guan's Adoption as a Protector Deity in Geluk Tibetan Buddhism

Tibetan-language textual sources on Lord Guan (Tib. Kwan lo ye/Bkwan lo ye/Sprin ring rgyal po) from the 18th and 19th centuries fall into two categories, namely 1) backround "histories" (*lo rgyus*) of the deity, and 2) ritual texts of offereing and propitiation (*gsol mchod, bsang, gser skyems*, etc). The earliest "history" of the deity is found in the Gönpojap's *History of Buddhism in China* (*Rgya nag chos 'byung*) cited above; and the earliest ritual text is the famous *Supplication to Lord Guan* (*Kwan lo ye gsol mchod*) by Changkya Rölpé Dorjé (1717–1784). Both of these texts were written at the imperial court in Beijing. And as the following discussion illustrates, the seeds of many, if not all, the key features one finds in the later elaboration of this cult, can already be discerned in these two early sources.

For ease of reference, the full list of Tibetan-language texts devoted to Kwan lo ye/Sprin ring rgyal po used in this section are first presented in a putative chronological order. This list offers a snapshot of when and by whom the Tibetanised cult of Lord Guan was textually elaborated over time, though there are likely more texts not covered here. The individuals included in this list were all senior Geluk figures closely connected to the Qing imperium. That most of them were ethnic Mongols illustrates the importance of Mongol Geluk tradition to the development of this particular *cultus*. The relative length of the texts listed also illustrates how the ritual repertoire for this deity gradually expanded from its foundations in the relatively brief texts of the

mid-18th century, to the voluminous corpus of the *Long Cloud King Chökor* (*Sprin ring rgyal po'i chos skor*) in the late 19th century.

[history] Gönpojap (Mgon po skyabs, c. 1690–1750)
- *Rgya nag chos 'byung* (2 pages)[110]

[ritual] Third Chankya, Rölpé Dorjé (Lcang skya 03 Rol pa'i rdo rje, 1717–1786):
- *Kwan lo ye gsol mchod* (3 folios)[111]

[ritual] Third/Sixth Panchen Lobzang Palden Yeshé (Panchen 03/06 Blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes, 1738–1780):
- *Kwan lo ye gsol mchod* (2 folios)[112]

[ritual] Second Jamyang Zhepa, Köchok Jigmé Wangpo ('Jam dbyangs bzhad pa 02 Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po, 1728–1791):
- *Maha tsi na'i yul gyi dgra lha chen po sprin ring rgyal po'am kwan lo yer grags pa'i gsol mchod mdor bsdus* (5 folios)[113]

[history and ritual] Third Tukwan, Lobzang Chökyi Nyima (Thu'u bkwan 03 Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 1737–1802):
- *Khams gsum bdud 'dul rgyal chen bkwan yun chang gi lo rgyus dang gsol mchod bya tshul 'phrin las char rgyun bskul ba'i 'brug sgra* (14 folios)[114]

[history and ritual] Chahar Geshé Lobzang Tsultrim (Cha har dge bshes Blo bzang tshul khrims, 1740–1820):
- *Bstan bsrung rgyal po chen po bkwan lo ye'i gsol mchod 'dod don kun stsol* (19 folios)[115]
- *Dbang phyogs tsi na'i yul gyi dgra lha'i gtso bo rgyal chen bkwan*

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[110] Mgon po skyabs 1983: 125–126.
[111] Lcang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje 1995: vol. 5, fol. 469–471.
[112] Blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes 1978: vol. 4, fol. 338–339.
[113] Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po 1971: vol. 10, fol. 672–676.
[114] Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 1971: vol. 5 (*ca*), fol. 781–794.
[115] Cha har dge bshes Blo bzang tshul khrims 1973: vol. 6 (*ca*), fol. 217–235. The author would like to express his thanks to Tashi Tsering Josayma of the Amnye Machen Institute, Dharamsala, for bringing this source to my attention and making these texts available. The *gsung 'bum* is also available on TBRC/BDRC as a scan of block-prints held at Sku 'bum monastery, but these scans are largely unreadable (W23726: vol. 6/*ca*: fol. 217–235).

lo ye la gser skyems 'bul tshul 'dod rgu 'gugs pa'i lcags kyu (4 folios)[116]
- *Bkwan lo ye gsang* (1 folio)[117]

[ritual] Anon. Tibetan translation of the *Guandi Ling Qian*
- *Mthu stobs dbang phyug sprin rig* (sic.) *rgyal po'i rno mthong srid gsum gsal ba'i me long* (142 folios) (= *Guan di ling qian* trad. 關帝靈 籤)[118]

[ritual] Anon./Various (the "*Yonghegong Corpus*")
- *Bstan srung rgyal po chen po bkwan lo ye'i gsol mchod 'dod don kun stsol* (47 folios)[119]

[ritual] Khalkha Damtsik Dorjepal (Khal kha Dam tshig rdo rje'i dpal, 1781–1855)
- *Sprin ring rgyal po'i gsol mchod* (4 folios)[120]

[ritual] Fourth/Seventh Panchen Lobzang Palden Tenpé Nyima Choklé Namgyel (Pan chen 04/07 Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan pa'i nyi ma phyogs las rnam rgyal, 1782–1853)
- *Chos skyong sprin ring rgyal po'i gtor cho ga bskang gso cha lag tsang pa paN chen thams cad mkhyen pas mdzad pa* (41 folios)[121]

[history and ritual] Ilgugsan Hutuktu Lobzang Samdrup (Il kog san Hu thog thu Blo bzang bsam grub, 1820–1882)
- *Dus gsum rgyal ba'i bstan bsrung srid gsum skye 'gro srog bdag khams gsum bdud 'dul sprin ring rgyal po'i bsnyen sgrub las gsum*

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116 Cha har dge bshes Blo bzang tshul khrims 1973: vol. 6 (*ca*): 637–640.

117 *Ibid*.: 641.

118 This is a Tibetan translation (from Chinese) of the "Guandi Sacred Lots" divination text *Guan di ling qian* (trad. 關帝靈 籤 simp. 关帝 灵 签), for use at the Guandi temple on Barmari at Lhasa, and perhaps elsewhere in Tibet. The full text is reproduced as an appendix in Pincuo 2016: 198–234, and analysed at length; *ibid*.: 83–145.

119 Xerox copy courtesy of Prof. Jamyang Phüntsok (Jiayang Pincuo) of Southwest Minorities University, Chengdu, who himself obtained the text from monks at Yonghegong, Beijing.

120 Dam tshig rdo rje 200?: vol. 10, fol. 284–287.

121 Included in the first volume of *Long Cloud King Chökor* (*Sprin ring rgyal po'i chos skor*) kept at the Mongolian National Library, Ulaan Baatar (NL 10745–017). The colophon states that this text was "written upon the request of Ilgugsan Hutuktu Lobzang Samdrup by the '*yogi* of Yamāntaka', Shakya *gelong* Lobzang Palden Tenpé Nyima Choklé Namgyel Pelzangpo". This text (discussed further below) does not however appear to be included in the Seventh Panchen's *Collected Works* (W6205).

> *gyi rnam bzhag dam nyams srog 'phrog ha la nag po dug gi spu gri* "The Poison Sword of Hala Nakpo: presentations of the approach, accomplishment and [ritual] activities with the Victorious Dharma Protector of the Three Times, Life-Lord of Beings of the Three Worlds, Khamsum Dündül Trinring Gyelpo, Slayer of Vow-Violators" (A compendium of 107 texts filling two volumes).[122]

4.1. The Foundation Phase ca. 1735–1786

The earliest Tibetan-language ritual text for Lord Guan is the *Supplication to Lord Guan* (*Kwan lo ye gsol mchod*) by the Third Changkya Hutuktu Rölpé Dorjé, who was the single most important figure in the history of the Qing's adoption of Geluk Tibetan Buddhism as a religion of state, especially during the reign of his close friend, patron and disciple, the Qianlong Emperor.[123]

According to Tukwan Lobzang Chökyi Nyima's biography of Chankya Rolpé Dorjé,[124] the latter's devotion Lord Guan dated back to 1735 (before Tukwan was born), when while travelling through Sichuan *en route* to Tibet, he had an impressive dream of Lord Guan. As Tukwan narrates the story:

> At the great mountain of Sichuan called Zhang-ling, a very large man, red in colour, appeared to the master [Changkya] in his dream and told him "the peak of this mountain is my abode, you are welcome there". Then in one step he arrived [in the dream] at the peak of the mountain, and the lord [Changkya] also went with him. There he beheld a very grand dwelling, captivating to behold, with all kinds of marvels. And the red man was sitting in the middle, as many fine foods and various other lavish offerings were made. His son and wife[125] were also there, he said, and many supplicants were seeking audience. "This place and the entire land of China from here on down, is mine" he said. "From

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122 Referred to henceforth by the short title *Long Cloud King Chökor* and listed as such in the bibliography. These two volumes of xylograph prints were consulted by the author at the National Library of Mongolia, Ulaan Baatur.

123 After the suppression of the Lobzang Tenzin rebellion against Qing rule in Amdo in 1723, the six-year-old Changkya Hutuktu was taken from his home monastery of Gönlung (Dgon lung) which had taken part in the revolt, and was henceforth educated at the imperial court, where he shared classes with the Manchu royal princes. In this way Changkya and Qianlong became lifelong companions and friends. For more on their relationship, see Illich 2006b.

124 Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989.

125 The iconographic inclusion of a wife or queen-figure is a noticeable innovation of the Tibeto-Mongol adaptation of Lord Guan as Long Cloud King. In Chinese traditions concerning Lord Guan, as shown by ter Haar, there is a notable absence of a wife figure; ter Haar 2017: 145–148.

> Tibet also there are many who give me food and drink. In particular the aged great Lama of Tsang regularly gives me food and drink. From today I will be your protector. Although tomorrow you will have some trouble on the road, I will help you and it will be fine", he said.
> The next day on the way, as they were passing through a forest, monkeys threw stones and one of the attendants named Tsultrim Dargyé was struck on the head. But apart from needing a small wound dressed, nothing else untoward happened.
> As for that [red man]: in Chinese he is called Guan Yunchang, which when you translate it into Tibetan is *sprin ring rgyal po* ["Long Cloud King"]. Since he is of the same mind-continuum (*thugs rgyud*) as Bektsé, the one who gives him food and drink from Tsang is the Panchen Rinpoche who relies upon Bektsé-Jamsring. This is what he [Changkya] said.[126]

Changkya's famous prayer to Lord Guan was not however authored until several years after this encounter. The more particular context for Changkya's authorship of the *Supplication*, as noted above, related to Yonghegong. When the Qianlong Emperor requested the Seventh Dalai Lama to send a highly-qualified Tibetan to serve as the abbot (*mkhan po*) of Yonghegong, the Seventh Dalai Lama chose his disciple the Seventh Tastak Tulku Lobzang Palden Tenpé Gyeltsen (Rta tshag 07 Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1708–1758). The Seventh Tatsak received the request to go to Beijing in 1747 (Fire-Rabbit year),[127] but delayed his departure from Tibet for some time while accumulating further teachings from the Dalai and Panchen Lamas. He appears to have arrived in Beijing in around 1749.[128] Soon afterwards, in around 1750—near contemporaneous with the dramatic events in Lhasa (the "murder at the *yamen*")—the "Demon-Subduing Temple" (Ch. *fumomiao* 伏魔廟) adjoining Yonghegong was expanded into a larger Guandi temple or *guandimiao* (關帝廟).[129] These events likely provide the immediate context for the Seventh Tatsak's request to Changkya to compose a prayer for Lord Guan, the product of which

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126 Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989: 206.

127 Smith 2001: 139.

128 I have not been able to ascertain the precise date of Tatsak's arrival in Beijing; see Bstan pa bstan 'dzin 2003: vol. 1, 493; see also Smith 2001: 140–141.

129 According to Greenwood, the *Guandimiao* at Yonghegong was built in 1750 as a separate building outside the northwest wall of the temple complex, accessible from main site through what was known as the Yamāntaka Tower. It was built as an expansion of the pre-existing "demon-quelling temple" (*fu mo miao* 伏魔廟). A record from 1763 records it as having seven buildings, with the Hall of Guandi (*guan di dian* 關帝殿), in the centre. It was destroyed in 1950s for road construction; Greenwood 2013: 115–117.

was Changkya's seminal *Supplication*.[130]

Despite its brevity (comprising only three folios), Changkya's *Supplication* was highly influential because of the powerful state patronage it received. According to Heissig (and echoed by other scholars) it was translated into Mongolian and Manchu and widely distributed across the Geluk institutions of Qing Inner Asia.[131] Since it is short, we can afford to include much of its text here. It starts with a general instruction to gather all the offering-items required to perform a *sang* (Tib. *bsang,* purifying smoke-offering), then:

> Establishing oneself in the divine pride of one's tutelary deity—whether Guhyasamāja, Cakrasamvara, or Yamāntaka (*gsang bde 'jigs gsum*)—intone the *mantra*s and perform the *mudra*s [hand-gestures] of the Sky Treasury (*nam mkha' mdzod*) [namely] the Six Mantras and Six Mudras, and intone the Three Syllables [i.e. *om ah hum*], and in this way bless [these offerings into ambrosia] and [offer them with the prayer:]
> "O Great Warrior-Deity (*dgra lha*) of the Mighty Land of China, from the *sé (*Tib. *bse*) class [of armoured protectors], known as the Long Cloud King (*Sprin ring rgyal po*), who voluntarily undertook to protect the Buddhist teachings, O Great God along with entourage—come here and abide in stability.
> Accept this feast of meat and blood and things to eat and drink blessed into an inexhaustible ocean of ambrosia.
> Aid *yogis* in the attainments of the holy *dharma*, so that all conditions, favourable and unfavourable, may be overcome, so that the teachings may prosper, and the land may be at peace!
> May we *yogis*, ritual masters, sponsors and benefactors alike, have peace and happiness in the three conditions—at home, abroad and on the road. Aid and support us all, in accordance with the *dharma*.[132]

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130 The colophon to the *Supplication* runs as follows: "these verses of entreaty, entrusted to the protector of the teachings known as Kwanloye, warrior-deity (*dgra lha*) of the great land of China, were written by Chankya Rölpé Dorjé immediately upon receiving the solemn command given by the holy Lord Protector [Seventh] Tatsak Jedrung Tulku Rinpoché, so that there may be virtue and merit. *Mangalam". tsi na'i yul gru chen po'i dgra lha kwan lo yer grags pa'i bstan bsrung la 'phrin bcol gyi tshogs bcad 'di yang / skyabs mgon dam pa rta tshag rje drung sprul pa'i sku rin po che'i bka' gnang thod du bcing ste / lcang skya rol pa'i rdo rjes 'phral du bris pa dge legs su gyur cig / mangalam*; Lcang skya rol pa'i rdo rje 1995: vol. 5, fol. 471.

131 The present author has not personally seen an extant print of the prayer in three languages, but it is widely referred to in the scholarship; Heissig (trans. Samuel) 1980: 99; Rawski 1998: 259; Crossley 1999: 245.

132 *de la 'dir lha bsangs mdor bsdus gtong bar 'dod pas / sman sna / rin po che / 'bru sna / dar zab sogs dug rigs dang ma 'dres pa'i bsangs rdzas gtsang ma legs par 'du byas la / rang nyid gsang bde 'jigs gsum sogs lhag pa'i lha gang yang rung ba'i nga'i rgyal gyis / nam mkha' mdzod kyi sngags rgya dang / sngags drug phyag drug dang 'bru gsum brjod pas byin gyis brlab la / dbang phyogs tsi na'i yul gyi dgra lha che / thub bstan bsrung bar rang gis zhal bzhes pa / bse yi rigs las sprin ring rgyal po grags / lha chen 'khor bcas 'dir gshegs brtan par bzhugs / sha khrag bza' bca' btung ba rgya mtsho'i tshogs / zag med bdud rtsir*

Although this prayer is very short, it includes within it all the requisites for Lord Guan's incorporation into Tibetan Buddhism as a protector. In it we see:

- the first textual attestation of the Tibetan name Trinring Gyelpo or "Long Cloud King" (Sprin ring rgyal po), a Tibetan rendering of Guan Yunchang (trad. 關雲長 simp. 关云长)[133]
- Lord Guan classified as a warrior deity (Tib. *dgra lha*; Mo. *dayisun tengri*) in the Tibetan Buddhist context.[134]
- Lord Guan included in the spirit-entourage of those wrathful tantric tutelary deities (*yi dam*) associated in a Tibetan Buddhist context with repelling (*bzlog pa*) negative forces in general,[135] and practices of war-magic in particular.[136]
- the Long Cloud King identified as being "from the *sé* class"

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byin rlabs 'di bzhes la / rnal 'byor dam chos sgrub pa'i grogs mdzod cing / 'gal rken kun zhi mthun rkyen ma lus sgrubs / thub bstan rgyas zhing rgyal khams bde ba dang / rnal 'byor dpon slob rgyu sbyor yon bdag bcas / gzhi lam byes gsum kun tu bde zhing skyid / bsam don chos bzhin 'grub pa'i stong grogs mdzod /; Lcang skya rol pa'i rdo rje 1995: vol. 5, fol. 469–471.

133 See note 1 above.

134 *Dgra lha* has no definitive English translation. Its semiotic range in Tibetan is reflected by a fluidity of spellings—*dgra lha, dgra bla, sgra bla, sgra lha.* Translated literally, *dgra lha* would be "enemy-god". The equivalent in Mongolian is *dayasun tngri* (also lit: "enemy-god"). In the more archaic Tibetan traditions (chiefly associated with Bon and Nyingma) and for example in the Gesar epic and associated propitiations, these battle-spirits are often associated with wild animals and are "called in" to different items of weaponry and armour to give support to the combatant in times of conflict. It seems that from the 17th century, and from the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama in particular (to whom a famous *dgra bla/lha stod pa* or "praise for the warrior-deities" is attributed), one sees a discernible development in their interpretation. From this time on, the main Buddhist presentation of the mythic place of these spirits relates them to the weaponry of the gods (*lha/deva*) in the ongoing primordial cosmic conflict between the gods (*lha*) and titans (*lha ma yin*), usually framed in an Indic context (i.e. as *deva* and *asura*). As such, the *dgra lha* becomes an open-ended Tibetan category which can include any protector deity perceived as being on the godly "side of light" (*dkar phyogs*) in its eternal conflict with the demonic forces of the "dark side" (*nag phyogs*). Many prominent warrior-deities in Tibetan culture, including for example Pehar, are praised as "king of *dgra lha*" (*dgra lha'i rgyal po*). Lord Guan, like Gesar, likewise comes to be depicted as a "chief of the *dgra lha*". For an excellent treatment of this category of deity-spirits, and a translation of the influential praise-text attributed to the Fifth Dalai Lama or the *Northern Treasures* master Rig 'dzin rgod ldem can, see Berounsky 2009.

135 It is perhaps worth noting here that in 1746 Changkya had personally initiated Emperor Qianlong into the tantric practices of Cakramsamvara (Tib. Bde mchog 'khor lo).

136 On Tibetan Buddhist war-magic see *inter alia*, FitzHerbert 2018. The Fifth Dalai Lama brought the wide-ranging Tibetan traditions of Buddhist war-magic more firmly within tantric Buddhist frameworks. He was particularly inclined towards rites with Yamāntaka/Gshin rje gshed.

(*bse yi rigs las*) of armoured protectors.[137]

In addition to Changkya's *Supplication*, two other texts from the late 18th century by very senior figures in the Geluk establishment are worth noting as laying the foundations for the later development of Geluk cult of Lord Guan.

Fig. 3. An early (probably 18th century) thangka of Lord Guan as a Geluk protector. HAR 88567.

[137] *bse khrab can*, "with *bse* armour" is an epithet one encounters for a number of local protectors in Tibetan Buddhism. *Bse khrab* likely means "rhinoceros-leather armour", while *bse* or *se* is also the name of one of the Tibetan proto-tribes and an early class of spirits. On these latter designations see Stein's work on the "proto-tribes"; Stein 1961.

The first is the identically-titled *Supplication to Lord Guan* (*Kwan lo ye gsol mchod*) by the Third/Sixth Panchen Lama Lobzang Palden Yeshé (1738–1780) authored in the last year of his life in 1780. As will be shown below, it was largely under the influence of Tukwan Lobzang Chökyi Nyima that the successive incarnations of the Panchen Lamas would after the Sixth Panchen's death be upheld up as the senior-most authoritative legitimators of the innovative cult of Lord Guan in Geluk Buddhism, and the Panchen Lamas would continue to occupy this status throughout the 19th-century. This was important because in the Mongolian-Qing imperial Geluk buddhism of the period, Tibetan origins conferred religious legitimacy in a similar manner to the way Indian origins conferred legitimacy within Tibetan Buddhism. As such, the post-1792 Geluk tradition was emphatic in according the Sixth Panchen (as the seniormost Tibetan lama during the minority of the Eigth Dalai Lama) a seminal role in the development of the cult of the Long Cloud King, and this is also regularly echoed in the secondary scholarship.[138]

However, the research undertaken for this article indicates no conclusive textual evidence that the Panchen Lobzang Palden Yeshé took anything more than a passing interest in this deity. The only text devoted to this deity in his *Collected Works* is the short *Supplication* below. Another two texts from the collection of Lord Guan texts referred to below as the *Yonghegong Corpus* (texts 1 and 2 of that collection, the first of which does not directly refer to the Long Cloud King by name), may also be attributable to him. However since there remains uncertainty on this point, those texts are treated separately below as part of

[138] R.A. Stein (1959: 39) noted a text attributed to the Third/Sixth Panchen called the *Bstan srung rgyal po chen po bkwan lo ye'i gsol mchod 'dod don kun sgrol (?)* (the question mark is Stein's). A text with exactly this name (except the *sgrol* being written *stsol*) was obtained from the monks at Yonghegong by Jamyang Phüntsok (Jiayang Pincuo) who gave the present author a copy. However this text, discussed later and referred to here as the *Yonghegong Corpus*, is not by the Third/Sixth Panchen, but in fact consists of six texts, the third of which is the Sixth Panchen's short *Kwanloye Supplication*. The collection itself dates to some time after 1853, since the fifth text is dated to that year (as discussed further below). Based on Stein's observation however, it seems clear that this was the text that he found attributed to the Third/Sixth Panchen as the authoritative or legitimating "face" of Kwanloye liturgies in Geluk Buddhism. Secondary scholars have echoed this: Fan Zhang for example states that the Third/Sixth Panchen "dedicated various prayers to *rgya yul gyi gzhis bdag*, the Chinese deity Guandi"; Zhang 2016: 584. However, the section of his *Gsung 'bum* cited in support of this assertion in fact seems to be a collection of generic supplications to "various deities of the desire realm" (*'dod lha sna tshogs gsol 'debs kyi skor rnams*), in which there does not appear to be any mention of Kwanloye or Long Cloud King. To date, the only text the present author which can be reliably attributed to the Third/Sixth Panchen, is this cursory *Supplication* (*gsol mchod*).

the later-compiled *Yonghegong Corpus*. With regard to the supposed devotion of the Sixth Panchen to Lord Guan, it is worth noting here that in his exchange of letters with Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Paljor (Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, 1704–1788)—an exchange which took place in 1779—on the subject of Gesar, no mention at all is made of Lord Guan by either of these learned masters, indicating a clear awareness on their parts of the completely distinct folkloric and legendary identity of Gesar from the Chinese martial deity Lord Guan.[139]

The Sixth Panchen's *Supplication*, composed upon request during his fateful visit to the imperial capital in 1780 (he contracted smallpox soon after his arrival and died there), covers only four lines of a single folio. It gives little elaboration on the deity, apart from a significant association with Manjuśri (as a protector of the Manchu emperors), which is echoed in later texts, and refers to the deity explicitly as being non-Tibetan, as the "local deity / territorial divinity of China" (*rgya yul gyi gzhis bdag*). Since the Panchen's *Supplication* is short and was embraced as a seminal prayer in later liturgies of the Long Cloud King, we can include its text in full:

> *Om swa sti* / / Gathering together all the loving wisdom of the buddhas residing in the purelands of the ten directions, may the great truth of Lord Manjuśri, proclaimed in one voice by all the buddhas, make this place beautiful. May these vessels, filled with various essences [foods] and limitless oceans of drink, be blessed [into ambrosia] by the truth of the buddhas, and become naturally inexhaustible!
> O sky-god (*gnam lha*) residing in your be-jewelled dwelling, with Chinese silks wafting, and heaps of wondrous phenomena, dressed in armour and wielding the sharp spear of a mighty lord (*btsan po*), we beseech you to approach quickly and abide. May these offerings of fine foods and good things to drink please you, so come, eat and drink! May your banner be spread over this land, and may all my renunciations be spontaneously achieved!
> [Colophon] This ritual offering to the local deity of China (*rgya yul gyi gzhis bdag*) Kwanloye, was composed by the esteemed *tāntrika* of Yamāntaka, the noble *gelong* Lobzang Palden Yeshé upon the request that he should do so by Zhabdrung Rabjampa Ngawang Gyatso [unidentified].[140]

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139 For a full translation of this exchange, see FitzHerbert 2015.

140 *Om Sva Sti // phyogs bcu'i zhing na bzhugs pa'i rgyal ba dang // rgyal ba kun gyi mkhyen brtse gcig bsdus pa // rgyal ba'i lab gcig rje btsun 'jam dbyangs kyi // bden pa chen pos [339] sa 'di mdzes gyur cig / sna tshogs bcud kyis gtams pa'i snod rnams dang btung ba'i rgya mtsho dpag tu med pa rnams // sangs rgyas rnams kyi bden pas byin brlabs te // zad pa med pa'i rang bzhin du gyur cig / rin chen khang pa'i nang du gnam gyi lha // rgya yi dar gos lhab lhub chos kyis spung // btsan po'i go gyon rno ba'i mdung thogs pa // rings pa'i tshul gyis 'dir byon spro bar bzhugs // bza' dang bca' ba btung ba'i tshogs 'di dag / 'bul gyis dgyes shing zo zhig btung bar mdzod // yul phyogs 'di nyid dar zhing rgyas pa*

The other important text from pre-Gorkha War period is by the Second Jamyang Zhepa, Könchok Jigmé Wangpo ('Jam dbyangs bzhad pa Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po, 1728–1791). This short text, *A Brief Supplication for the Great War-God of China known as Long Cloud King or Kwanloye*[141] was composed at an as yet unknown date upon the request of two (as yet unidentified) figures.[142] This text is particularly notable because it is the first Tibetan-language text (known to this author) which in addition to his form seated upon a throne, depicts the hero-deity in mounted form, carrying a sword and noose. The language in which he is depicted here has a discernably more "folky" quality than the more polished or courtly ritual texts by Changkya (above) and Tukwan (below), and in it one can see more clearly how Lord Guan was associated in the popular imagination of Tibetans and Mongolians with Gesar/Geser, the oral epic concerning whom is replete with similar depictions of mounted warriors. The red-complexioned deity is here invited riding a "raging red [chestnut] horse with flash on its forehead", brandishing a sword and noose in his hands and clothed in armour and a military helmet.[143] He is praised as "king of *dgra lha*, powerful in magic" and is depicted attacking enemies "like a lion pouncing on its prey".[144] However, here gain, no explicit mention is made of Gesar/Geser, and the deity is depicted "leading a vast Chinese army", a clear reference to this deity's Chinese origins.

Also notable in the Jamyang Zhepa text, is its entreaty section which explicitly dedicates the *Supplication* to political ends. The deity is propitiated for "the dominion of the sky-appointed [Qing] Emperor" and "all those engaged in the union of religion and politics (*chos srid zung 'brel*)".[145]

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dang // bdag gi 'dor ba ma lus lhun gyis sgrub // zhes pa 'di ni rgya yul gyi gzhis bdag kwan lo ye'i gsol mchod 'di lta bu zhig dgos zhes zhabs drung rab 'byams pa ngag dbang rgya mtshos bskul ba ltar [ʂ] gshin rje'i gshed kyi rnal 'byor pa [ʂ] shakya'i dge slong blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes kyis sbyar ba'o //; Blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes 1978: vol. 4, fol. 338–339.

141 *Maha tsi na'i yul gyi dgra lha chen po sprin ring rgyal po'am kwan lo yer grags pa'i gsol mchod mdor bsdus*, in Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po, 1971: vol. 10, fol. 672–676.

142 Namely Rabjampa Tashi Khyenrab and Shi-yang Emchi Lobzang Mönlam: *maha tsi na'i yul gyi dgra lha chen po sprin ring rgyal po'am kwan lo yer grags pa'i gsol mchod mdor bsdus ni rab 'byams pa bkra shis mkhyen rab dang shi yang emchi blo bzang smon lam gnyis kyis bskul dor //*; *ibid.*: fol. 676.

143 *res 'ga' pa tsan rta dmar po khros pa'i steng // sku mdog dmar gsal khros shing brjid ba'i tshul // g.yas pa ral gri g.yon pa zhags pa bsnams // khrab rmog dar dang rin chen rgyan gyis mdzes //*; *ibid.*: fol. 673.

144 *mthu ldan dgra lha'i rgyal po khyod la bstod // tsi na'i dmag dpung 'bum gyi sna drangs te // dgra sde'i g.yul ngo seng ges ri dwags bzhin /*; *ibid.*: fol. 674.

145 *gnam bskos gong ma'i chab srid mnga' thang rnams // rdzogs ldan dus ltar 'bar ba'i 'phrin las mdzod // khyad par khyod la gus ldan bdag cag gi / 'gal rkyen kun rin legs tshogs ma*

By way of conclusion to this section on the "foundational phase" for Geluk Cult of Lord Guan in the 18th century, it is worth observing that in all of these "foundational" ritual texts—by the Third Changkya Rolpé Dorjé, the Sixth Panchen Lobzang Yeshé Peljor, and the Second Jamyang Zhepa Könchok Jigmé Wangpo—no association is made between Lord Guan and the wrathful protector Bektsé-Jamsring, nor is the deity identified with Dzongtsen Shenpa, or with Gesar. Indeed all of these associations are notable by their absence. As we shall see below, these were associations that were cultivated in particular by Changkya's disciple and the main guardian of his legacy, namely Tukwan Lobzang Chökyi Nyima, who was to succeed his master as the main representative of Geluk Buddhism at the Qing imperial court in the final decade of the 18th century.

4.2. The Development Phase: ca. 1786–1802

The most important figure in the further development of a cult of Lord Guan in Tibeto-Mongol Geluk Buddhism in the late 18th century was undoubtedly the Third Tukwan, Lobzang Chökyi Nyima (Thu'u bkwan 03 Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 1737–1802). It is hard to say when Tukwan wrote his Lord Guan texts, but it seems likely it was after the death of his root guru Changkya Rolpé Dorjé in 1786. Given the expansion of the *cultus* of Lord Guan in Tibet after 1792 (as detailed in the previous section, it seems likely it was also in this period that Tukwan's attention was turned to this topic.

As Changkya Rolpé Dorjé's disciple and biographer, it was Tukwan who bolstered his former master's spiritual connection with this deity; who further elaborated the ritual cult by authoring an authoritative "history" (*lo rgyus*) of the deity and an expanded ritual repertoire for his propitiation; who expanded the deity's name to include the epithet Khamsum Dündül (Khams gsum bdud 'dul, "Subduer of Demons of the Three Realms") being the translation of the Chinese *San jie fu mo* (三界伏魔); who cemented the associations with Jamsring-Bektsé and Dzongtsen Shenpa; and who further stamped this burgeoning imperial cult with the authority of the Panchen Lama incarnation line. It was also Tukwan who cemented the dissmissive attitude towards the folkore of Ling Gesar which was to be a hallmark of the Geluk cult of the Long Cloud King as an alternative "Geluk Gesar". In later 19th century developments of the cult of the Long Cloud King (especially in Mongolia in the hands of the Ilgugsan *hutuktu* as discussed below), it was the writings of Tukwan above all that were to be the seminal

lus spel // chos srid zung 'brel gang brtsam bgyi ba kun // dpag bsam shing ltar 'grub pa'i 'phrin las mdzod /; ibid.: fol. 675.

sources.

Tukwan's *Dragon's Roar (Thunder) which Summons a Long Rain of Enlightened Action*[146] is a 14-folio text which includes both a history of the deity and instructions on how to make various kinds of offering to him. Tukwan's *History* follows closely, but is more elaborated, than that of Gönpojap:

> At some time in the past, in the great land of Maha-Tsina [China] a Han-gur king called Shya-na Bh'i [Emperor Xian, 181–234 CE] had a brave and courageous minister of noble lineage called Yu'u, who on account of his great power (*mthu stobs*) elimated enemies of different lands in military campaigns, and innumerable kings and their principalities came under his dominion. On account of his awesome skill in battle, even the most arrogant of opponents were brought onto his side. He was like a *khyung* [large bird] among little birds, there was not a man in all directions, who did not bow upon merely hearing his name. And whether protecting the vulnerable or vanquishing the haughty, it is said he was always honest and could never be flustered by anything, peaceful or wrathful. Like Chögyel Nyannamé [Emperor Aśoka], he was a *cakravartin* protecting the realm in accordance with the *dharma.*
> Then suddenly, as in the saying that if one dies in a state of despondency one will take rebirth as a sea monster (*nya mid chen po*), at the end of his life, during a war with others, dying in a state of anger, he was transformed into a very powerful spirit of the *lu* (*klu*) species, and haunted the vicinity of the great mountain in the Sichuan region called Yu'i chan-zhan or nowadays known as Zhang-ling. And because [this spirit] was very rough and violent, it was difficult for others to even traverse that mountain.
> Then, after about 400 years, the Great Master called T'i-ce t'a-shi [=Zhizhe Dashi 智者大师 a.k.a. Zhuyi] who was a monk holding the paternal [lit. "father-son"] lineage of the philosophical view of lord Nāgārjuna (Tib. Klu sgrub), came to that place to practice. Not dissuaded by the warnings of the local people, he meditated there. So he [the spirit] manifested as a massive snake which coiled itself three times about the mountain, and calling forth a myriad army of gods (*lha*) and serpentine spirits (*klu*), made the mountain start to crumble, and the sun and moon clash like a pair of cymbals; and a rain of weapons

[146] *Dragon's Roar,* full title: *History of the Great King Guan Yunchang, Subduer of Demons of the Three Realms, and How to Make Offerings to Him, called the Dragon's Roar / Thunder which Summons a Long Rain of Enlightened* Action; Khams *gsum bdud 'dul rgyal chen bkwan yun chang gi lo rgyus dang gsol mchod bya tshul 'phrin las char rgyun bskul ba'i 'brug sgra* in Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1971: vol. 5 (*ca),* fol. 781–794. The second part of the text, the *gser skyems,* is also found in a *dpe cha* obtained in Lhasa by Jamyang Phüntsok, and included as an appendix to his monograph (Jiayang Pincuo 2016: 187–188). However, the last three pages are missing there. He correctly identified the author of this text as Thu'u bkwan; Jiayang Pincuo 2016: 48, 55 fn 1.

> to fall, and a lightning blizzard to rage.
> But despite all this, despite displaying various repulsive forms and so on, he was unable to disturb the master's *samādhi*. And so he appeared to him in his real form, as a great general together with a spirit army, and prostrating before the master, praised him highly and asked for forgiveness. "Formerly I was a great general, and because I died in anger, I was transformed into a snake. But because I was honest in deeds, I have gained these great magical powers and powers of transformation" he said, and suchlike. Then the master gave him many teachings on the law of cause and effect, after which he announced, "now I will be a protector of the Buddhist teachings. Wherever there are images of the Buddha, if you place my image in the doorway or whatever kind of gate-houses there are on left and right, I will protect that holy place and its monastic community". Thus he made his oath, and ever since he has been a protector of the Buddhist teachings.
> Such is [the history of] this Great King, who is of the same mind-continuum (*thugs rgyud*) as Bektsé- Jamsring.[147]

Tukwan then elaborates on this association with Bektsé-Jamsring (see Fig. 4), explaining:

> In the old texts from former times, it is said that the origin of Bektsé was as a *damsi* [Tib. *dam sri* a form of harmful spirit] of the land of China. And the colour of Bektsé's body is red and he wields a sword with a scorpion-shaped handle, as according to the ancient records.[148]

He then reprises the story from his biography of Changkya to show that, as revealed to Changkya in his dream, the propitiation of Bektsé-Jamsring was also a way of propitiating Lord Guan, since the two deities are one and the same. Tukwan clarifies this point, saying that the reference in Changkya's dream to "the one who gives me food and drink in Tsang", refers to the "successive incarnations of the All-knowing Panchen, since they rely on Bektsé".[149]

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147 *Dragon's Roar*: Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 1971: vol. 5 (*ca*), fol. 782–784.

148 *Ibid*.: 784. Nebesky-Wojkowitz relates a legend connecting the cult of Bektsé to the Third Dalai Lama, Sönam Gyatso, which he says suggests that "*Beg tse* was orginally a pre-Buddhist deity of the Mongols, who began to be venerated by the Tibetans after *bSod nams rgya mtsho* had turned the defeated enemy of Buddhism into a protector of the Buddhist creed"; Nebesky-Wojkowitz [1956] 1998: 88.

149 *gtsang phyogs kyi bza' btung ster mkhan pan chen thams cad mkhyen pa sku na rim gyis beg tse bsten par mdzad 'dug pas de la zer ba yin 'dug /*; *ibid*.: 785.

Fig. 4. A 19th century Mongolian Geluk thangka of the enlightened protector Bektsé/Jamsring, surrounded by "29 butchers" (shan pa). Rubin Museum of Art, C2006.66.368/ HAR 805.

Tukwan then explains the identification of Lord Guan with Dzongtsen Shenpa. With an exemplary clarity of exposition, he notes that "others also recognise this great king as one-and-the-same as the one known as Zhanglön Dorjé Dündül (Tib. Zhang blon rdo rje bdud 'dul)"[150] and explains this identification thus:

> When Songtsen Gampo [Tibetan emperor of the early 7th century CE] married the Chinese Princess Wenchan Kongjo, the custom in Tibet of referring to China as Zhang (*zhang* "uncle") began, and since he [Lord

[150] *gzhan yang rgyal chen 'di nyid zhang blon rdo rje bdud 'dul dang ngo bo gcig par yang grags te* /; *ibid.*: 785.

> Guan] had been a king's great minister, he became known as Zhanglön (*zhang blon* "uncle-minister"). And since kings in former times gave this god the honourific Chinese title Zan kye-e pho-o mo-o t'a di [i.e. =*San jie fu mo da di* 三界伏魔大帝 meaning "subduer of the three realms"], he became known as Khamsum Dündül (*Khams gsum bdud 'dul* or "subduer of the three realms"). In this way the title Dündül (*bdud 'dul*) was added to Zhanglön. And when the Chinese princess went to Tibet, she brought this protector with her, and at his various abodes (*gnas*) such as Lhasa Drib, Yarlung Shelkidrakphuk, Cheki Lhalung Tsenkhar, Kongyul Buchu Lhakhang, Puri Phukmoche, Tsechendrak and so on, he is now known as Dzongtsen Shenpa, the "Mighty Butcher" (Rdzong btsan shan pa). Many great masters have been heard to speak of this.[151]

Tukwan then quotes from the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Offering to Dzongtsen*[152] to affirm the point, and asserts that this deity has long been recognised in Tibet as a "warrior deity" (*dgra lha*).

In this way Tukwan asserts the identity of Dzongtsen Shenpa, a deity already worshipped as a protector-deity at various places in central Tibet and most prominently at Drib (Grib) just south of Lhasa,[153] with Lord Guan. It is surely no coincidence that in 1790 the worship of this deity at Drib was expanded and institutionalised under the authority of the Eighth Dalai Lama (1758–1804).[154]

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151 *de'i rgyu mtshan ni / chos rgyal srong btsan sgam pos rgyal bza' wan chang kung jo khab tu bzhes bas / rgya la bod phyi rabs pa rnams kyis zhang por 'bod pa byung zhing / de'i rgyal po zhig gi blon chen zhig yin tshul gong du smos zin ltar yin pas / zhang blon zer ba dang 'grigs shing / lha 'di nyid la sngon gyi rgyal po chen po rnams kyis gzengs bstod kyi mtshan phul brgya skad du Zan kye-e pho-o mo-o t'a di khams gsum bdud 'dul rgyal po chen po zhes zer ba yin pas zhang blon gyi mtshan zur bdud 'dul zhes pa dang 'grigs pa 'dug / yang rgya bza' bod du byon dus srung ma 'di nyid rjes su 'brang nas bod du byon nas lha sa'i grib kyi rdzong ri / yar klung shel gyi brag phug 'phes* [sic. *'phyos*] *kyi lha lung btsan mkhar / kong yul bu chu lha khang / spu ri phug mo che / rtse chen brag sogs la gnas bcas pa da lta rdzongs btsan bshan par grags pa de yin pa 'dug ces skyes bu dams pa mang po zhig gis gsungs pa thos shing /; ibid*. 785–786.

152 See note 23 above.

153 According to Sørensen and Hazod, Dzongtsen of Drib (Grib rdzong btsan) was the local deity (*yul lha*) of the Gar (Mgar) clan who settled in this area south of Lhasa at some time before the 12th century; Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 425 fn 32.

154 According to Sørensen and Hazod, in 1790 the Eighth Dalai Lama institutionalised Drib Dzongtsen as a protective deity housed in his own temple there; *ibid*.: 573. They also note "[…] Grib represents only one of several places associated with the story of the deity's arrival in central Tibet. The other seats include Yar-lung Shel gyi brag-phug (i.e. the Shel-brag-ri), 'Phyes kyi lHa-lung btsan-mkhar (perhaps referring to Phyos in lower 'Phyong-po), Kong-po Bu-chu lha-khang, sPug-ri Phug-mo-che-lung (in eastern Ya-lung) and rTse-chen-brag (i.e rTse-chen in Myang-stod?) […] In Bu-ch[ung] […] rDzong-btsan is one of the temple *srung ma*, and entrusted with guard of the temple treasure [...]. In this western part of central Kong-po (i.e. the right side of the lower Nyang-chu, where Bu-chu is located), two

Tukwan's rituals for the Long Cloud King also elaborated on the foundations laid in Changkya's *Supplication.* His rituals are also the first in which the deity is accompanied by a "queen, son and minister"—an innovation not found in Chinese ritual traditions for Lord Guan, whose Chinese *cultus* as noted earlier, is notably devoid of female or wife-figures. The presence of the "queen, son and minister" would become the standard iconography of the Tibetanised form of Lord Guan as Khamsum Dündül Trinring Gyelpo, the "Long-Cloud King, Subduer of Three Realms" (see fig. 5 below). The *Dragon's Roar* has further sections on:

- how to offer *torma* (*mchod gtor 'bul tshul*), fol. 787–789.
- how to make smoke-offering (*bsang mchod*), fol. 789.
- how to praise and entreat him to enlightened action (*bstod cing 'phrin las bcol ba*), fol. 789–92.

And in a separate ritual text:

- how to make offering of "golden libation" (*gser skyems gtong ba*), fol. 792–794.

In this ritual section of *Dragon's Roar*, the deity is visualised thus:

> In front of you, on a precious golden throne stacked with silk brocade cushions in various designs, is seated the protector of the entire land of mighty China, Khamsum Dündül Trinring Gyelpo. He has a red body, impressive build, and a wrathful smile, with flowing whiskers and a long beard. He bears a haughty expression and his two hands rest on his thighs. His body is clothed in the finest golden armour surmounted by a cape of various kinds of silks, tied at the waist by a golden belt studded with jewels. He wears a silk hat called a flying crown (*'phur lding cod pan*), and sits with his two feet in playful posture. Thus he abides, attended by his queen, son and minister, as an intimidating great general along with his army, as a variety of emanations dance around him, filling earth and sky.[155]

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further places associated with rDzong-btsan are to be found: according to the locals, he resides on a mountain in Upper rDzong-btsan, a small valley to the north of Bu-chu (in the lower part of this valley a modern cemetery is located, where rich Chinese people from Ba-yi (the capital of the sNying-khri Prefecture) used to be buried, a possible reference to rDzong-btsan in his manifestation of Guan Yu). Further to the east, in Jo-mo *rdzong* (opposite Ba-yi), the Jo-mo *yul lha* called A-pho gDong-btsan is identified by the locals as Grib rDzong-btsan"; *ibid.*: 574 fn 7.

155 *rang gi mdun du rin chen gser gyi khri // sna tshogs dar zab 'bol gdan brtsegs ba'i steng // dbang phyogs tsi na'i yul gru kun skyong ba // khams gsum bdud 'dul sprin ring rgyal po ni // sku mdog dmar po khro 'dzum brjid bag can // 'bar ba'i sma ra smin ma ring pos brjid // 'gyings pa'i nyams kyis phyag gnyis brla la brten // rin chen gser khrab 'bar ba sku la gsol // sna tshogs dar zab 'jol ber brtsegs pa la // nor bus spras pa'i gser gyi ske rags bcings // 'phur lding cod pan gyis mdzes dar thod gsol // zhabs gnyis rol ba'i stabs kyis dgyes bzhin bzhugs // btsun mo sras dang bka' yi blon po dang // 'jigs rung dmag dpon chen po dpung dang bcas // rdzu 'phrul gar gyi rol pa sna tshogs kyis// gnam sa bar snang*

As will be illustrated in the pages that follow, Tukwan's development of the cult of Lord Guan in the *Dragon's Roar* served as the bedrock upon which this *cultus* would grow during the 19th century. The exact date of this important text remains elusive. In the biography of Tukwan by Gungthang Könchok Tenpé Drönmé (Gung thang 03 Dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me, 1762–1823) it says that:

> In the Fire Pig year [1767], while on pilgrimage at Wutai Shan, the master [Tukwan] had a sudden vision of a "red[-complexioned] man riding a red [i.e. chestnut] horse carrying red military banner" who appeared in front of him and then disappeared like a flash of lightning. Believing this to be a visitation of Trinring Gyelpo (Long Cloud King), he immediately composed an offering ritual (*gsol mchod kyi cho ga*) to him.[156]

This however does not seem to refer to the rituals contained in the *Dragon's Roar*, since as we have seen, the deity is not depicted there in mounted form, but it does suggest that Tukwan had himself penned a ritual for this deity in this earlier period, though the ritual itself remains unidentified. The *Dragon's Roar* text itself contains two colophons indicating that it was composed by stages, with the golden libation (*gser skyems*) section written separately upon the request of a high-ranking Khalkha Mongol lama-administrator called Chöjé Yeshé Drakpa Zangpo, whose elaborate title includes Mongolian, Manchu, Chinese and Tibetan elements, but about whom further information has to date remained elusive.[157]

'gengs bzhin bzhugs par gyur //; Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 1971: vol. 5 (*ca*), fol. 787.

156 Dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me 2003: vol. 6, 180.

157 The first colophon, for the main history and ritual text, runs as follows: "These days, with most people abandoning worship of the Wisdom Protectors of the teachings, and preferring to take refuge in harmful spirits rather than in the [Three] Precious Jewels headed by the Lama—in such a time, the propagation of a text like this could face great criticism. Nevertheless, because of the urging of a few interested persons, and for a few other reasons also, the one called *Jingziu Chanzhi* by decree of the celestially-appointed great Manjuśri Emperor, [namely] Tukwan Hutuktu, praised as a spiritual master of purity, learning, and meditative stability, the itinerant monk called Lobzang Chöki Nyima, composed this at the solitary retreat of Dechen Rabgye Ling. May it be virtuous and good!": *deng dus phal mo che zhig gis bstan srung ye shes pa rnams bsten pa dor nas / mi ma yin gdug pa can re la bla ma dkon mchog las lhag pa'i skyabs gnas su 'dzin dus 'dir 'di 'dra'i yi ge spel ba dgag bya che na'ang / don gnyer ba 'ga' zhig gis bskul ba dang / gzhan yang rgyu mtshan 'ga' zhig la brten nas /* [ς]*gnam bskos 'jam dbyangs gong ma chen po'i bka'i lung gis jing zi'u chan zhi thu'u bkwan hu thog thu zhes rnam dag brlab ldan bsam gtan gyi slob dpon du bsngags pa sa mthar 'khyams pa'i btsun gzugs* [ς] *blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma'i ming can gyis dben pa'i dga' tshal bde chen rab rgyas gling du sbyar ba dge legs su gyur cig* /; Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1971: vol. 5 *(ca)*, fol. 792. The second "golden libation" (*gser*

A further significant contribution to the tradition, possibly penned during the late 18th century, was also made by Chahar Geshé Lobzang Tsultrim (Cha har dge bshes Blo bzang tshul khrims, 1740–1820), who authored three texts.[158] The cult of Lord Guan put down popular roots in parts of the Mongolian world to much greater extent than it ever did in the ethnically Tibetan regions, and this was particularly true of the southern Chahar region, a Sino-Mongol borderland which had been brought under Manchu rule early in the 17th century. There, a cult of Lord Guan was already a well-established part of popular culture by the late 18th century. Indeed there is even evidence that a cult of Lord Guan existed in this region as early as the 16th century.[159] A survey of village temples in southern Chahar conducted by W. Grootaers in 1948 found no less than forty Lord Guan temples in just one district. At these, the deity was depicted in various forms, including seated on a throne, and on horseback.[160]

Chahar Geshé's Lord Guan texts include a history (*lo rgyus*) of the deity which draws heavily on Tukwan's *Dragon's Roar*.[161] In his ritual texts, he alludes to a diversity of forms in which the deity may be worshipped. For example, in the 19-folio *Supplication to the Dharma-Protector Great King Kwanloye which Grants All Wishes*,[162] the main image of the deity is presented as a seated form with hands resting on his thighs (following almost *verbatim* Tukwan's presentation quoted above), but he also adds:

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skyems) colophon indicates it was written upon the request of a high-ranking Khalkha Mongol lama-administrator: "this was composed by the ragged monk Dharma Badzra [i.e. Tukwan] upon the request of the mighty Khalkha Junang Peizi'i T'a Lama Khyenpé Chenden Kachu Uljisthu Darhan Chöje Yeshé Drakpa Zangpo. And the scribe was Ngawang Phüntsok: *zhes pa 'di yang stobs dang ldan pa hal ha ju nang pe'i zi'i t'a bla ma mkhyen pa'i spyan ldan dka' bcu ul jis thu dar han chos rje ye shes grags pa bzang pos bskul ba la brten nas ku sa li* [ç] *dharma badzra kyis sbyar ba'i yi ge pa ni ngag dbang phun tshogs so //; ibid.*: fol. 794. This colophon is also discussed in Jiayang Pincuo 2016: 55, working from a version of Tukwan's text he obtained from Kündeling monastery in Lhasa, but no identification of this figure is made there either.

158 Cha har dge bshes Blo bzang tshul khrims 1973: vol. 6 (*ca*), fol. 217–235, 637–641.

159 Grootaers 1951: 63. For an interesting image of an amulet (probably Mongolian) depicting Kwanloye at the centre of a variety of other miniatures depicting the *'go ba'i lha lnga* protective deities, see Czaja 2008: 410.

160 Grootaers 1951: 63.

161 *Bstan srung rgyal po chen po bkwan lo ye'i gsol mchod 'dod don kun stsol*; Cha har dge bshes Blo bzang tshul khrims 1973: vol. 6 (*ca*), fol. 217–235. As stated in the colophon, his "history" is heavily indebted to the treatment by Tukwan, but "with a little further elaboration".

162 *Ibid.*

This is the appearance according to the custom of China as a great king seated on a throne. But other forms are also possible, such as riding a red [chestnut] horse; bearing the long chopper; wearing a helmet and golden armour; and in military form bearing a long spear.[163]

Fig. 5. A Tibetanised Lord Guan/Long Cloud King thangka showing at top, from left to right, the Third/Sixth Panchen Lama Lobzang Palden Yeshé, the Third Changkya Rölpé Dorjé, and the Eighth Dalai Lama. China. Qianlong Period, ca. 18th century. Mineral pigments and gold on cotton. 57 x 40.6 cm. Pritzker Collection, Chicago. HAR 88591.

163 *'di ni rgya yul gyi bkod pa bying gi lugs ltar rgyal chen khri la bzhugs pa'i rnam ba can yin la / rnam ba gcig tu rta dmar zhon cing / ral gri yu ring bsnams pa / dbu la rmog zhu dang sku la gser khrab gsol ba / dmag la chas pa'i rnam pa can byas kyang chog la / mdung ring bsnams par byas ba'ang 'dug /; ibid.*: 225.

It is notable that this "long chopper" (*ral gri yu ring*) seems to be the only mention in the Tibetan-language texts, of Lord Guan's distinctive weapon in Chinese iconography, namely the long-handled "green dragon crescent moon knife" (Ch. *qing long yan yue dao* 青龍偃月刀). In *thangkas* of "Tibetanised" Lord Guan, the deity is never (in this author's experience) depicted with such a weapon. It is also notable that in Chahar Geshé's second text, in deference to the association made by the Sixth Panchen, Trinring Gyelpo is referred to as "attendant of Manjuśri" *('jam dpal bka' sdod sprin ring rgyal po*).[164]

Again, like Tukwan, the Chahar Geshé texts make no mention at all of Geser/Gesar, and the main associations of the deity are, as in Tukwan's texts, with Bektsé and Dzongtsen Shenpa.[165]

4.3. The Mature Phase: ca. 1802–1880

In the post-Tukwan period, the Geluk cult of Trinring Gyelpo is marked not so much by innovation, as by elaboration and expansion. The main institutional *locus* for the ritual cult remained Yonghegong in the imperial capital[166] along with Qing administrative and military centres across the Mongolian and Tibetan regions.

Most significant for the practical conduct of this cult—and certainly for its public expression in Tibet itself—was the translation into Tibetan of the Chinese divination text the *Guandi Sacred Lots* (*Guan di ling qian* trad. 關帝靈 籤; simp. 关帝 灵 签). The 142-folio Tibetan version of this text (which carries no colophon) is entitled *The Mighty Long Cloud King's Clear Mirror for Divining the Three Planes of Existence*.[167] It was used for publicly-available divination (Tib. *mo*) through the drawing of "sacred lots" (Ch. *ling qian* or *chou qian* = Tib. *khro chen*) at the Barmari "Gesar" temple.[168] As Jamyang Phüntsok's research on this subject makes clear, this was not the only Chinese lots divination text

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164 *Dbang phyogs tsi na'i yul gyi dgra lha'i gtso bo rgyal chen bkwan lo ye la gser skyems 'bul tshul 'dod rgu 'gugs pa'i lcags kyu*; Cha har dge bshes Blo bzang tshul khrims 1973: vol. 6 (*ca*), fol. 638.

165 Chahar Geshé's "history" (*lo rgyus*) of the deity closely follows Tukwan's *Dragon's Roar*; *ibid*.: fol. 218–222.

166 Yonghegong was f course not the only Geluk establishment in Beijing. As stated by Rawski, "the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong emperors renovated or built a total of thirty-two Tibetan Buddhist temples within Peking"; Rawski 1998: 252. However Yonghegong was certainly the largest and most prestigious, and with its Guandimiao, was certainly the most significant for the Geluk cult of Lord Guan.

167 *Mthu stobs dbang phyug sprin rig* (sic.) *rgyal po'i rno mthong srid gsum gsal ba'i me long*.

168 This text was obtained by Prof. Jamyang Phüntsok (Jiayang Pincuo) from the Kündeling archives in Lhasa. Analysis of this text, and its adaptation of Chinese frames of reference into a Tibetan Buddhist cultural context, constitutes a large part of his 2016 monograph. The full (Tibetan) text is also reproduced as an appendix there;

translated into Tibetan, but it was certainly the longest. It seems likely that this text (or some variation of it) was also used at the garrison temples at Trapchi, Shigatsé, and Dingri.

During the mature phase of the Geluk cult of Trinring Gyelpo which spans the 19th century, Tibetan-language texts authored for this deity, with the important exception of the text attributed to the Fourth/Seventh Panchen (discussed further below), seem to have enjoyed greater popular traction in Mongolian Geluk tradition, than they ever did in Tibet itself. Given the volume of the textual material available from this period, all that can be offered here are some cursory observations.

An important collection of ritual texts performed as propiation for the deity at Yonghegong is a compendium entitled *Supplication to the Dharma-Protector Great King Kwanloye who Grants All Wishes* (*Bstan srung rgyal po chen po bkwan lo ye'i gsol mchod 'dod don kun stsol*) referred to here as the *Yonghegong Corpus*, which is still in use there today.[169] This *Corpus* is in fact a compilation of six separate texts, only one of which carries a colophon (text 5) which dates it to the year 1853 (see below). The third text is also identifiable as the Sixth Panchen's short *Supplication* (treated above). It seems there was a custom at Yonghegong of attributing this entire liturgy (or at least the first four texts of it) to the Sixth Panchen, as reflected in R.A. Stein's citation of a text with the same name he identified in Beijing.[170]

The first text (fol. 1–5) in this *Corpus* is a tantric *sadhana* for Vajrabhairava/Yamāntaka (Rdo rje 'jigs byed) in which the ritualist is instructed to establish himself in the divine pride of this ferocious enlightened deity through a series of visualisations.

The second (fol. 5–12) is an invitation, along with offerings of purifying smoke (*bsang*) and sculpted effigies (*gtor ma*) to Trinring Gyelpo,

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Jiayang Pincuo 2016: 198–234. For the comparison of the Tibetan and Chinese versions see *ibid*.: 83–145.

169 The 47-folio text referred to here as the *Yonghegong Corpus* was obtained by Prof. Jamyang Phüntsok (Jiayang Pincuo) from monks at Yonghegong in Beijing, who told him that the text was still in use today. Jamyang Phüntsok kindly gave the present author a xerox copy of this text (which does not appear to be published elsewhere) in Chengdu in March 2018. The title of the text in this version (*Bstan srung rgyal po chen po bkwan lo ye'i gsol mchod 'dod don kun stsol*) is identical to one of Chahar Geshé's texts cited above. It is also identical to the title of a 16-folio text noted by R.A. Stein in Beijing which he attributed to the Sixth Panchen Lobzang Palden Yeshé; Stein 1959: 39. It is possible that the text Stein reported was in fact texts 1–4 of the *Yonghegong Corpus*, which together would be the same length (16 folios), and includes the Sixth Panchen's short *Supplication* (text 3), thus explaining the attribution.

170 See note 138 above.

also bearing the title Khamsum Dündül. The text then includes offering rituals which strongly resemble (sometimes *verbatim*) those of Tukwan's *Dragon's Roar*. For example, the visualisation of the deity is identical with that found in *Dragon's Roar* translated above.[171]

The third text (fol. 12.2–13.2) is the Sixth Panchen's short *Supplication to Kwanloye* (*Kwan lo ye'i gsol mchod*) also translated above.

The fourth text, which again is without colophon, is dedicated to the "Great War-god (*dgra lha*) of Mighty China" (*dbang phyogs tsi na'i yul gyi dgra lha che*). It is especially notable for the way in which the deity is beseeched as an explicitly Geluk protector of church and state, and specifically as the protector of Yonghegong. Here the deity is called upon to:

> Protect day and night without distraction the teachings of Lobzang Drakpa [Tsongkhapa] and all the communities of monks who are the bearers of his teachings, and especially the Yung monastery Ganden Jinchak Ling [i.e. Yonghegong], and the political dominion of the Great Qing.
> Destroy the power, strategies and charisma of those barbarians who hold false views and are contemptuous of the honour of the Three Jewels! Expel them, irrespective of the year and month! And may the work of religion and state be successful, in accordance with the commands of the Manjuśri Emperor, so that all hindrances and difficulties are dealt with through pacifying enlightened action in the *dharmadhātu*. Thus with strong faith and devotion are we reliant upon you, O war-god (*dgra lha*) worshipped since long ago […] expel [harm] and protect this land![172]

The fifth text (fol. 16–20) is a feast-offering (Skt. *ganacakra*, Tib. *tshogs*) to the Great King, Subduer of Demons of Three Realms. He is also invoked as the "great *dharma*-protector of Mighty China" (*dbang phyogs tsi na'i yul gyi bstan srung mchog*), accompanied by consort (*yum mchog*) and an "attendant army of butchers" (*bka' nyan bshan pa'i dmag*). Elab-

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171 Tukwan's description of the deity, as translated above in section 4.2, is found *verbatim* in the *Yonghegong Corpus* folios 6.6–8.1.

172 *Rgyal ba blo bzang grags pa'i bstan pa dang // de 'dzin skyes bu dge 'dun sde rnams kun // yang dgos yung dgon dga' ldan byin chags gling // chen po ching gi chab srid mnga' thang la // nyin* [15] *mtshan dus kun bya ra ma g.yel zhig // dkon mchog gsum gyi dbu 'phang smod byed pa'i // lha log* [sic. *kla klog*] *mu stegs sde tshogs thams cad kyi // mthu stobs dpa' rtsal kha rje'i dbang thang chom // lo zlar ma bzhag gnas nas bskrad par mdzod // yang dgos jam dbyangs gong ma'i bka' bzhin du // chos dang srid kyi bya ba bsgrubs pa la // bar du gcod pa'i nye bar 'tshe ba kun // chos kyi dbyings su zhi ba'i 'phrin las mdzod // de ltar mos gus gdung shugs drag po yis // ring nas bsten cing mchod pa'i dgra lha khyed //* [16] […] *bskrad nas yul 'di'i srung skyobs tshul bzhin mdzod*; *Yonghegong Corpus:* fol. 14–16.

orate offerings of food, drink, incense, butterlamps and so on are prepared and blessed into ambrosia with *mantra*s and *mudra*s, and the deity and his entourage are called upon to protect the Buddhist teachings in general and the teachings of the Second Buddha (Tsongkhapa) in particular. Protection is also requested against thieves and bandits and wild animals, and against disease, famine and warfare, so that "holders of the teachings may spread across the earth, and its patrons may prosper". This is the only text in the *Corpus* which carries a colophon, and reveals its provenance as coming from Yongegong itself in 1853, authored by the "Tongkhor Hutuktu" (Stong 'khor hu tog thu), a senior Lama form the Blue Lake (Kokonor/Tsöngon/Qinghai) region of Amdo:

> composed on the fifteenth day of the third month of the Water Ox Year (1853) by the noble Tongkhor Hutuktu named Thupten, out of great respect for the temple of the Great Demon-subduing King at Yung-gön Ganden Jinchak Ling.[173]

The sixth and final text in the *Corpus* is an elaborate tantric offering of 27 folios with several sections. This text has some striking convergences in phraseology with the Chahar Geshé texts cited above, which could thus be considered among its sources. For example, as in Chahar Geshé's work, the deity is addressd in Sanskritised form as *Yun chung r'a dza sa ba ri wa r'a.*[174] Also, as in the Chahar Geshé texts, we see Padmasmabhva evoked along with Tsongkhapa,[175] and again we have the deity addressed in the formulation "Manjuśri's Attendant Trinring Gyelpo" (*'jam dpal bka' sdod sprin ring rgyal po*).[176] Two other interesting features of this text (especially with regard to potential cross-over with the parallel ritual cult of Ling Gesar being developed in eastern Tibet

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[173] *ces pa 'di ni chu glang lo zla ba gsum pa'i tshes bco lnga la/ btsun ming 'dzin pa stong 'khor hu tog thu'i thub bstan ming 'dzin can gyis yung dgon dga' ldan byin chags gling gi bdud 'dul rgyal chen gyi lha khang nas gus ba chen pos sbyar ba'o //; ibid*. fol. 20. This appears to refer to the throneholder of Tongkhor called Thubten Jigme Gyatso (Stong 'khor Thub bstan 'jigs med rgya mtsho, 1820–1882). If this identification is correct, the text must date to 1853, not to the prior (more famous) Water-Ox year of 1793. The seat of the Tongkhor incarnation lineage was Tongkhor Ganden Chökhor Ling, established in the Kokonor region during the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama. The monastery primarily served the Mongol tribes that had settled that area. https://treasuryoflives.org. Last accessed on 16/01/2019.

[174] For example, *Yonghegong Corpus*: fol. 42; compare with Cha har dge bshes Blo bzang tshul khrims 1973: vol. 6 (*ca*), fol. 225.

[175] *Yonghegong Corpus*: fol. 35; compare with Cha har dge bshes Blo bzang tshul khrims 1973: vol. 6 (*ca*), fol. 638.

[176] *Yonghegong Corpus*: fol. 36; compare with Cha har dge bshes Blo bzang tshul khrims 1973: vol. 6 (*ca*), fol. 638.

from the mid-19th century),[177] are its emphasis on territorial divinities (*yul lha/gzhi bdag*), and the unusual description of Lord Guan/Trinring Gyelpo as a "speech emanation of Padmasmbhava in his form as a tutelary divinity" (*yi dam padma'i gsung sprul Kwan yun chung*).[178] This identification is not found in any other texts consulted, possibly suggesting a relatively late provenance, when the separately-evolved *cultus* of Gesar and his association with Padmasambhava in eastern Tibetan Buddhism may have begun to influence the Tibetan and Mongolian presentations of Lord Guan. However the text also has an intriguing final verse which might also suggest an earlier (late 18th century) provenance. This final verse appears to dedicate the rituals to "all those at Tashi Gomang" (the full name of Drepung's Gomang college), and to "Sönam Dargyé",[179] which could refer to the father of the Eighth Dalai Lama, and a senior relative of both the Fourth Jetsundamba and the Seventh Panchen Lama (whose Trinring Gyelpo text is treated briefly below). Sönam Dargyé was the Tibetan aristocrat-patriarch at the centre of the highly nepotistic convergence of senior Geluk incarnations within one family in the late 18th century.[180] Redressing the "capture" of all the major Geluk incarnation lineages within this one family (the Lhalu family) was a major motive for Qianlong's introduction of the Golden Urn and his 1792 *Lama shuo* or *Discourse on Lamas*.[181] The further dedication to Yönten Gyatso here could also possibly indicate one of the main teachers of the Seventh Panchen (1782–1853).[182]

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[177] There is no direct convergence between the rituals of the two deities (Trinring Gyelpo and Ling Gesar) but both were being developed over roughly the same period. The main commonalities are at the level of general iconography and classification: both Ling Gesar and the Long Cloud King were praised as *dgra lha* and depicted in both seated "kingly" and mounted "warrior" forms (as discussed further below). The framing here of Trinring Gyelpo as a "speech emanation of Padmasambhava" presents a rare moment of greater convergence. Padmasambhava occupies a central role in the ritual identity of Ling Gesar especially since the 19th century; see FitzHerbert 2017. For more in-depth treatment of Tibetan Gesar rituals from the 19th century, see Forgues 2011.

[178] *yi dam padma'i gsung sprul Kwan yun chung*; *Yonghegong Corpus*: fol. 36.

[179] *bkra shis sgo mang ji snyed yod pa kun // phun sum tshogs pa chu bo'i rgyun bzhin du // skye 'gro yongs la rtag tu bkra shis shog // bsod nams dar rgyas ri rgyal lhun po bzhin // snyan grags chen pos nam mkha' bzhin du khyab // tshe ring nad med gzhan don lhun gyis grub // yon tan rgya mtsho mchog gi bkra shis shog; Yonghegong Corpus*: fol. 46.

[180] Oidtmann 2018: 72. An interesting entry on Sönam Dargyé on the *Treasury of Lives* website was unfortunately unreferenced at the time of writing. The aristocratic Doring family were also closely connected to this family through marriage; Li Ruhong 2002: 168.

[181] Lessing 1942: 58–61. For extensive discussion and contextualisation of the Golden Urn and the *Lama shuo* (*Discourse on Lamas)* see Oidtmann 2018.

[182] The "great *mantrika*" Yönten Gyatso is named as the main tutor (*yongs 'dzin*) of the Fourth/Seventh Panchen Lama in the modern publication *Bod gangs can gyi grub*

Moving on from the *Yonghegong Corpus,* another notable Long Cloud King text from the first half of the 19th century is a short *torma*-offering authored by Khalkha Damtsik Dorjepal (Khal kha Dam tshig rdo rje'i dpal, 1781–1855). This text itself is cursory—three folios from Damtsik Dorjepal's *Collected Works* of some twenty-one volumes—so it should not be given undue weight,[183] but its significance lies in the elevated politico-religious status of its author. Damtsik Dorjepal, of Khalkha Mongol background, was a very senior figure in the Geluk church of the early 19th century. He served, at various points in his career, as tutor (*yongs 'dzin*) to both the Seventh Panchen Lama (discussed further below) and the Fifth Jetsun Dampa, who were the seniormost lamas of Tibet and Mongolia respectively. In this short *torma*-offering, the deity is addressed as the "Great *Nöjin* Long Cloud King" (*snod byin chen po sprin ring rgyal po*) and is visualised in wrathful tantric form "in the middle of an ocean of human and horse blood". The text also includes an interesting allusion to the reach of the cult of Lord Guan during this period, a reach envisaged as co-terminus with the Qing Empire itself at the height of its expansion in the post-Gorkha War period (fancifully including India):

> From all your abodes [shrines/temples] in India (*rgya gar*), China (*rgya nag*), Mongolia (*hor*), Xinjiang (*li yul*), Tibet (*gangs can*) and so on, Long Cloud King (Trinring Gyelpo) and entourage, please approach![184]

It is significant to note that in the "mature" phase of the cult of Trinring Gyelpo in the 19th century, the only text by a *Tibetan* (as opposed to Mongol) religious figure, is the atonement text (*bskang gso*) attributed to the Seventh Panchen Lobzang Palden Tenpé Nyima Choklé Namgyel (1782–1853). This was the Panchen Lama who had taken part (albeit as a child) in the consecration of the Guandi temple on Barmari in 1792 (section 3 above). After the death of the 8th Dalai Lama in 1804, this Panchen was to be the seniormost Tibetan Geluk lama for most of the first half of the 19th century, the period during which the Ganden Phodrang state was more firmly than ever before under the authority of the Qing imperium. The Seventh Panchen oversaw the recognition

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mtha' ris med kyi mkhas dbang brgya dang brgyad cu lhag gi gsung 'bum so so'i dkar chag phyogs gcig tu bsgrigs pa shes bya'i gter mdzod (W19837): vol. 2 (*bar cha*), 545.

183 *Sprin ring rgyal po'i gsol mchod*; Dam tshig rdo rje 200?: vol. 10, fol. 284–287. The colophon reads: *Ces rgyal ba'i bstan bsrung chen po mthu stobs nus pa'i mnga' bdag sprin ring rgyal po la mchod gtor phul te 'phrin las bcol ba'i tshigs su bcad pa mdor bsdus 'di ni / bstan* [.damaged.] *dpal mgon mtshungs med Il kog san mchog sprul rin po che'i zhal snga nas kyi bzhed dgongs bzhin / ban rgan bhu su ku pa / [ç] dam tshig rdo rje sbyar ba'i yi ge pa ni dge slong blo bzang tshe ring ngo //*; fol. 287.

184 *Ibid.*: 285.

and enthronement of no less than three sucessive Dalai Lamas.[185]

The 41-folio Long Cloud King *Ritual Service* (*bskang gso*) attributed to him is not included in his own *Collected Works,* but is found within the Trinring Gyelpo *Chökor* compiled by the Mongolian Lama Ilgugsan Lobzang Samdrup (see below) some time after his death. According to its colophon there, this text had in fact been requested from the Seventh Panchen by Ilgugsan himself.[186] As an elaborate ritual service text attributed to such a senior Tibetan figure, this text appears to have enjoyed a seminal status for Ilgugsan Lobzang Samdrup himself.

This work is also particularly notable because of the fact that each xylographed folio of the text (as found in Ilgugsan's *Chökor*) carries the marginal title *Ritual Service to Geser (Ge ser bskang gso*). This marginal title, carved into every folio block, constitutes the *only* explicit textual affirmation found by this author in the entire body of ritual texts devoted to the Long Cloud King, of the fact that this deity was habitually and pervasively known in Mongolian Geluk tradition by the name Geser.[187] However the text itself makes no mention of Gesar/Geser, indicating that this was a short-hand "nickname" for this text to "Geluk Gesar", rather than a formal assertion.

In the text, the deity is again summoned through self-identication with the wrathful *yidam* Vajrabhairava/Yamāntaka (Rdo rje 'jigs byed). It then includes sections on confession (*bshags pa*), *torma*-offering (*gtor 'bul*) and golden libation-offering (*gser skyems*). Here the identification of Trinring Gyelpo with Dzongtsen Shenpa is particularly emphasised, and we find Dzongtshen Shenpa's places of worship in

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185 Namely the Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Dalai Lamas, none of whom survived into maturity. The Seventh Panchen Lama, who was related by birth to his *guru* the Eighth Dalai Lama, presided over the Geluk church during the post-1792 period in which the Qing imperium sought to bring Tibetan politics in general and the Geluk church in particular more firmly under imperial dominion. At the emperor's request, this Panchen also briefly served as Regent of the Ganden Phodrang government in 1844–1845.

186 *Chos skyong sprin ring rgyal po'i gtor cho ga bskang gso cha lag tsang pa paN chen thams cad mkhyen pas mdzad pa*. Mongolian National Library: NL 10745–017 (41 folios). Included in the *Trinring Gyelpo Chökor*. The colophon states that the text was "written upon the request of Ilgugsan Lobzang Samdrup by the '*yogi* of Yamāntaka', Shakya *gelong* Lobzang Palden Tenpé Nyima Choklé Namgyel Pelzangpo" (*zhes pa 'di yang I la ke san ho thog thu blo bzang bsam grub pas bskul ngor / 'jam dpal gshin rje gshed kyi rnal 'byor pa [ʂ] shakya'i dge slong blo bzang dpal ldan bstan pa'i nyi ma phyogs las rnam rgyal dpal bzang pos sbyar ba'o //*; *ibid*.: fol. 26a. The text does not however appear to be included in the Seventh Panchen's *Collected Works* (*Gsung 'bum* W6205).

187 The marginal title "*ge ser bskang gso"* is engraved on every page. However, as with other Trinring Gyelpo texts, there is no mention in the body of the text itself of Geser/Gesar or any of his associated mythology. The text itself makes clear that the object of propitiation is unambiguously the Long Cloud King/Lord Guan.

central Tibet listed exhaustively. It is from these abodes—at Yarlung Shelgidrakphuk; the Lhatsenkhar of Chö, the Dzongri of Kyishö Drib; Puri Phukmoché; and Tsechendrak, in addition to "his many adamantine abodes in the great land of China"—that the Long Cloud King and entourage are summoned.[188]

It is unclear at what institutions in Tibet itself this *Ritual Service* was actually performed. But we do know that the Seventh Panchen's parallel text of propitiation for Drib Dzongtsen is still in use at Drib today, and that that text also includes a history of Lord Guan's Buddhist conversion.[189] It is perhaps notable that in a Tibetan popular-culture context, the name Shenpa (*shan pa*, "butcher") also lent the *cultus* of Dzongtsen Shenpa/Drib Dzongtsen a certain "Gesaric" tint, since the "Shenpa" are a prominent clan in the Gesar epic, and Shenpa Merutsé (Shan pa rme ru tse) is one of the Gesar epic's most prominent heroes.[190] However there is no evidence (so far encountered) that Dzongtsen Shenpa was ever explicitly identified as Gesar at his places of worship in central Tibet.

Notwithstanding this important text attributed to the Seventh Panchen, it is possible to discern from around the mid-19th century, an increasing divergence between the reception of the Long Cloud King as a Geluk protector-deity in Mongolia and in Tibet. From around the 1850s, textual production by Tibetan lamas concerning this figure seems to have ceased altogether, likely reflecting a weakening of Qing control there, while in the same period Long Cloud King texts continued to become more numerous in Mongolia. In particular, from the mid-19th century, Tibetan-language rituals devoted to this deity are universally associated with a single individual, namely the western Mongolian Geluk incarnation Ilgugsan Hutuktu Lobzang Samdrup (Il kog san Hu thog thu Blo bzang bsam grub, 1820–1882), who was also instrumental it seems in commissioning the aforementioned Panchen

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188 *yar lung shel gyi brag phug / 'phyos kyi lha btsan mkhar / skyid shod grib kyi rdzong ri / kong po bu chu lha khang / spu ri phug mo che/ rtse chen brag / khyad par ma ha tsi na'i yul gru chen po sogs gar bzhugs rdo rje'i pho brang so so nas rgyal ba'i bstan srung chen po khams gsum bdud 'dul sprin ring rgyal po 'khor dang bcas pa skad cig gis gnas 'dir spyan drangs*; NL 10745–017: fol. 5a.

189 *Dus gsum rgyal ba'i bstan bsrung srid gsum skye 'gro'i srog bdag mthu stobs yongs kyi bdag po kog ma grib btsan rdo rje mchog rgod rtsal gyi gtor chog cha tshang 'phrin las rnam bzhi'i rin chen 'dren pa'i shing rta* (17 folios). Included as an appendix in Jiayang Pincuo 2016: 189–193. This text is likewise not found in the Seventh Panchen's *Collected Works*.

190 In the Gesar epic (as for example in the *Hor gling g.yul 'gyed* authored c. 1730s), Shenpa Merutse (Shan/bshan pa rme ru tse) is the formidable minister of the Hor King, responsible for killing Gesar's brother Gyatsa (Rgya tsha zhal dkar). He then comes over to the side of Ling and becomes one of the most prominent of Gesar's "thirty warriors" (*dpa' rtul sum cu*).

Lama *Ritual Service*, which he took as a template for his further elaborations.

It was through the inspiration of this Ilgugsan Lobzang Samdrup—who himself had strong links to the Qing imperial administration at Uliastai in western Mongolia—[191]that the Long Cloud King became the focus of a voluminous tantric ritual cycle or *chökor* (*chos skor*), along with masked dance (*'cham*). All of the texts treated below were either authored by this Ilgugsan Hutuktu or requested by him from his teachers, who included some of the most prestigious figures of 19th century Geluk tradition. Ilgugsan Lobzang Samdrup's own prolific production of diverse rituals for the Long Cloud King, as revealed in this *chökor*, constitutes a significant and historic contribution of Mongolian Buddhism to the Geluk tradition,[192] which has recently been republished in Ulaan Baatur and distributed to Geluk monasteries across Mongolia by the contemporary Amgalan Lama of Ganden Tekchenling.[193]

It seems that during Ilgugsan's own life, the popular identification

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[191] A temple to Trinring Gyelpo located at the very centre of the Qing fort at Uliastai, was, according to Pozdeyev's 1892 testimony, known by the Mongols as the "temple of Geser"; Pozdneyev (trans. Shaw and Plank) 1971: 160. On the Ilgugsan incarnation lineage and its powerful status in the Uliastai region during the 19th century, as well as an account of the monastery and "Geser" temple built at Ideriin goul, see *ibid*.: 248–255. Also, a scan of a 75-folio Tibetan-language biography of this Ilgugsan Hutuktu, *Hu thog thu rje btsun blo bzang bsam grub dpal bzang po'i rnam thar nor bu'i 'phreng ba*, henceforth the *Jewel Rosary*, was kindly given to the author by Amgalan Lama at Ganden Tekchenling Monastery, Ulaan Baatar, in August 2018. A Mongolian translation of this biography is also included as a preface to his one-volume *dpe cha* edition of the *Trinring Gyelpo Chökor*. This biography indicates that the great "*amban* Pei-si of Uliastai" (western Mongolia) was an instrumental figure in the recognition of this *tulku*; *Jewel Rosary*: fol. 15b. According to the biography, the young Ilgugsan Hutuktu's devotion to Lord Guan began when he was seven. He wrote his first text on the deity (a "history" based on that of Tukwan) at the age of eleven; *Jewel Rosary:* fol. 19a.

[192] *Dus gsum rgyal ba'i bstan bsrung srid gsum skye 'gro srog bdag khams gsum bdud 'dul sprin ring rgyal po'i bsnyen sgrub las gsum gyi rnam bzhag dam nyams srog 'phrog ha la nag po dug gi spu gri. "The Poison Sword of Hala Nakpo: presentations of the approach, accomplishment and [ritual] activities for the Victorious Dharma Protector of the Three Times, Life-Lord of Beings of the Three Worlds Khamsum Dündül Trinring Gyelpo, Slayer of Vow-Violators".* Henceforth, and listed in the bibliography as *Trinring Gyelpo Chökor*. 107 texts compiled into two volumes, held at Mongolian National Library, Ulaan Baatar. The existence of Ilgugsan's *chökor* was noted by both RA Stein (Stein 1959: 33) and Lokesh Chandra (Chandra 1963: 44–46) though neither of them were able to consult it directly. It was however consulted by the Mongolian scholar Tseten Damdinsuren, who used it to illustrate the difference in identities between Guandi and Geser; Damdinsuren 1957: 15–30. On Ilgugsan Lobzang Samdrup's wider contribution to Mongolian Geluk tradition, see Chandra 1963: 44–46.

[193] For details of this modern *dpe cha* republication, see the bibliography entry under *Trinring Gyelpo Chökor*. The author would like to thank Amgalan Lama for giving him a personal copy of this publication during a visit to Ulaan Baatar in August 2018.

of the Long Cloud King/Trinring Gyelpo with Geser was widely accepted in Mongolia, and that this was not only tolerated but even encouraged by Lobzang Samdrup himself, who appears to have been known and remembered as the "Geser Lama". However, in keeping with the silence of the Geluk textual tradition on the parallel Tibetan and Mongolian epic folklore concerning the figure of Gesar/Geser, Ilgugsan's writings on Trinring Gyelpo likewise shun all mentions or allusions to this figure, and instead formally ground the identity of the deity being propitiated firmly on Lord Guan (and in particular on Tukwan's treatment of him).[194] This Geluk disdain for the epic and

[194] Ilgugsan, in all his voluminous writings on the Long Cloud King/Trinring Gyelpo, never explicitly alluded to Geser in his texts or addressed the subject of Geser as a folkloric figure alternative to Lord Guan. However this issue is addressed in two texts ancilliary to *chökor*, both presumably written sometime after his death (in 1880) by his disciples. These are a) the *Table of Contents* (full title: *Dus gsum rgyal ba'i bstan srung srid gsum skye 'gro'i srog bdag chen po sprul gzhi beg tse lcam sring dang de'i rnam 'gyur khams gsum bdud 'dul sprin ring rgyal po'i chos skor gyi dkar chag gsal byed sgron me* NL 10746–049 (45 folios); and b) his biography, the *Jewel Rosary* (full title: *Hu thog thu rje btsun blo bzang bsam grub dpal bzang po'i rnam thar nor bu'i 'phreng ba zhes bya ba bzhugs so*. Both of these texts give paraphrased citations from Tukwan's biography of Chankya Rölpé Dorjé as the authoritative basis on which the epic folkore of Geser/Gesar was rejected as a basis for this deity. The *Contents* states: "as for those three or four volumes of Gesar tales or history that are widespread these days in Amdo, they are, like the all-knowing Changkya said, and as is stated in his biography, just the false inventions of talented poets. So they are not included here" (*Yang a mdo phyogs su dar ba'i ge ser gyi sgrung ngam lo rgyus po ti gsum bzhi yod pa de ni snyan dngag* [sic] *mkhan zhig gis blo bzor byas pa'i brdzus* [sic.] *ma yin par lcang skya thams cad mkhyen pa'i zhal nas gsungs tshul de'i rnam thar du byung bas 'dir ma bkod*); *Contents*: fol. 10b. Much the same point is made in the biography: "The three or four volumes of songs and tales of Gesar which are spread in the Amdo region these days are just the creations of a skilled poet. In the biography (*Beautiful Ornament of the Teachings*) of the all-knowing Changkya Rölpé Dorjé, it is stated that he said 'the stories told of Geser these days are false, I have a reliable one which I can tell.' As such even the period in which Geser lived is not settled" (*Deng sang a mdo phyogs nas dar pa'i ge ser sgrung glu'i dpe pod gsum bzhi tsam yod pa 'di ni snyam dngags* [sic] *mkhan zhig gis rtog bzor byas pa yin te / lcang skya thams cad mkhyen pa rol pa'i rdo rje'i rnam thar thub bstan mdzes rgyan las / deng sang gi ge ser kyi sgrung gtam 'di brdzun ma yin / kho bo la yid ches khungs ldan zhig bshad rgyu yod gsungs zhes byung ba bzhin dang / ge ser ces pa de byung ba'i dus yang mi 'grigs pas so*); *Jewel Rosary*: fol. 19b. For comparison, the actual quotation from Tukwan's biography of Changkya is as follows: "He [Changkya} was heard to say that 'the many Gesar tales told these days are mostly just false made-up stories. I have an authoritative version not mixed with falsehoods which I can tell'": *Ge sar sgrung 'di la deng sang mang po zhig shod gi 'dug pa phal che bar tog btags kyi rdzun gtam kho nar 'dug / nged la rdzun gtam ma 'dres ba'i khungs ma zhig bshad rgyu yod de zhes gsungs pa thos so* / Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989: 689. It is not clear what this "authoritative" version refers to. One possibility is that it refers to the classic Mongolian literary version of the Geser epic *Arban ĵü-ün eĵen Geser qagan-u toguji* xylographed in Beijing in 1716, perhaps under the oversight of Changkya's incarna-

folkloric traditions concerning the "Epic Geser/Gesar" in both Mongolia and in Tibet, is justified in Ilgugsan's biography by deferring to Changkya Rölpé Dorjé. This disdain appears to have been shared by other senior Geluk luminaries of the time. For example Sumpa Khenpo's apparent disdain for the figure of Geser/Gesar has been observed by Damdinsuren.[195] However such a disdain is not entirely borne out by Sumpa's comments on the subject of Gesar in his letters to the Sixth Panchen Lobzang Palden Yeshé, which are well-researched and also indicate a clear awareness of the distinct folkloric identity of Ling Gesar as entirely distinct from Lord Guan.[196]

Ilgugsan's rituals for Trinring Gyelpo, as a kind of "Geluk Geser" enjoyed considerable patronage and dissemination in Mongolia. Ilgugsan's masked dances (*'cham*) centring on the deity for example, were instituted by the Fifth Jetsun Dampa at the Tashi Samtenling tantric college (Bkra shis bsam gtan gling grwa tshang) at Maimatchen (Chinese commercial district) just east of Khuree (modern Ulaan Baatar) at some time after 1841.[197] Two statues of the deity were housed at

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tion-predecessor. But this is not how the authors of the *Contents* and the *Jewel Rosary* seem to interpret it. Rather, the implication in those sources is that the "reliable" or "authoritative" version of Geser/Gesar refers simply to the legends of Guan Yu and his conversion into Buddhist *dharma*-protector. Damdinsuren also notes that in his biography of Changkya Rölpé Dorjé, Tukwan reports him expressing disdain for the current vogue of writing religious biographies (*rnam thar*) "in the style of Gesar legends", telling of "victories over enemies and the protection of blood-relatives". Such tales, he says, are "useless bragging [lit. 'raven's songs']"; Damdinsuren 1955: 59, citing Tukwan's *rnam thar* of Chankya Rölpé Dorjé, vol. 2 fol. 229.

195 Damdinsuren cites the longer version of Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor's autobiography, in which he says that the tales of Gesar "spread across China, Mongolia and Tibet" are "interlaced with the false traditions of heretics" (*mu stegs rig byed pa'i gtam brgyud lta bu'i rdzun phreng bsgrigs nas*); Damdinsuren 1955: 59; Damdinsuren 1957: 169 (citing Sumpa's autobiography, the *Sgra 'dzin bcud len* fol. 6). Damdinsuren might be over-stating the case, since in his letters to the Sixth Panchen Lama on the subject of Gesar, Sumpa Khenpo is not roundly dismissive of the Gesar tradition, and indeed is quite knowledgeable about it. Sumpa is however dismissive in those letters about claims to Gesar's divinity. He says "In China, Tibet and Mongolia (*hor*), the stories of Gesar are told in poetic fictionalised ways, but he seems to have been an ordinary person, as it is hard to rely on the many competing accounts saying that he is this or that emanation, so it is rather hard to make a considered judgement about whether he was an ordinary person or an incarnation"; FitzHerbert 2015, citing Sum-pa's *Gsung 'bum*, vol. *nya,* fol. 197.

196 *Ibid*. Sumpa's extensive comments on the identity of Ling Gesar and local legends about him gleaned first-hand from "elders in Dergé", make no mention of Lord Guan/Trinring Gyelpo, or of the assocation between the two figures.

197 "at the age of 22, in the Iron Ox year (1841), he staged the new dance (*gar 'cham*) which he had composed for the Dharma protectors Bektsé and Long Cloud King for the great Fifth Jetsun Dampa, [26a] and [the Jetsun Dampa] said that his new *'cham* for these protectors was excellent […] and he had it instituted at the *grwa*

this temple which were locally known as images of "Geser Khan" in his peaceful and wrathful forms.[198] And this tantric college itself, famed for these dances,[199] came to be known colloquially as the Geser Dratsang (Mo. *geser dačang*; Tib. *ge ser grwa tshang*).[200] This gives a clear indication that in Mongolian Geluk tradition, "Geser" simply meant the Trinring Gyelpo/Long Cloud King, and Trinring Gyelpo in turn, as the texts unequivocally show, was Lord Guan, and had nothing to do with Ling Gesar/Geser or the "Epic Geser".

Before returning this discussion to how this *cultus* was to evolve somewhat separately in Tibet from the latter half of the 19th century, a brief summary is first given of how these Ilgugsan rituals for Trinring Gyelpo were elaborated and expanded for Mongolian Geluk tradition.

While the vast majority of the 107 texts in the two volumes of the *Trinring Gyelpo Chökor* were authored by Ilgugsan Lobzang Samdrup himself, the corpus also includes a number of associated texts. These include a number of tantric texts for Jamsring-Bektsé,[201] as well as Trinring Gyelpo texts requested from Ilgugsan's teachers, a few of which

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tshang": *dgung lo nyer gnyis dus su / lcags mo glang lor [ʂ] mi dbang chen po ratra shar nas rje btsun dam pa lnga ba chen por chos skyong beg tshe dang sprin ring rgyal po gnyis kyi gar 'cham gsar du sgrigs nas 'dzugs chog pa'i snyan zhu phul bar/* [26a] *bka' las / chos skyong 'di gnyis kyi 'cham gsar bsgrigs pa shin tu legs /* […][26b] *gsar rtsom byas te gar 'cham legs par bsgrigs nas grwa tshang tshugs par mdzad do //;* in *Jewel Rosary:* fol. 25b–26b.

198 Rintchen 1958: 8.

199 This "theatre" is for example mentioned by Pozdneyev, based on his observations in 1892; Pozdneyev (trans. Shaw and Plank) 1971: 87. This temple is now under the care of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) in Mongolia and has been re-purposed as a Buddhist convent named Drolma Ling (*sgrol ma gling*). All that remains today of its Qing dynasty heritage are two tall pillars inscribed with the Chinese characters 大发慈悲救万苦 (*da fa ci bei jiu wan ku*; "May great compassion save all suffering beings").

200 Rintchen 1958: 8. Bambyn Rintchen's 1958 article "En marge du culte de Guesser khan en Mongolie" is an article about the Long Cloud King/Lord Guan as the Geluk Geser. Throughout this article, no distinction is made between Geser and Lord Guan. The avowed aim of Rintchen's article was to challenge the assertions of N. Poppe and especially T. Damdinsuren, who had asserted that the figure of Geser was frowned upon by Geluk tradition, which he denies vehemently by pointing to the flourishing Geluk cult of Geser. Rintchen seems to have completely missed, or willfully misunderstood, the cogent arguments of Damdinsuren (1957: 15–30) that Geser and Guandi are distinct folkloric and cultic figures.

201 Such as *The Liberating Butcher Tantra of Wrathful Mantras of the Red Lord of Life/Srog bdag dmar po'i drag sngags bshan pa sgrol byed kyi rgyud* (NL 10745–001) attributed to a lineage through Marpa; and the *Tantra of Firing the Red Blood-Arrow/Dmar mo khrag gi mda' 'phen ma'i rgyud* (NL 10745–002), also attributed to a lineage through Marpa. However, Nebesky-Wojkowitz says the association between this tantra and Marpa was probably a later construction; Nebesky-Wojkowitz [1956] 1998: 88–89.

have been outlined above (namely those by Khalkha Damstik Dorjé, the Seventh Panchen, and the Fifth Jetsün Dampa, all of whom were among his own teachers).

As for the voluminous texts authored by Ilgugsan himself, the *Chökor* contains no less than five "histories" (*lo rgyus*) of Trinring Gyelpo,[202] none of which, in keeping with tradition, make any mention of or allusion to Geser/Gesar at all, and instead closely follow (and elaborate upon) the treatment of Lord Guan by Tukwan. Ilgugsan's mature "history" is his 21-folio *Authentic History of the Protector of the Teachings Victor of the Three Times, Life-Lord in the Three Planes of Existence, Khamsum Dündül Trinring Gyelpo*[203] (henceforth *Authentic History*). Here, drawing on a range of authoritative textual sources,[204] Ilgugsan creatively re-elaborates the mythic backstory, and for the first time brings into a single narrative the myths of Yamshud Marpo (Yam shud dmar po)-Jamsring-Bektsé; Guan Yu; and Dzongtsen Shenpa.

First, he relates an origin-myth for Yamshud Marpo-Jamsring-Bektsé based on the account of Lelung Zhepé Dorjé, in which an apostate younger brother of the Buddha Śakyamuni goes through a series of horrific rebirths, including as Yamshud Marpo, a "speech emanation of Yamāntaka" born from a *sé* (*bse*) egg as the offspring of Wangchuk Chenpo (Śiva) and Ekajati, who by mating with his sister, creates a *damsi* (*dam sri*, harmful spirit) which haunts the land of China (as previously alluded to in Tukwan's *Dragon's Roar*). Ilgugsan then identifies this *damsi* with the story of Guan Yu's afterlife as a spirit haunting the Zhang-ling mountain in Sichuan, and his subsequent

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202 1. *Dbang phyugs maha tsi na'i dgra lha chen po khams gsum bdud 'dul sprin ring rgyal po'i la mchod gtor 'bul tshul 'phrin las char rgyun bskul pa'i 'brug sgra / The Dragon's Roar (Thunder) which Summons a Continuous Rain of Enlightened Action* (NL 10745–007). This is the only "history" contained in the one-volume Amgalan Lama edition of the *chökor* (text 16). The history section of this text (fols. 1b–8a) follows that of Tukwan's very closely which it also echoes in its title; 2. *Khams gsum bdud 'dul sprin ring rgyal po'i yid ches pa'i 'byung khungs gsal bshad blo gsar dga' bskyed* (NL10745–023) by D'a ri dra Snang mdzad rdo rje (11 folios); 3. *Dus gsum rgyal ba'i bstan srung srid gsum skye 'gro'i srog bdag khams gsum bdud 'dul sprin ring rgyal po'i khungs thub kyi lo rgyus* / the*"Authentic History"* (NL10745–024) discussed here as Ilgugsan's "masterwork"' on the deity's history (21 folios); 4. *Khams gsum bdud 'dul sprin ring rgyal po'i lo rgyus kyi sur rgyan* / (NL10745–025) "additional notes" on the deity's history (14 folios); and 5. *Sprin ring rgyal po'i rgyus kyi skabs su nye bar mkho ba 'ga' zhig* (NL10745–026) which adds "a few important points" relating to the history (25 folios).

203 The *"Authentic History": Dus gsum rgyal ba'i btsan bsrung srid gsum skye 'gro'i srog bdag khams gsum bdud 'dul sprin ring rgyal po'i khungs thub kyi lo rgyus* (NL 10745–024).

204 Namely "*dpe cha*s by successive incarnations of the Panchen Lama; the Great Fifth Dalai Lama's *Rnams kyi gangs sgros*; Lelung Zhepé Dorjé's *Dam can rgya mtsho*; Lord Ngawang Jampa's *Bka' bsgyur gyi dkar chag;* Tukwan's *Bkwan lo ye'i gsol mchod*; the *Rgya nag chos 'byung,* and so on"; *Authentic History*: fol. 2b.

conversion into a *dharma*-protector, who is then brought to Tibet in the time of Songtsen Gampo by the Chinese princess Wenchang Kongjo. The mythic backstory is considerably more complex than this however, and other issues are also raised such as the assertion by the "all-knowing Panchen" that he was a "mind-manifestation of Hayagrīva" as well as a "speech-manifestation of Yamāntaka".[205]

To give some idea of the breadth and scope of Ilgugsan's *Trinring Gyelpo Chökor*, the following is a summary of the types of rituals it includes, based on the contents (*dkar chag*) of the one-volume (i.e. shortened) collection published recently at Gandentekchenling.[206] This shorter collection of the *Chökor* (which excludes for example the texts on masked dances), includes rituals centring on the Long Cloud King for a wide variety of worldly goals, ranging from summoning good fortune to violent rituals of repelling:

- praise (*mngon rtogs, bstod pa*);
- smoke-offering (*bsang mchod*);
- *torma* offering (*gtor 'bul*);
- fire-offering (*sbyin sreg*);
- libation-offering (*gser skyems*);
- ritual service (*bskang ba*);
- confession (*bshags*);
- how to set up "supports", such as military banners (*ru mtshon*) (*rten 'dzugs pa*);
- protection (*bsrung*);
- repelling *(bzlog pa*);
- rallying protector deities and expelling harm through sense objects (*mdos*);
- summoning good-fortune (*g.yang 'bod/phya g.yang 'gugs*);
- guru-yoga (*bla ma'i rnal 'byor*);
- spreading auspiciousness and good signs (*bkra shis dge mtshan 'phel ba*);
- preparing butter lamps (*mar me*);
- divination with dice (*sho mo*);
- deploying the ritual dagger (*phur bu*);
- feast offering (*tshogs mchod*);
- deploying *mantra*s;
- protecting travellers (*bka' bsgo*);
- preparing holy water (*snying chu bsres pa*).

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[205] *Ibid.*: fol. 5a–6b.

[206] See bibliography under *Long Cloud King Chökor*.

Ilgugsan's *Chökor* illustrates the degree to which the cult of Trinring Gyelpo as the "Geluk Geser" became an integral part of Mongolian Geluk tradition.

No more will be said here of this elaborate ritual corpus though it certainly merits further attention. For the purpose of this article, it is significant to observe from a historian's point of view, that Ilgugsan's elaboration of a Mongolian Geluk cult for Lord Guan as a kind of "Geluk Geser" mirrors very closely the near-contemporaneous efflorescence in Chinese "spirit-writing" on Lord Guan in China proper.[207] By contrast, one sees no parallel development of this cult of Trinring Gyelpo in Tibet. What one does see however, is the development, especially from the last decades of the 19th century and particularly under the inspiration of the Nyingmapa luminary Ju Mipham ('Ju mi pham Rnam rgyal rgya mtsho, 1846–1912) in eastern Tibet, of a burgeoning ritual corpus devoted to Ling Gesar, likewise presented as a "king of the war gods" (*dgra bla'i rgyal po*), but here modelled not on Lord Guan, but rather on the "Epic Gesar" celebrated in popular oral and literary tradition and folklore, but assiduously ignored by Geluk tradition as illustrated above. It is to this that we shall now turn.

5. The Ling Gesar Superscription: A Divergence between Mongolia and Tibet?

The above discussion has illustrated that in Mongolian Geluk Buddhism from the mid-19th century, the name "Geser" was being used primarily and prominently to signify the Geluk apotheosis of Lord Guan. The quite separate mythology and legends of Geser/Gesar, as expressed through largely secular folk epic traditions in both Tibet (especially eastern Tibet) and Mongolia, and reflected in a large number of epic texts from the 18th and 19th centuries,[208] were assiduously ignored. In the Tibetan regions however, one discerns a rather different

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[207] Goossaert 2015.

[208] As noted earlier, the classic Mongolian-language literary version of the Geser epic, *Arban ĵü-ün eĵen Geser qagan-u toguji*, had been xylographed in Beijing in 1716 under the sponsorship of the Kangxi Emperor. As suggested by the researches of Heissig, this classic version served as a bedrock for ongoing Mongolian oral traditions thereafter. In Tibetan, among the earliest Gesar epic texts are the *Stag gzig nor 'gyed* attributed to Dzogtrül Padma Rigzin (Rdzogs sprul Padma rig 'dzin, 1625–1697); and the classic *Hor gling g.yul 'gyed* authored by the Dergé *zhabdrung* Ngawang Tenzin Phüntsok (Sde dge zhabs drung Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin phun tshogs) during the reign of Pholhané (i.e. between 1728 and 1747). These Tibetan works represent a mature and explicitly Buddhist Gesar folkloric tradition which displays no influence from the Lord Guan mythology or its associated cult.

trajectory. There, rather than the Long Cloud King (as a form of Lord Guan) subsuming Geser, we see instead the folkloric figure of Gesar ("Epic Gesar") coming to subsume and overgrow the identity of Lord Guan.

In Tibet, although the Chinese divinatory custom of "drawing lots" in front of the idol based on Lord Guan divinatory manuals translated from Chinese into Tibetan, did continue to be the main popular practice at the various "Chinese" garrisons temples in Lhasa (especially at Barmari and Trapchi), Shigatsé and elsewhere right up to the mid 20th century,[209] beyond this, the ritual cult of Trinring Gyelpo does not appear to have achieved any significant traction in Tibetan culture. And from around the 1850s the "Chinese" identity of this deity appears to have fallen further into obscurity. The Seventh Panchen's *Ritual Service* for this deity was not included in his *Collected Works*, and after his death (1853) no further senior Tibetan lamas championed the cause. This again mirrored developments in the military field. As the Qing's centralised grip on its military institutions in Tibet gradually weakened over this period, one discerns an increasing (albeit incomplete and never formally enshrined) subsuming of the Lord Guan idols worshipped at the Qing garrison temples under the identity of the Tibetan "Epic Gesar" who was undergoing his own parallel apotheosis in the same period, in the hands of non-Geluk masters, mostly from Kham.[210] One is tempted to link this speculatively to the increasing dominance of the Tibetan army—which one might assume included significant numbers of Khampa soldiers—over the (neglected) imperial soldiers stationed at the various garrison outposts in Tibet.

There is also evidence from the mid-19th century that the informal superscription of Lord Guan as "Gesar" at the garrison-temples themselves became ever-more coloured by explicit evocations of the folkloric legacies of *Ling* Gesar (or the "Epic Gesar"), despite the fact that such associations, as we have seen above, were carefully eschewed by those Geluk dignitaries who authored ritual texts for the deity.

The clearest evidence of this is the detailed illustration of the interior of the Barmari temple made in 1856/1857 by "a monk from Lassa", which constitutes part of the *Wise Collection* at the British Library recently studied extensively by Diana Lange.[211]

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[209] As discussed at length in the monograph of Prof. Jamyang Phüntsok (Jiayang Pincuo); Pincuo 2016.

[210] On the parallel apotheosis of Ling Gesar as a Buddhist deity during the late 19th century, see FitzHerbert 2017; for a fuller treatment see Forgues 2011.

[211] See Diana Lange's contribution to the present volume and Lange forthcoming. These illustrations were made by a Tibetan monk, who appears to have been of a Nyingmapa persuasion, who had travelled alone from Lhasa to northern India where he was requested to make them by the British District Commissioner of

Fig. 6. The interior of the Barmari temple at Lhasa as depicted in the c. 1856 illustration accompanying the "Wise Map". British Library Add. Or. 3027. © British Library Board.

Indicating the political importance of this temple as a *locus* for diplomatic ceremonies at which high-ranking members of the Ganden Phodrang government expressed loyalty to the Qing imperium, the illustration (see Fig. 6) depicts the two *ambans* along with other Manchu

Kullu, Edmund Hay. The notes accompanying these images were made by Hay himself on the basis of oral information supplied by the artist.

and Han Chinese military and civilian officials[212] paying obeisance there together with the top-ranking officials of the Tibetan government.[213] The iconography of the temple in the illustration is clearly Chinese, and there are several plaques inscribed with Chinese characters.[214] However, what is of particular interest for the present discussion, are the detailed notes which accompanied this illustration, in which the main idol is identified as Gesar ("Gésirr Gyalpo"),[215] and the subsidiary statues are also identified with specific figures drawn from the eastern Tibetan epic tradition of Ling Gesar. For example the statue left of the central idol (no. 2) is identified as "Gyachashilkur" (i.e. Rgya tsha zhal dkar, Gesar's half-brother in the epic tradition); the one on the right (no. 3) as "Akū Thōtūm" (i.e. A khu khro thung, Gesar's mischievous uncle); no. 4 as "Kālun Durma Chungta" (i.e. Bka' blon 'dan ma spyang khra Gesar's loyal minister); and nos. 5, 6 and 7 as other

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212 The notes accompanying the illustration identify nos. 11 and 12 as the two "Chinese Ambas" (*ambans*); no. 14 as the "Phōkpun" (*phog dpon*) or military paymaster; nos. 13 and 15 as military officers with the Chinese titles "Tāloyé" (*da lao ye?*) and Sōngyé respectively; and nos. 16 and 17 as "Chākōché" and "Pichinché" respectively. On the meaning of these terms see Diana Lange's contribution to the present volume; British Library Add. Or. 3027, note 7.

213 No. 8 is identified as the "Gyelpo Rating" (*rgyal po rwa sgreng*) or Reting Regent; no. 9 as the "Chikyub Kenbo" (*spyi khyab mkhan po*) a very senior-ranking monk official in the Tibetan government; no. 10 as the "Gyalyub" (*rgyal yab*) or Dalai Lama's father; and nos. 19–22 as the "four Lassa kālūn" (*bka' blon*) or cabinet ministers of the Ganden Phodrang. The notes further state that "on the first day of every month they go to worship at this temple"; *ibid*.

214 The "Chinese" characters are however indecipherable since the monk who made the drawings did not know Chinese. The notes accompanying the drawing state that the blue plaque in front of the main altar was "in two languages, Chinese and Tibetan" and that it carried "the name of Chinese emperor in whose reign the temple was erected" (i.e. Qianlong). The Tibetan words, it says, read "Namgilāh Juméyung Kōngma Dākpō Chenpō", i.e. *gnam gyi lha 'jam dpal dbyangs gong ma bdag po chen po* or "God of Heaven, Great Lord Manjusri Emperor"; British Library Add. Or. 3027, note 7.

215 The central statue is also identified as "Zhāng", which might be interpreted in a number of ways. In Tibetan *zhang* means "maternal uncle" and was a familial epithet sometimes used of the emperors of China since the Tang dynasty. It could thus refer to Lord Guan as the "uncle" emperor. Another possibility is that it is shorthand for "Guan Yun*zhang*", Guan Yu's courtesy name which was rendered into Tibetan by Changkya Rinpoché as Trinring Gyelpo (Sprin ring rgyal po) or "Long Cloud King". Another possibility is that by the 1850s there was a confusion or conflation between Guandi and the other prominent Chinese deity Wenchang/Wenzhang (文昌), often characterised as the god of literature. Guandi in his Confucian embodiment was also considered an idol of education and in his peaceful form was often depicted reading from a scroll (Pallas describes this form at the Miamatchen garrison temple in Kiatka for example). The identities of Guandi and Wenchang could thus easily be confused, especially by Tibetans unfamiliar with Chinese iconography. One finds this uncertainty also with regard to Chinese temples in Amdo; see Buffetrille 2002.

prominent figures from Gesar's *comitatus* of "thirty warriors" namely "Chūikyong Pélnā" (Chos skyong ber nag), Singtākādum (Seng stag a dom), and Nyatsa Aten (Nya tsha a brtan).[216] The significance of this, is that here we have "Gesar" being more than just a superficial nickname or cipher for Lord Guan. Instead, we have an explicit and datable textual attestation of a wider superscription of the folkloric identity of Ling Gesar (or "Epic Gesar") onto the figure of Lord Guan.

Other evidence from central Tibet in the second half of the 19th century affirms this wider superscription also at the garrison temple at Shigatsé. This can be seen in the observations of the (British-employed) Indian *pundit* Sarat Chandra Das who visited Shigatsé in 1879. In Das' relatively detailed account of the garrison area, he describes the "Qesar Lha-khang" there, and although his description of the temple—its layout and iconography—clearly indicates that he was observing a Lord Guan temple in Chinese style, he makes no mention at all of Lord Guan or Trinring Gyelpo.

Instead, Das' identification of this place (based on local informants),[217] was as a pre-historic ruined Gesar fortress ("Qesar Jong")[218] with a "Qesar Lha-khang" in the middle. And based on information gleaned from the "old Ani" (nun) looking after the place, he identified aspects of the temple's iconography with the Tibetan folklore concern-

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[216] Excerpts from Tibetan Gesar epic texts describing each one of these heroes can be found in Gcod pa don grub and Bsod los (eds.) 1996. On Rgya tsha zhal dkar: 7–9; A khu Khro thung: 12–17; Chos skyong ber nag: 33–35; Ldan ma spyang khra (or byang khra, both spellings are used): 25–29; Nya tsha a brtan: 32–33.

[217] Das was a Tibetan-speaker with no knowledge of Chinese. In the absence of the "Captain and Lieutenant of the Militia" who he said "had lately gone to Lassa on business", Das was reliant on the information of his Tibetan companions; Das 1881: 39, 42–43. The author is grateful to Diana Lange for bringing this source to his attention.

[218] The identification of half-forgotten ruins in the landscape with Gesar's legendary campaigns is a phenomenon one finds across the Tibetan plateau from Ladakh to Kokonor. Indeed, local legends relating ruins and other landmarks to Gesar's heroic adventures and magical feats, provide a significant source of inspiration for the ever-fluid Gesar epic's *raconteurs* in all of the regions in which his epic is told. Das also noted the "vulgar belief that it was built by the Tartar general of the Emperor Kanghi [sic, Kangxi]", and observed "several Chinese houses and the Captain's quarters" nearby. He also observed "a large isolated fireplace with a central chimney" in the main courtyard where "a few Chinamen were preparing pastries". "In the front room" (i.e. doorway chapels) he describes "statues of the two favourite horses of the king, fully equipped for war, and each held by two grooms". The main idols were a set of five seated figures, with the central icon by far the largest, which were set against the northern wall. The main idol is described as a "gigantic statue […] in a sitting posture with a terrifying countenance"; Das 1881: 43. All of these features are consonant with the general layout of Lord Guan temples of the time.

ing the epic of Ling Gesar. For example, "in the two wings of the building were placed statues of the captive kings of Hor-Jung and other countries" (Hor and 'Jang being two of the prominent campaigns in the Tibetan Gesar epic).[219] It is worth noting that this apparent indigenisation of the Lord Guan temple also appears to have been mirrored by a certain indigenisation of the imperial troops themselves stationed there, many of whom, he said, had taken local wives.[220]

Admittedly, such local identifications of the iconography of Lord Guan and his associates with "Epic Gesar" figures at the Chinese temples at Lhasa and Shigatsé was not unique to Tibet, and we do find a similar phenomenon in the Mongolian regions even as early as the 1770s, as attested to by the diary of Pallas, and that of Pozdeyev in the late 19th century.[221] However the difference seems to be that in Tibet, there was no parallel acceptance of Trinring Gyelpo/Lord Guan as the object of his own elaborated ritual cult.

Possibly relevant to this increasing obscuration of Lord Guan's identity at Qing garrison temples in central Tibet, we also see, from the late 19th century, the development in eastern Tibet of a growing corpus of Buddhist rituals centred on the figure of Ling Gesar. The eastern Tibetan apotheosis of "Epic Gesar" or Ling Gesar as a protective deity in the class of "warrior deities" (*dgra lha*) appears have grown out of popular tradition, and the earliest formal ritual texts for this deity seem to date from the 17th century.[222] But as shown in the studies of Gregory Forgues, it was from the late 19th century, and especially in the Kham region, that this deity was hugely elaborated and elevated as the formal object of Buddhist ritual.[223]

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[219] *Ibid.*: 43

[220] "We did not see any Chinese women here. On account of the great distance of this country from China, the wives of the Chinese soldiers and officers do not accompany them, in consequence of which they keep Tibetan concubines […] the Tibetan concubines of the Chinese soldiers prepare pastry and biscuits for sale in the bazar"; *ibid.*

[221] In addition to his account of Lord Guan/"Geser" temples at Sair usu, Uliastai, Kalgan Mai-mai-'cheng, Hsia-p'u and Urga, Podzneyev, in his 1892 diary, also described in some detail the five main icons in the Chinese "Geser" (i.e. Lord Guan) temple at the "Mai-mai-che'eng" (Chinese commercial centre) of Kobdo, the main temple of which he describes as "one of the best in Mongolia"; Pozdneyev (trans. Shaw and Plank) 1971: 213.

[222] See FitzHerbert 2016.

[223] A two-volume compendium of Tibetan ritual texts devoted to Ling Gesar, the majority of which have their origins in 19th century Kham, was published in *dpe cha* format in India in 1971: Don brgyud nyi ma (ed.) 1971. The authors of the texts of this collection include many of the most celebrated lamas associated with the 19th century *rimé* (*ris med*, non-sectarian) revival: the fifth Khamtrül Drupgyü Nyima (Khams sprul lnga pa Sgrub brgyud nyi ma, 1781–1847); Do Khyentsé Yeshé Dorjé (Rdo mkhyen brtse ye shes rdo rje, 1800–1859); Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thayé

Fig. 7. Rubin Museum of Art, F1996.20.1 (HAR 473).

In this ritual cult of Ling Gesar, which appears to have developed independently of any Chinese garrison temples, we do not see any evidence of direct borrowing from the Geluk cult of the Long Cloud King. Associations with Bektsé and Dzongtsen Shenpa for example are entirely absent. Instead, the religious or cultic associations of this epic-

('Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas, 1813–1899); Nyakla Pema Dündül (Nyag bla Padma bdud 'dul, 1816–1872); Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo ('Jam dbyang mkhyen brtse dbang po, 1820–1892); and Chogyur Lingpa (Mchog gyur gling pa, 1829–1870). But by far the most prominent author in this collection is Ju Mipham, who authored no fewer than forty-five Gesar ritual texts. These texts spanned Mipham's long and prolific career. The earliest was composed when he was only thirteen years old (1859) and the latest when he was around sixty. For more on these rituals see Forgues 2011.

derived Ling Gesar were mostly Nyingmapa, orientated towards Dzogchen, and the figure of Padmasambhava in particular.

Nevertheless, there is a discernable overlap in both the iconography and in the ritual *function* of these two alternative forms (Trinring Gyelpo and Lingjé Gesar Gyelpo). Indeed, a 19th century *thangka* held at the Rubin Museum of Art in New York (see Fig. 7) illustrates how hard it can be to distinguish iconographically between Gesar and Trinring Gyelpo in mounted form, since both were heroic martial figures adopted from folklore, and both were considered warrior deities (Tib. *dgra lha*; Mon. *dayisun tengri*). In the absence of lama figures or deities at the top of this image (which would identify it as Geluk or not), it is impossible to say with certainty whether it depicts Gesar, or Trinring Gyelpo, or both. On the Himalayan Art Resources database (himalayanart.org), the image is accordingly listed simply as a "Dralha" or "warrior deity" (*dgra lha*).

It is also interesting to observe that in Ju Mipham's rituals for Gesar, the hero-deity is also invoked in a courtly seated iconographic form as Gesar Dorjé Tsegyel (Ge sar rdo rje tshe rgyal, see Fig. 8)[224] which is unusual for a "warrior deity" (*dgra lha*), and is reminiscent of the pacific "kingly" depictions of Lord Guan as Trinring Gyelpo/Long Cloud King (as seen in Fig. 5 for example). It can be observed that in their range and function, Mipham's Gesar rituals and Ilgugsan's Trinring Gyelpo rituals could be seen as parallel *corpora* with broadly similar themes, goals and techniques.[225]

As Qing overlordship in Tibet faded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the "Gesar-isation" of Tibet's imperial garrison temples became even more marked, reaching its apex during the period of Tibet's independence (1913–1951). A similar trajectory is also observable in Mongolia, so that by the mid 20th century the original Chinese identity of the deity worshipped at these temples seems to have all but forgotten in both regions, though the custom of drawing lots at the formerly "Chinese" temples did continue.

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[224] The title Gesar Dorjé Tsegyel, "Gesar the Adamantine Lord of Life", was first used in the early 18th century rituals of Lelung Zhepé Dorjé mentioned earlier. On the iconography of the two forms of Gesar, mounted and seated, see Watt 2012.

[225] Both centring on analogous kingly-figures-turned-warrior-deities (*dgra lha*). On the Mipham Gesar corpus, see Forgues 2011. His Gesar rituals are less focused on "repelling" (*bzlog pa*) than Ilgugsan's, and more oriented towards personal flourishing, but are broadly similar in range.

Fig. 8. Gesar Dorjé Tsegyel in seated "kingly" iconography. HAR 60615.

Observers in this period described the Barmari temple, for example, simply as a temple to Gesar, and its other statues (which had perhaps been altered or reduced after the departure of the last Chinese soldiers in 1912) were also routinely identified with Gesaric figures. When Charles Bell photographed the interior of the Barmari temple in 1921, he captioned his image of the main idol (Fig. 9) "an image of King Ke-sar, the hero of early Tibetan mythology" and two ancillary statues as "Ke-sar's brother and minister". By their appearance, it seems these statues actually depict Lord Guan's son Guan Ping and his companion Zhang Fei, respectively (Fig. 10).

Fig. 9. Charles Bell's 1921 photograph of the central idol "King Ke-sar" at the Barmari temple in Lhasa. Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford: "Tibet Album" 1998.285.254.1.

Fig. 10. Charles Bell's 1921 photograph of "Ke-sar's brother and minister"at the Barmari temple. Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford: "Tibet Album" 1998.285.255.

Also of interest is that during the early 20th century, we find Ling Gesar (as opposed to Trinring Gyelpo) and his associated epic folklore becoming an object of interest to members of the Geluk political elite for the first time since the 18th century. This is reflected in the fact that the Reting Regent (Rwa sgreng) employed a personal Gesar bard.[226] It is likely that it was also during this period that the association in the Geluk pantheon between Gesar and Vaiśravana (Tib. Rnam thos sras), the Guardian King of the North, who, like both Lord Guan and Gesar is considered a "wealth god" (*nor lha*), was cultivated.

This is suggested because the association with Vaiśravana is something which appears to be grounded in neither the Gesar folkloric traditions, nor in the Trinring Gyelpo ritual tradition examined above. Indeed associations with Vaiśravana seem notably absent from the textual corpus of Ilgugsan Hutuktu). Instead, the association between Gesar and Vaiśravana appears to have been a relatively late layer of accretion, based on a shared association between "Gesar King of Armies" (*ge sar dmag gi rgyal po*)[227] and Vaiśravana as kings of "the northern direction", as well as generic shared associations between Guandi, Gesar and Vaiśravana as wealth deities (*nor lha*).[228]

However, despite this discernable shift away from Guandi and towards Gesar at the former imperial garrison temples and shrines in Tibet, it is important to note that there is no evidence of (predominantly Nyingma) Gesar rituals, as distinct from (Geluk) Trinring Gyelpo rituals, ever being performed at the Geluk-curated former garrison temples at Barmari, Trapchi, Shigatsé, Dingri, Gyantsé and elsewhere.

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[226] Namely Champasangta (Tib. Byams pa gsang bdag), who would later be the main Tibetan informant for R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz's *Oracles and Demons of Tibet* (1956) and R.A. Stein's *Recherches sur l'épopée et le barde au Tibet* (1959), two seminal works of mid-20th century western Tibetology.

[227] As mentioned earlier, Tibetan scholars generally distinguish between "Gesar King of Armies" (*ge sar dmag gi rgyal po*) and "Ling Gesar" as two distinct legendary or mythical figures. The former is a generic title used of the Turko-Mongol king of the "northern direction" in early schemes of the Four Directions (*phyogs bzhi*) relating to the Tibetan imperial period (7th-9th centuries), where he also known by variations on the "Trom Gesar" (*'phrom/khrom ge sar*); see Stein 1959: 256–261. In Geluk tradition, going back even to Gönpojap's *History of Buddhism in China* (1736), the association with Lord Guan was actually related to this Gesar "king of armies", and not "Ling Gesar". However, the association with the latter was the main popular superscription, as we have seen. Of course, a certain fluidity in these matters of folklore and popular perception must be admitted, though a clear distinction between these two "Gesars" is maintained by Tibetan scholars.

[228] Crossley has suggested that a merging between Guandi-Gesar and Vaiśravana was also part of the Qing project of cultural synthesis. This may be so, but no sources are provided to support the suggestion, and this has not been corroborated by the Geluk ritual *corpora* examined here; Crossley 1999: 284.

6. Conclusion

What does the above material suggest about the questions we started with? Was the identification of Lord Guan as Gesar/Geser part of a deliberate imperial policy of syncretism or fusion? Or was it rather a subaltern phenomemon of appropriation on the part of the uneducated laity? Or was it something else? The additional materials presented here to elucidate this issue suggest that to answer these questions requires considerable nuance.

Part of that nuance involves an appreciation for different phases in the story, and for the different geographical regions of Buddhist Inner Asia and their relations with the Qing imperium. During the early Qing, both Lord Guan and Gesar/Geser were distinct figures of interest to the Qing court, and both were supported through literary patronage. Even in the late 18th century there is evidence that the figure of "Epic Gesar/Geser" (as distinct from Lord Guan) enjoyed some patronage Qing court.[229] However, the materials presented here establish quite clearly that the figure of "Epic Gesar" was anathema to those Geluk hierarchs who led the formal adoption of the Long Cloud King (Lord Guan) as a protector of church and state propitiated at Yonghegong and other Geluk institutions from around 1750. Informally however, a popular identification of Lord Guan as Geser/Gesar persisted across Qing Inner Asia. While this identification was never formally endorsed through text, the Geluk establishment clearly tolerated it and even cultivated it, presumably because it engendered a sense of familiarity and ownership among Mongols and Tibetans over a deity whose cultural resonance was otherwise completely Han Chinese. This superscription, which likely had its origins among the Mongol soldiery of the Qing army, and no formal documents have yet surfaced to indicate that it was a deliberate imperial strategy. As such, it can be considered part of the legacy of the military history of Qing Inner Asia, and contribution of its military culture to the wider cultural history of the Qing Empire.

This article hopes to have shown that the formal Geluk adoption of Lord Guan as a protector deity called Khamsum Dündül Trinring Gyelpo was a response to two parallel historical institutionalisations, both of which started in the mid 18th century: a) that of the Qing military presence in Mongolia and especially in Tibet (the authoritative "home" of Tibetan Buddhism); and b) that of the Geluk church as a

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[229] Sumpa Khenpo, in his 1779 letter to the Third/Sixth Panchen on the subject of Gesar (which makes no mention of Lord Guan) states that "various stories are told about him [Gesar] these days, and are even performed as dances (*zlos-gar*) before the great [Qing] Manjuśri Emperor (*'jam dbyangs gong ma chen mo*)"; FitzHerbert 2015: 33.

religion of state at the Qing imperial centre.

As Qing power waned during the second half of the 19th century, and even more so in the 20th century when both Mongolia and Tibet asserted independence from China in the wake of the Qing dynasty's demise, what had previously been an informal identification of Lord Guan as Gesar/Geser became an ever-more substantive cultural phenomenon, so that gradually the original identity of this Chinese deity came completely obscured by this indigenising superscription.

However in Mongolia and in Tibet this indigenisation appears to have diverged to some degree. In Mongolia, where the "Geluk Geser" had gained considerable popular traction and formal institutionalisation (as with Ilgugsan's "Geser" religious dances adopted at Khuree), the figure of "Geser" was widely understood as referring precisely to this Geluk protector (i.e. Trinring Gyelpo).[230] However in Tibet, where the apotheosised form of "Epic Gesar" developed independently largely within Nyingma tradition, the figure of "Epic Gesar" increasingly came to subsume the figure of the Geluk protector, although this "Epic Gesar" never formally acknowledged or adopted by the Geluk curators of the formerly "Chinese" garrison temples.

During the period of Tibetan independence, there are some indications that (at least parts of) the Geluk religio-political establishment in the 1930s and 1940s were tentatively moving towards an interest in adopting "Epic Gesar" as a protective divinity, through his association with the *pukka* Buddhist guardian king Vaiśravana. However, because of the lack of any pre-existent Geluk tradition concerning this "Epic Gesar", who had been dismissed by Geluk masters for so long (such as Changkya, Tukwan, Sumpa), such an embrace of the "Epic Gesar" or Ling Gesar as a national defender-deity was never formalised, and a full-blown "indigenous" Gesar identity was never formally embraced. Instead these former garrison temples, known locally as "Gesar temples" (*ge sar lha khang*) or "Chinese temples" (*rgya mi lha khang*), persisted in a kind of post-colonial limbo until their destruction at the hands of Maoist fervour in the 1960s.

This article has shown that Trinring Gyelpo was unambiguously a form of the imperial deity Guandi. It should be acknowledged in conclusion however that Trinring Gyelpo, the "Long Cloud King", does

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[230] A very clear expression of this perspective is found in Rintchen 1958. It also explains George Roerich's observation in his 1942 fieldwork-based article that "in A-mdo among followers of the dGe-lugs-pa sect one often hears the unexpected statement that Tsong-kha-pa himself, the Tibetan Reformer, had been once the chaplain (*a-mchod*) of King Kesar of Ling". Roerich 1942: 286. The fate of Guandi temples in Amdo and the criss-crossing associations with Gesar and other local deities there, could be the subject of another article.

represent a "Tibetanised" form of this quintessentially Han Chinese deity. With the hindsight of Tibet's current status as a colonised annexe to modern China, and in light of contemporary disputes concerning Tibet's historical status, the historic role and political legacy of the senior Geluk figures who were most closely involved in this adoption may be viewed from different angles, as discussed for example by Illich and Fan Zhang. On one level, these figures, such as Changkya Rölpé Dorjé and Tukwan Lobzang Chökyi Nyima, were clearly serving Qing imperial interests and using their religious authority to facilitate the acceptance of the Qing's (Chinese) military presence in Buddhist Inner Asia. But on another level, their successful indigenisation of this Chinese cultural form and symbol of authority, was also an act of appropriation which subverted and diluted what might have been a powerful colonial symbol. These Geluk figures in effect reduced Guandi from the status of the highest-ranking deity of state and a symbol of Chinese military dominance, to the status of a relatively marginal protector-deity.[231]

Moreover, although the Geluk textual record surveyed here illustrates the scholastic rigour with which the identity of Trinring Gyelpo, as a form of Lord Guan, was kept distinct from the folkloric figure of Ling Gesar or "Epic Geser", at the same time there can be no doubt that both in Tibet and in Mongolia, the Geluk establishment and indeed the Qing imperial authorities (pluralistic as both of these things were) tacitly allowed and even encouraged the blending and merging of these two figures in popular perception. In this way, the figure of Lord Guan was effectively indigenised in Buddhist Inner Asia, thus softening the perception of—and perhaps even the reality of—the Sino-Manchu imperial project as one of imperial imposition. So while the Geluk adoption of Lord Guan may be seen as a politically-motivated project serving the interests of the Qing imperium, the associated merging of identities between Lord Guan and Geser/Gesar was a more complex and nuanced affair. For its part, the Qing empire emerges from this story as a relatively light-handed and tolerant imperial project, which especially in the post-Qianlong era, perhaps due to the weakening of central imperial control over the frontier region of Tibet, became ever more tolerant of fusion and syncretism within its imperial domains, while trying to limit and and reduce outside influence through an enforced isolation.

[231] See the discussions of this and related issues in Illich 2006 and Zhang 2016.

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